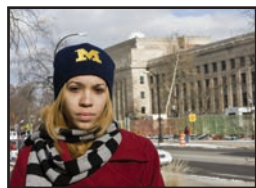




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Cobra raises issues at Parkland

PN Ken Smith
Staff Writer

Time management is an essential part of the education process for both professors and students alike, and institutions frequently turn to technology to assist with the logistics of that process. Parkland College has done the same in utilizing its web based portal known as Cobra Learning, but what happens if the solution unintentionally causes some of the very problem it was enlisted to solve?

Recently Cobra had major issues that affected everyone at Parkland. These issues were due to missing database paths, which were caused when the software engine was moved to another server during a maintenance window at the vendor's Indianapolis location. Desire to Learn, the vendor of the Cobra software, is working to resolve the problem, but even without these vendor issues, Cobra still receives many complaints from those that use it.

Students that have multiple classes on Cobra may notice that course menus are often different depending on the class. For someone with five or six classes, navigating Cobra can be an assignment in itself, and the issues aren't just an inconvenience for students, as many instructors have expressed frustration as well.

"Having an online portal is great for the instant connection with students, especially for making corrections or updates to assignments and grades, but I actually spend more time configuring Cobra than on preparing and teaching course content," an instructor in the Social Sciences Department said, who wished to remain anonymous. "Since I often

switch classes from term to term, the work is considerable since I have to set up Cobra for each new course all over again with each coming semester."

The situation is so frustrating that many faculty members have found alternatives for distributing their class materials, resorting to services

like Google Drive, or even building their own course websites to host class content.

It has been suggested that the software itself is to blame either by not performing as advertised, or that the code is full of errors and never worked as intended. However, the program is

being used by hundreds of schools and Fortune 500 companies across the nation, and the overall response has been positive.

"Except when the vendor makes changes, which we cannot control, we try our best to keep the system up and running, and it is very easy to blame the technology when problems arise," Lori Wendt, Online Support Specialist for the Distance and Virtual Learning Department said. "Overall our vendor has been very supportive and readily addresses our concerns, but not knowing the system adequately can also cause configuration or navigational errors."

Recently the Distance and Virtual Learning Department lost their director, who was largely responsible for most of the instructor training and module creation. As a result, the remaining staff have been trying to fill this void by helping out wherever possible and attempting to solve problems as they arise.

"Instructors are not properly trained, and we want to help change that," Debbie Newsome, Assistant Online Support Specialist in the Distance and Virtual Learning Department said. "Instructors are building as they go, and they shouldn't have to, instead the faculty for a course should agree on a format that can still be flexible, and then get trained on how to use it. This way the layout is built only once through a collaborative effort instead of continuous rebuilding with each new semester."

As it currently stands, Cobra is designed to be a general purpose portal that allows extensive in-house customization according to the needs of the institution using it. However, it is this extreme configuring ability that seems to be part of the problem,

See COBRA on P. 5



Illustration by Chang Bao/Prospectus News

Diet tips for a healthy student lifestyle

PN Peter Cowley
Staff Writer

The spring semester will be over soon, and many students are trying their best to deal with the stress of studying for their final exams before Summer Break. There are many bad effects that come along with the stress, including stress eating and sleep deprivation.

There are various problems that come along with abusing your body in this sort of way, but luckily there are plenty of methods that students can use to help stay in shape after the stress of a long semester, and possibly lose the dreaded "Freshman 15" that many acquire during this time.

Keeping up with a good sleep schedule ties in very well with staying in shape, and also helps your body to function well.

"I think the key to staying in shape in college would be fighting the urge to eat out all of the time," English major Eric Miller explained. "Bringing a small and healthy snack to school to munch on will help keep you from gorging on unhealthy foods, as well as keeping up a regular exercise regimen."

Miller is correct, as many students fall victim to the unhealthy snacks that are advertised on a daily basis, so it's important to have a distraction from all of it.

"Bad things come from increased stress, because you would want to calm yourself down and sooth yourself, so that leads to poor choices in terms of lifestyle. Sleeping, good nutrition, and movement are the three components,"

Parkland's Wellness Coordinator June Burch said.

You have to keep a good sleep schedule to function and do well in classes. Another simple and easy tip to help keep a good figure is to simply walk everywhere. This can be the cheapest way to try and stay in shape.

"It doesn't cost gas or bus fair to walk. It's not really all that necessary to use a gym; just walking to a place you need to go within a good distance is a great idea, instead of taking an elevator. Just try to be mobile and active," Burch explained.

Students in Parkland have a lot of trouble making good food choices. This problem is not even necessarily over-eating, but choosing foods that are high in fats and sugars, which will not do very much in terms of providing fuel for your body.

"There is a lot of talk about clean eating," Burch said. "Clean eating is all about making choices for foods that are as close to their natural form as they can be. This can be difficult, but looking at the labels of foods will help you."

It is not always possible to make clean choices, but doing your best will help. When you look at a label, make sure you know what sort of ingredients are in it besides what you would expect. There are all sort of chemicals and extra fats in most foods these days, and any time that you see something labeled as "low fat," it usually means that it has high levels of sugar in order to make it palatable.

"Clean eating means eating foods that are as close to their natural state as possible. That means finding out



Illustration by Rick Nease/The Detroit Free Press/MCT

where it came from, what kind of pesticides were used on it, and how you are supposed to cook it. Clean eating is something you hear a lot about now, and I highly recommend it," Burch finished. Many students have made some smart decisions by themselves pertaining to how they will stay in shape throughout semesters.

Computer Science and Engineer major Donovan King has a few good methods.

"I ride my bike a lot so that really helps me," Computer Science and Engineer major Donovan King said. "I also drink pretty much nothing but water just to stay clean. And whenever I feel like actually working out, I try to do it with friends so that they can keep me more motivated."

For more information on how you can stay in shape, please visit the Wellness Center located in X240 at Parkland College.

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Fact or Fiction?

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NEWS

Supreme Court upholds Michigan ban on affirmative action in state universities



Tony Ding/Detroit Free Press/MCT
University of Michigan freshman Katila Howard, 18, a Cass Tech graduate, is pictured in front of the Michigan Student Union, December 6, 2007 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Admissions officers at schools where race and ethnicity were once considered in the admissions process are continuing to rework the definition of diversity.



David G. Savage
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court upheld Michigan's ban on the use of racial affirmative action in its state universities Tuesday, ruling that voters are entitled to decide the issue.

The 6-2 decision clears away constitutional challenges to the state bans on affirmative action, which began in California in 1996.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, speaking for the majority, said the democratic process can decide such issues. "This case is not about how the debate about racial preferences should be resolved," he said. "It is about who may resolve it. There is no authority in the Constitution of the United States or in this court's precedents for the judiciary to set aside Michigan laws that commit this policy determination to the voters."

In 2003, the high court upheld an affirmative action policy at the University of Michigan Law School. But three years later, the state's voters adopted Proposal 2 by a 58 percent to 42 percent margin. It said public colleges and universities "shall not discriminate against or grant preferential treatment to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color,

ethnicity or national origin." But that policy was challenged as discriminatory by two groups that had advocated for affirmative action. And the U.S. Court of Appeals in Cincinnati declared it unconstitutional on the grounds that it took away a policy that had helped minority students.

Tuesday's ruling is not a surprise, since a majority of the sitting justices have been skeptical of affirmative action. Justice Stephen G. Breyer, who had supported affirmative action in the past, concurred in the ruling, saying the issue could be decided by the voters.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor delivered a lengthy dissent which she read in court. She said the court had turned its back on earlier rulings that prohibited the states from withdrawing remedies for racial discrimination. The Constitution does not "give the majority free rein to erect selective barriers against racial minorities," she said. Her opinion cited the steep decline in the percentage of black and Latino students who were admitted to UCLA and UC Berkeley after the passage of California's Proposition 209.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg agreed with Sotomayor, while Justice Elena Kagan sat out the case.

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Lifestyle

Parkland Fitness Center helps beat winter blues

PN Mackenzie Eisenmann
Staff Writer

Winter is arguably the least cheerful time of year. Freezing weather, grey skies, icy roads, and dirty, melting snow often make it difficult to stay positive during the colder months of the year.

"I love being outside in the fresh air, but it is hard to do that during the winter. I am always in a much better mood in the spring," Forest Conservation major Chelsea Schofield said.

While spring tends to wipe away the dreary feelings brought on by winter, sometimes it takes more than a few warm, sunny days to start feeling cheery again. This spring, some students are finding it especially hard to recover from winter hangovers.

One of the most serious effects winter has on students is Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. SAD is a disorder that causes depression during certain seasons, most frequently winter. According to the Mayo Clinic, people who experience anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and weight gain through the winter months may be suffering SAD.

Though winter SAD is most common, some people are affected by SAD during the warmer months. Spring and summer sufferers of SAD often experience symptoms of anxiety, insomnia, weight loss and

irritability.

The Mayo Clinic acknowledges that everyone has bad days, but a doctor should be visited if symptoms last longer than a normal case of "the blues," or if the sufferer turns to alcohol dependence or thoughts of suicide.

Even for people who do not suffer from SAD, winter still leaves many feeling depressed and lethargic for multiple reasons. But the arrival of spring brings the opportunity to get active and feel positive again.

Due to the poor weather and shorter days in the winter, most people become less active through the cold months. Winter inactivity combined with the many delicious end-of-year holiday foods often result in a little extra fat buildup when spring rolls around.

The Parkland Fitness Center offers many inexpensive fitness courses for students, from Pilates and yoga to Tai-chi and belly dancing. The classes are incredibly inexpensive, ranging from \$35 to \$45 for two to three month courses. Most classes are an hour long and are held once a week.

Of course, taking a fitness class is not the only way to get active this spring. The Parkland Fitness Center has clean, high-quality cardio and strength training equipment for students and community members who choose to create their own workout plans.

Students can sweat off their winter pounds by using the treadmills, elliptical, stationary bicycles, step mills and rowing machines or work on building pounds of muscle by working out with the power racks, weights, ropes, and push-pull equipment at the Fitness Center.

A membership to the Fitness Center costs \$90 for full semester use. Students must be enrolled in an academic fitness course to become a member of the Fitness Center.

The Fitness Center also has an indoor walking track that is available for anyone to use for free. Fitness Center hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, and 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays.

A free monthly online magazine called "Student Health 101" is available for everyone thanks to the Parkland Wellness Center. The magazine is produced by College Health Services and offers helpful tips on how to stay healthy and active despite a busy schedule and limited funds.

Anyone can subscribe to StudentHealth101 via e-mail at <http://www.studenthealth101.com/register.html>. For more information on the Fitness Center, please go online to <http://www.parkland.edu/wellnesscenter/fitnesscenter>.



Illustration by Jose J. Santos / Los Angeles Times/MCT

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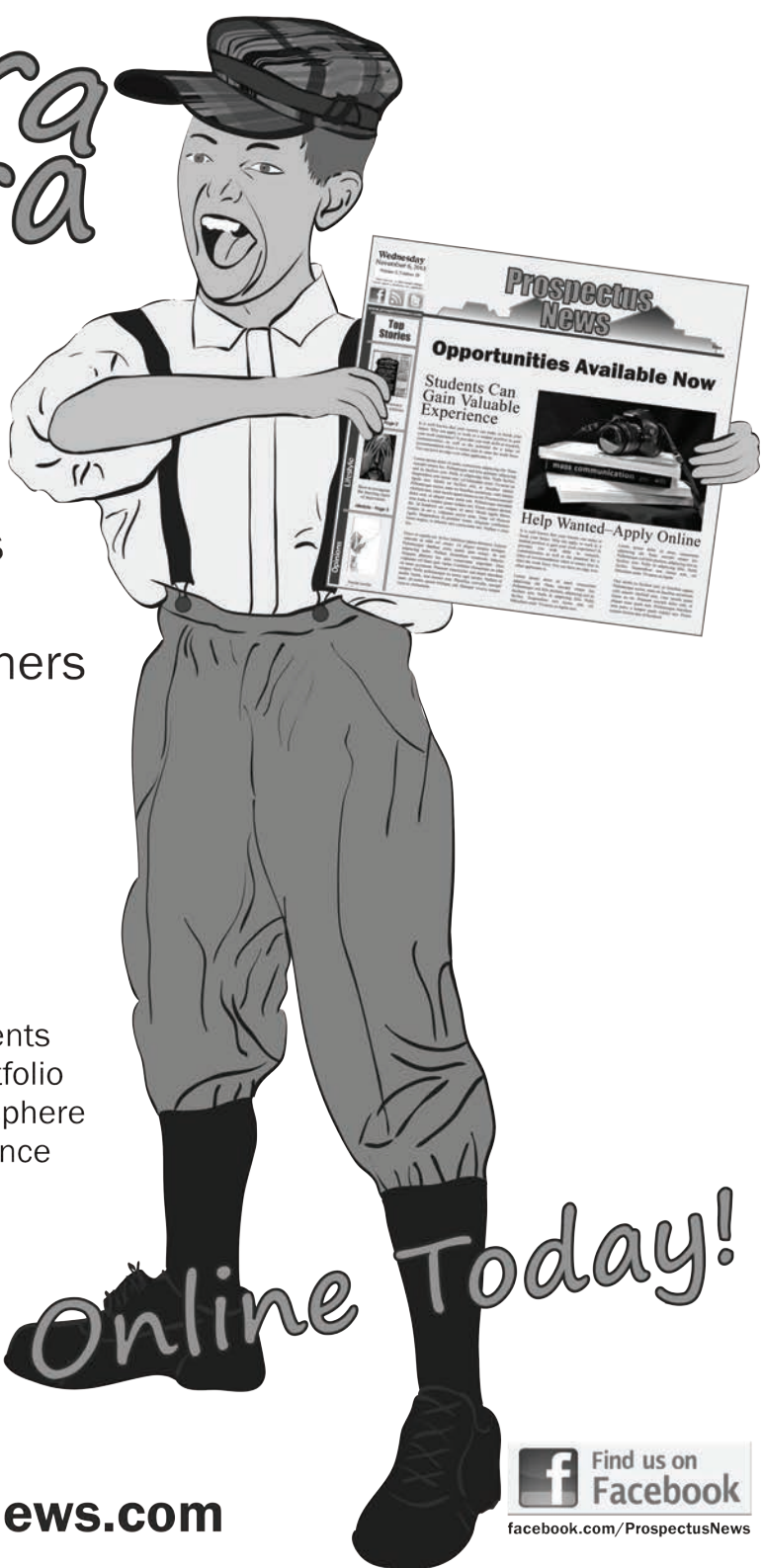
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Please Recycle

Boston Marathon bombing survivor: My best days are ones others take for granted

Jeff Bauman
Los Angeles Times

It is a weekend for working around the house. My fiancée, Erin, and I have the baby's room to paint and some IKEA furniture to assemble. I roll out of bed early - 10:30 - and get into my wheelchair. Erin is already making coffee in the kitchen.

"I started the first wall," she says. "I love that gray." Erin never bugs me about sleeping late. For a few months after I was injured in the Boston Marathon bombings, I often slept 15 hours a day. The doctors said my body needed to heal. It must still be healing because I hardly ever see 8 a.m. anymore.

I finish my coffee, then roll into the bedroom for my stubbies. Two days after the bombing, both my legs were amputated above the knee.

A year later, I'm still unstable on my artificial legs, so in private I sometimes use my stubbies, small platforms that attach to the bottom of my thighs. Because they are only a couple of inches high, and don't have knees, I can walk and stand on them for hours.

With my stubbies on, I'm less than 4 feet tall, so I paint the bottom half of the wall. Erin stretches for the top, doing things I'll never be able to do, like stand on tiptoes.

We had only been dating for a year when the bomb went off, but she never left my side. She knew how to lightly lift the hair from my burnt forehead without causing me pain. When I joked, "Don't worry E, our kids will have legs," and she laughed, I realized how much I loved her. We hugged, and it was the first time we touched without pain. It was six more months before the engagement, and the pregnancy, but it felt inevitable.

"What about trim?" I ask.
"I don't know. I was thinking yellow or green."

"How about red for the Sox?"

"Jeff ..."

"I'm kidding."

The doorbell rings. "That's Kevin," Erin says. "I asked him to help with the futon." Kevin Horst is my store manager at Costco. He visited me every day in the hospital, and stopped by my mom's apartment for months to give her flowers because he knew how worried she was.

He's gay, in a long-term relationship but with no plans for children, and sometimes I feel like his semi-adopted son.

"Heavy Kevy!" I shout, opening the door. Kevin is standing there with a drill. "You don't know anything about IKEA furniture, do you?" I say, laughing.

"It's a gift for you and Erin."

He and I sit on the floor and unbox the futon pieces. It does not go well. There is fake wood everywhere, and none of it fits. Kevin keeps insisting we follow the directions. I'm convinced the drill could solve all our problems, if we'd give it a chance. In the end,

Kevin is driven crazy because the slipcase won't fit snugly on the cushion. Erin talks him down. I just laugh; I've been laughing with Kevin all afternoon.

Afterward, I make lattes for everyone, and we sit in the baby's room, admiring our work. I think: Are we watching paint dry? But Erin and



Photo by Angela Rowlings/Boston Herald/MCT
A memorial is shown for Boston Marathon bombing victims at Copley Square in Boston, Massachusetts, Thursday, April 25, 2013.

Kevin talk about the natural light, and all the memories this room will hold.

For a minute, it's hard to believe this is my life: my house, my love, my friend, my baby on the way.

"This was a great day," I tell Kevin, as I roll with him to the door. "One of the best."

Most people would look at me sideways for saying this about such a mundane day. After all, since the bombing, I've stood on the field at Fenway during the seventh-inning

stretch of a World Series baseball game; I sat in the presidential box at the State of the Union address. Erin and I met Michelle Obama.

But Kevin understands. He knows that the things normal people take for granted - going to the bathroom on their own, getting out of bed without falling down, making a latte for friends - once seemed insurmountable to me.

There were times, when the sweat poured off me as I struggled and failed to take one step, that I wanted to give

up, because I thought that no matter how hard I tried, I would never be self-sufficient again. I would always be a burden to the people I love.

So those other experiences, they are special. They are memories I'll always have. But this experience - doing household chores, being helpful, living a normal life - is what matters.

It is what I worked so hard for. And right now, it's all I really want.

(c)2014 Los Angeles Times

When a wave and a smile are magic

Gina Barreca
The Hartford Courant

You know how you get into those moods where you convince yourself that the only thing to do when you're absolutely miserable is to make yourself even more miserable, as if misery were some kind of contest?

And when you're in that kind of mood, there's some part of you determined to make yourself so thoroughly unhappy you are guaranteed to take home the poor-me crown?

Picture me, then, having a perfectly rotten day.

Waking up to a washed-out gray morning, I'd started to feel as if every decision carried with it the potential for a cataclysmic spiritual crisis.

And I mean everything.

Choosing the wrong font for certain emails, for example, might act as the harbinger of ruin; parking too close to the building where I work would

mean somebody else would attempt to squeeze a vehicle so close to mine that it would simply be easier just part their car inside my car.

Parking far away would prove I was the abject failure I always imagined myself to be.

(Who but a schmuck pays \$300 a year for parking and then walks three-quarters of a mile in the rain to get to the office? Sure, people do that all the time when they work in a city.)

But who does that when her building is located on acres and acres of open farmland and rolling hills? For several hundred bucks a year, I want access to what by implication is promised when the money is routinely deducted directly from my paycheck under the heading "parking." Not that I'm bitter.)

I was facing a day filled with budget cuts at work, computer problems and calls from home about a repeatedly (not direly,

only annoyingly) sick cat - and I was fully intending to cap it all off by driving in the rain to pick up a cheap pre-cooked chicken for dinner.

You've had those chickens, right? They sort of look like very short extras from a zombie movie: Basically, they're dried skin pulled tight over brittle bones with a little bit of ooze emerging from somewhere.

Frankly, you don't want to make inquiries concerning the ooze's origins.

I don't even really like the cheap pre-cooked chicken, but it seemed like the kind of half-baked idea, literally and metaphorically, to signal the day's finale.

Then a stranger wrecked the whole thing.

I was coming off a ramp and onto the highway, eyes narrowed against the blur of rain, fists clamped around the steering wheel, radio news station in the background

announcing the end of the civilized world as we know it (plus additional rain) and some guy actually permitted me to merge.

Then he had the nerve to smile and wave.

And without thinking about it, I smiled and waved back. It wasn't a fake. I meant it. I think I even said "Ooh, thanks, mister!" out loud in my car.

It turns out that, when it comes to changing moods, I'm a cheap date.

When I realized that my fundamental perception of the day could pivot both immediately and entirely on the smallest of incidents, I admit to being startled. I was happily surprised, of course, but still ... was it really just so easy to feel better after feeling bad?

(Not always, of course. Not when there's real cause for sadness or when I'm caught by sense of loss or longing emerging from somewhere

deep or damaged. That's when I check in with the professionals - the therapist, the doctor and the old friends who know me best - to see if I need some kind of real tune-up.)

There was a small, flinty part of me that wanted to clutch the misery and hold it close. But you can't wave with a clenched fist and you can't really smile with gritted teeth.

Maintaining unhappiness was too much work.

Trust me when I say that I didn't mean to forget being frustrated, angry and soured. It just happened. One kind gesture and SHAZAM, there I was with my heart opening like a parachute and my hand waving like a 5-year-old's at a Fourth of July parade.

I still picked up dinner on the way home, but decided to get fresh pizza. It went better with the parade.

(c)2014 The Hartford Courant (Hartford, Conn.)

COBRA

continued from page 1

as having even a basic standardized format will allow menu sub-categories to always be located in the same place if the instructor chooses to use them.

Many instructors have fine-tuned their curriculum over the years to provide the best course presentation possible, so there may be resistance to following a standard format.

"Clearly there is an issue that needs to be resolved that will greatly benefit both faculty and students," Kris Young, Vice President of Academic Services said. "It is definitely

something we will be looking into." Any improvement, no matter how small, that allows more time for instructors to devote to effective teaching and students to learning is a sure step in the right direction of streamlining the educational process.

"Now that this office is aware of the full extent of the problem, we are looking to gather some baseline data on this issue by surveying both students and faculty," Seamus Reilly, Vice President of Institutional Affairs said. "Hopefully this will develop into some truly effective training for both faculty and students alike on how to efficiently configure and use the system."

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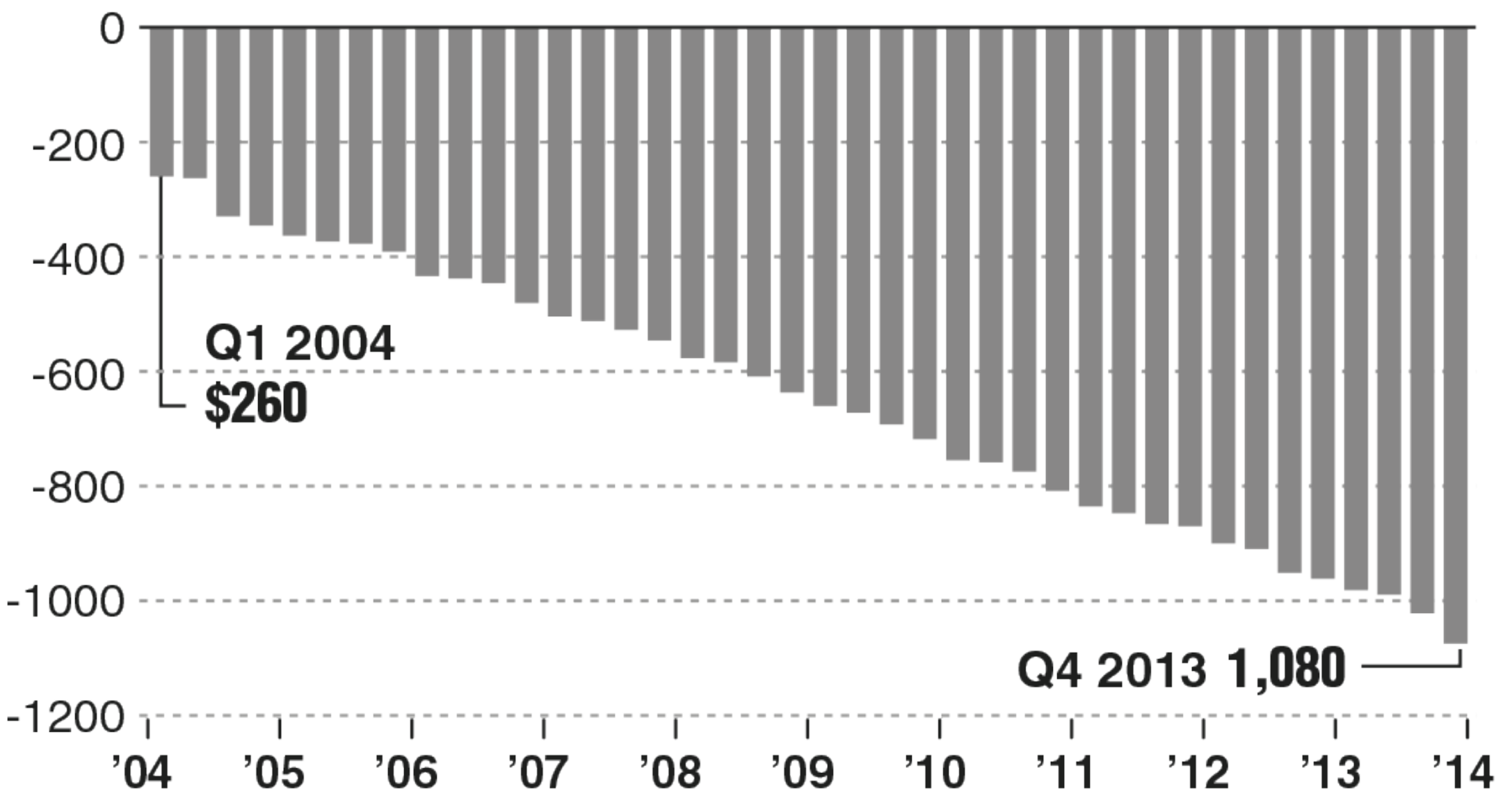
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Deeper in debt

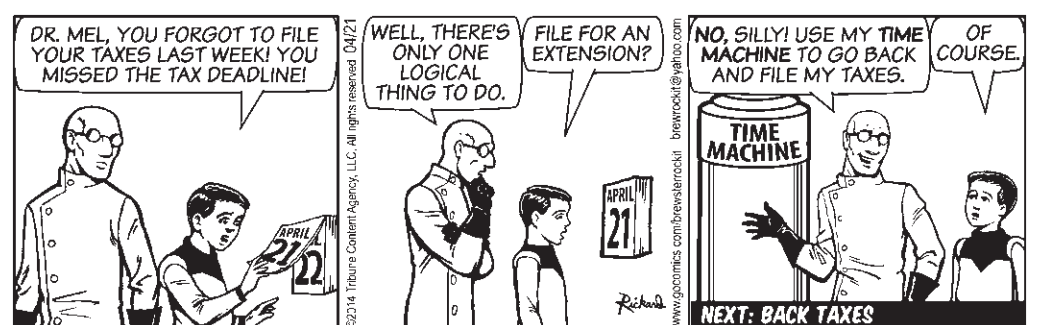
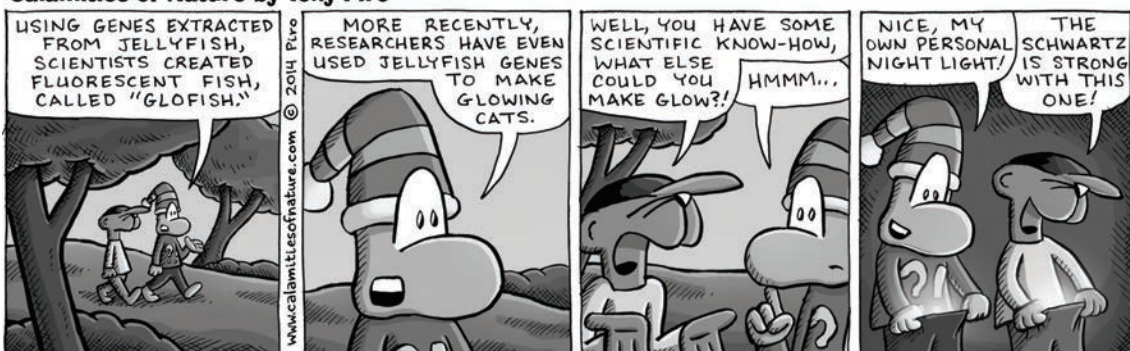
Total student debt carried by Americans has more than tripled over the past 10 years. Total student loan balance, in billions:



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York
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Calamities of Nature by Tony Piro



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We do have a lot in common. The same air, the same Earth, the same sky. Maybe if we started looking at what's the same instead of always looking at what's different, ...well, who knows?"
-Meowth, Pokemon the first movie

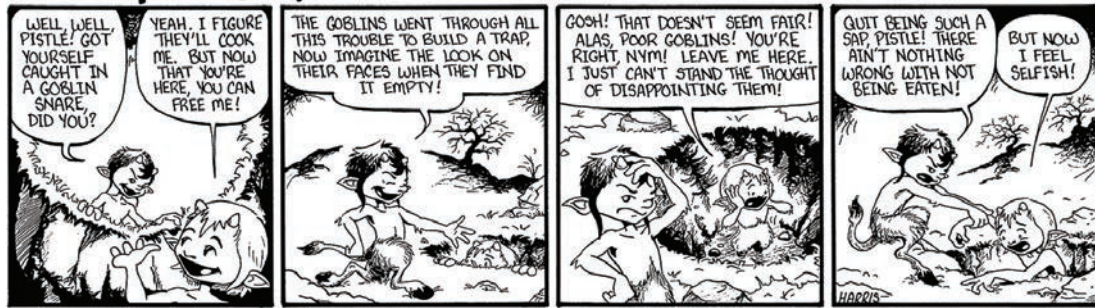
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	6	1				7	9	
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6								1 5
5	8				4			2 7

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Imps! by Jeff Harris



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Best In Show Comic



THE TV CROSSWORD

by Jacqueline E. Mathews

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11
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48					49						50	
51											53	

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

5/19/13

ACROSS

- Furry alien from an old sitcom
- "__ Family"; Vicki Lawrence series
- Goodman of "Dancing with the Stars"
- "To __, with Love"; movie for Sidney Poitier
- Wear away
- __ Ortiz of "Ugly Betty"
- Pub order
- "Teenage Mutant __ Turtles"
- Rushmore and Rainier: abbr.
- Lasagna or fettuccine
- Scarlett __; Vivien Leigh role
- Series for Jesse Spencer
- __ lamb; roasted entrée
- Rap artist Dr. __
- "__ Life to Live"
- And so forth: abbr.
- Actress Campbell and her namesakes
- Role on "Blue Bloods"
- Strong string
- "Studio 60 on the Sunset __"
- Actor McKellen

- __ parking; service offered by some hotels and restaurants
- Dover's state: abbr.
- Actor on "The A-Team"
- Clear the board
- Prefix for sphere or system
- Begley and Bradley
- Actress Winona
- "__ and Stacey"

DOWN

- Letters indicating urgency
- Purple flower
- "The __ Prince of Bel-Air"
- "Dennis the __"
- Mr. Onassis, to friends
- Night we watch "The Bachelor": abbr.
- Descriptive part of speech: abbr.
- "__ Love"; Al Pacino movie
- Actress Hedy
- Dinner's main course
- Space flight agcy.
- "__ Death"; series for Brad Garrett and Joely Fisher
- Concealed
- "The __ and the Ecstasy"
- One whose case is hopeless
- "The Three Faces __"; movie for Joanne Woodward
- Actor __ James Olmos
- Contaminates
- Wolf Blitzer's employer
- "__ Parade"; Judy Garland classic
- Title for Bilko & Joe Friday: abbr.
- "Tomorrow __ Dies"; 007 movie
- Actress Eve __
- Dorothy, to Em
- "One Day at a __"
- Trudge
- Suffix for station or custom
- Boy
- 180° from WNW

Solution to Last Week's Puzzle

W	H	O	S		O	L	E								
R	O	L	E		B	A	M	B	I						
R	O	U	G	E	S	A	T	U	R	N					
A	T	R	A		M	A	M	E	I	A	M				
Y	E	S		M	A	M	A		L	A	N	A			
				M	E	I	R		D	I	N	E	D		
				Y	A	N	K		G	O	O	D			
J	E	S	S	E		L	O	N	I						
A	R	T	E		T	O	U	R		E	J	O			
G	E	E		K	E	N	T		S	T	E	R			
				C	R	A	N	E	S		M	A	Z	A	R
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						I	T	S			P	E	N	S	

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Lovett receives Award of Excellence



Photo courtesy of NJCAA

Rod Lovett with Norma Carr of Salt Lake Community College in Utah receives the NJCAA George E. Killian Award of Excellence, which according to the NJCAA is "awarded to individuals dedicated to the organization's ideals of volunteerism, achievement, service, leadership and excellence."

Alex Wallner
Sports Writer

Parkland's Athletic Director Rod Lovett was honored with the NJCAA George E. Killian Award of Excellence.

The NJCAA George E. Killian Award of Excellence is handed out annually by the NJCAA's national office to individuals who have shown dedication towards volunteerism, achievement, service, leadership and excellence.

"Truthfully, I was actually very surprised," Lovett said. "They give those awards at the opening ceremonies of the national meetings and it always goes to one male and one female recipient, usually most

years it has been."

Lovett remarked that the person the speaker was describing sounded like himself, and then Lovett saw his picture on the screen, which made him feel surprised also very honored.

Lovett, who is in his twenty-third year at the college and thirteenth year as Athletic Director, is seen as a valued member of the NJCAA

Lovett not only serves as Athletic Director, but also serves as Chair of the Committees for Division Two Baseball, Division Two Districting and Vice-Chair of the Championship Events Committee.

Lovett was given this award for many reasons, including in recognition for his position as Men's Region Director. This job entails that

the Director oversee all men's sports, post-season tournaments and day-to-day operations of the 20 schools in the region.

"I don't come into the college after hours to work, but when I do here's what I see typically," Student Life President Tom Caulfield said. "I see Rod's vehicle out there on weekends, nights; all these times when I just happen to be coming in."

Caulfield continued by saying that seeing his car in the parking lot after hours shows him how hard he works for this college, and that there's no one more deserving than someone who does such a great job for Parkland.

"At this point, I don't have a lot of contact with the other ads," Secretary Mickey Cler said. "I know Rod is

considered a really good one because he has phone calls, everyone checks with him for translations of the rules, he works hard at it and is trusted at the job and he takes it seriously and is very good at his job."

What people may not know is that this award is not necessarily always for Athletic Directors.

"It's basically for people who serve the NJCAA in some capacity, who have kind of gone above and beyond just the day-to-day operations of their normal job," Lovett said.

Lovett explained that the NJCAA flew him out to Raleigh, North Carolina to do site visits, and Lovett is also one who votes on numerous polls and meets his deadlines consistently.

Lovett's job never seems to stop as

he is always doing something related with the NJCAA with the many roles he serves.

His hard work has not gone unnoticed by the NJCAA, which is why Lovett was given the Award of Excellence.

This is another trophy that Parkland can put next to its four national championships. This award is far more unique than a national championship, because it is an award for someone's individual hard work and dedication to their role in athletics.

For more information about the NJCAA George E. Killian Award of Excellence, please visit <http://bit.ly/1h0IMfh>.

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Heartbleed Virus affects Internet security

 **Mace Mackiewicz**
Staff Writer

Recently a flaw in the Internet code known as SSL was found, which allowed it to be exploited with malicious software, enabling others to steal information from individuals. Many websites over the past week have been updating their servers and security to try to work around the exploit, but for now it's best to tread lightly while using personal information on the internet.

A description of the Heartbleed Virus is given by heartbleed.com.

"The Heartbleed Bug is a serious vulnerability in the popular OpenSSL cryptographic software library. This weakness allows stealing the information protected, under normal conditions, by the SSL/TLS encryption used to secure the Internet. SSL/TLS provides communication security and privacy over the Internet for applications such as web, email, instant messaging (IM) and some virtual private networks (VPNs)," the website read.

"The Heartbleed bug allows anyone on the Internet to read the memory of the systems protected by the vulnerable versions of the OpenSSL software. This compromises the secret keys used to identify the service providers and to encrypt the traffic, the names and passwords of the users and the actual content.

This allows attackers to eavesdrop on communications, steal data directly from the services and users and to impersonate services and users," the website continued.

Around Monday, April 7, 2014 the Heartbleed vulnerability was found in the Internet's SSL code, which is a security code much of the Internet uses. The estimated amount of the Internet that was vulnerable to the breach was thought to be about 17 percent.

According to a press release by Symantec, the company that makes Norton Antivirus, the Heartbleed Virus works by allowing people to view the history of systems using open SSL for security on their websites. Through this they can get people's passwords and even their credit card information.

There's a new fixed version of SSL

available for websites to upgrade to. This updated version basically protects the services being affected from being able to be read like an open book.

As soon as the upgrade is in place most websites recommend changing your password to something completely different, but don't recommend changing it to something overly complex.

Photography major Allison Curtis has received emails from several sites telling her to change her passwords.

"The first website I received an email from was Norton which made sense since I use their anti-virus. It told me to change my password for websites that had said to fix their vulnerability. But oddly I also received emails from places I have never visited before telling me to change all my passwords now which seemed odd to me," Curtis explained.

Web design major Joseph Plotner has also received mysterious emails.

"Over the past couple of weeks I have noticed in my inbox websites sending me emails about 'Heartbleed' with many conflicting messages on how to keep my info secure. I personally wait until the log-ins of the websites I use tell me it's safe to change my password but I am a bit scared that so many places I have never been to were also sending me emails," Plotner said.

After the vulnerability was first found a lot of websites have begun to update their security for the accounts on them. After the upgrades were completed many of these websites took an extra precaution by warning users on certain websites to change their password since it is now safe to do so without worrying about compromising their personal information.

A man named Filippo has developed a website that checks the servers of other websites to see if they are currently vulnerable.

He recently did an "Ask Me Anything" thread on Reddit, and detailed what his website does and even gave some more advice to users for what to do to browse safely on the Internet while this vulnerability is around.

On the AMA, Filippo said one of the best things to do is use an extension

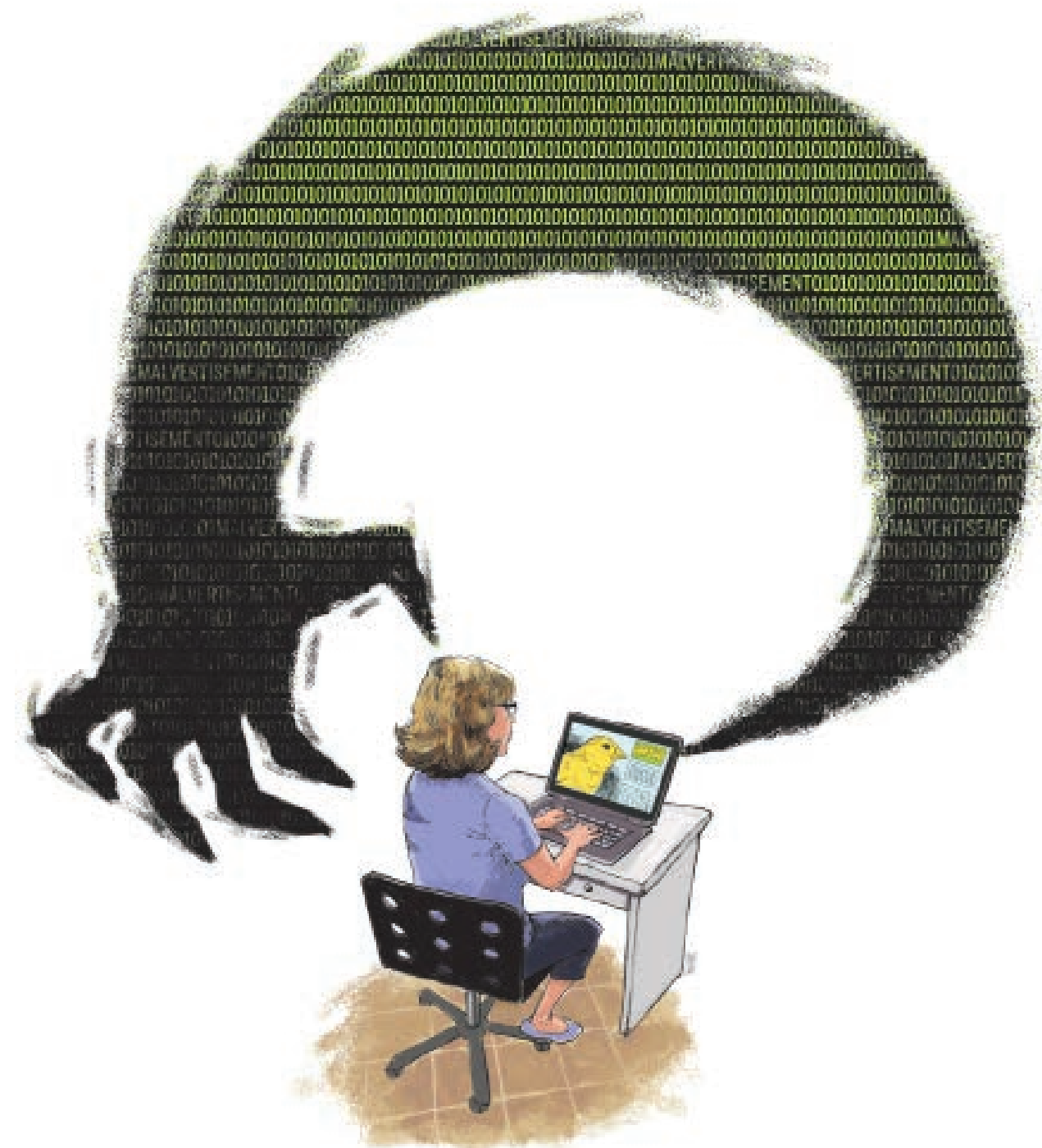


Illustration by Chuck Todd/Bay Area News Group/MCT

for browsers, either "Foxbleed" or "Chromebleed," which check the vulnerability of the websites. If a red flag shows up, users should avoid logging into the website until it's secure again. He also said to wait for the website to reveal what's been

exploited before panicking about anything like credit card information

Fillipo also explained that even though there is currently a fix for the Heartbleed Virus, he wouldn't be too surprised if another exploit is found again.

The website currently shows that Cobra is not one of the websites vulnerable Heartbleed, so students don't need to worry about logging into it.

For information on the Heartbleed Virus, please visit bit.ly/1gINDsH.



Pick of the week



Artist:
Megafauna

Album:
Maximalist

Song:
Touch the Lion

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