

Financial aid could be available to those who apply

David Melendez Staff Writer

As the cost of higher education rises, the assistance provided to students in need is being reduced.

However, there is financial assistance for students who have financial need and apply for it. Students can submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). According to http://www.pellgranteligibility. net, due to an unexpected shortfall in the federal funding for the 2011-2012 school year, Congress voted to reduce funding by several billion dollars in Spring 2011. Eligibility requirements have been raised a bit, requiring slightly more of a financial need than before, however the maximum amount for a Pell Grant will remain \$5,550 for the academic school year.

The issue to keep in mind is not that funds have been somewhat reduced, but rather that students are not applying at all. Many students are finding themselves in debt due to student loans and assistance from family to get by each semester. Some students have to work multiple jobs or live with parents or other family in order to save enough for the upcoming semester, while others take classes at local community colleges to save money. There are even some students who have to make the difficult decision to skip a semester, due to lack of funds.

"My mom has to pay for my tuition every semester and I admit, it has cost her quite a bit. I feel guilty for her having to charge her credit cards to put me through school" says Julian (last name withheld by request), a former University of Houston-Downtown (UHD) student who is taking the semester off to save up money for next semester. "I had to attend classes at Houston Community College last semester because there simply was not enough money to attend UHD. Now with my mom's cards maxed out, I have to take a semester off," Julian said.

Julian said that he has never filled out a FAFSA and does not know how to do so.

This seems like a difficult situation but it does not have to be, because it pays to fill out a FAFSA early. According to http:// www.FAFSA.com, the earlier a student submits an application for federal student aid, should consider when submitting a FAFSA. the better. No matter what the state deadline is to submit a FAFSA form, students are

There is no Pell Grant application, but rather the FAFSA covers all federal student

nancial aid in previous years, that student may want to file as independent, rather than a dependent student. The U.S. government



able to fill one out after Jan. 1 of every year.

Filling out an application early not only can bring federal financial aid, but also additional aid that is available at a first comefirst served basis.

UHD offers grant money to eligible students by garnishing a small percentage of every students tuition to give to students who present an additional need for academic expenses.

In addition, the different colleges at UHD offer their own scholarships to students who apply. When applying for financial aid, there are also little known facts that students funding. Any funding that a student is eligible for can be awarded with just the one application.

The FAFSA itself takes less than an hour to complete and it only requires your tax information as well as an estimation of how many college hours you plan to take in per semester. Students can fill out their FAFSA once their 2011 tax returns have been completed.

Most of the information submitted stays on the FAFSA website and applying the following year takes even less time.

If a student has been denied federal fi-

judges who will receive an award as well as the aid amount, based on the tax information provided by the applicant. If a student is filed as a dependant by his parents he or she may not receive funds, if the government determines that the parents are able to pay for tuition.

However, if a student files an independent tax return, the government may determine a greater need based on the students's income.

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Websites show opposition of SOPA and PIPA with blackouts

Uwire - While some students may be confused to find Wikipedia and other social media sites offline today, others stand with the sites in their opposition to recent antipiracy bills facing the House of Representatives.

Wikipedia, Reddit and the Cheezburger Network of social media websites began a 24-hour blackout today at midnight to protest the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and PROTECT IP Act (PIPA). Both acts would crack down on the sale of illegally downloaded material by forcing Internet service providers to block access to sites that violate U.S. copyright laws.

Members of the Wikipedia community and other sites believe these acts would "seriously damage the free and open Internet" by opening the way to further censorship, according to a statement published on the English Wikipedia's homepage. While SOPA is currently suspended from receiving a house vote, PIPA is still slated to go before the House of Representative for vote Tuesday, Jan. 24.

White House representatives came out against SOPA and PIPA in a written statement Saturday because the acts threatened a "dynamic, innovative global Internet."

U. Texas Democrats communications director André Treiber said the acts risk inhibiting creativity and the freedom of speech, agreeing with the White House's position.

"[SOPA] is stifling, too broad and has a shoot-first-ask-questions-later approach, as far as due process is concerned," Treiber

said. "As a whole, it is overreaching and is the equivalent of using dynamite when a scalpel is more appropriate."

Members of the political activist group, Fight for the Future, are standing with Wikipedia and other websites against the bills. Tiffiniy Cheng, co-founder of Fight for the Future, said if the bill was allowed to pass the United States could eventually become more like China.



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Information

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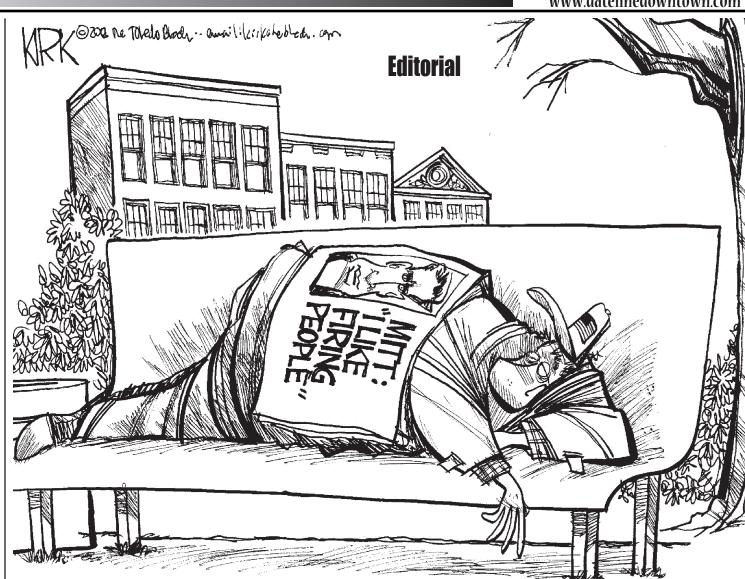
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Jan. 23- Feb. 6, 2012 Arts & Leisure **Dateline** : Downtown www.datelinedowntown.com Google offers new offers for keeping in touch

Taylor Luce

Staff Writer

The internet search engine Google released its new search format this January, "Search, plus Your World," which brings the opinions of friends and family to your daily web explorations.

The new format will show results not only from specific web content, but from people you know through Google's Search, plus Your World.

What does Google mean by "your world?" Well, normally Google uses the words you type in the search box to find what you might be looking for by comparing those words to its database of key words. When you turn on the Personal Content option, Google expands that database to include key words found on your friend's and family's Google+ profiles.

"Search, plus Your World" is made up of three new features, according to the official Google Blog: Personal Results, Profiles in

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To put it simply, if you work a part-time job, you probably present a greater need financially for academics. Any money left over after tuition is paid, will be given to the student to use toward food, clothing, transportation and housing.

Financial aid money is out there, the issue is that many do not take the time to apply for it and year after year, funds go unclaimed. Scholarships aid and grants, unlike loans, are free money given to students that never has to be paid back. The funds from financial aid such as the Pell Grant come from taxpayer money and is meant to help the underprivileged achieve their academic goals.

For students who want to take summer courses, there is even a Summer Pell Grant that students may apply toward the Summer session and these funds require a separate application, but any student who receives a Pell Grant for the previous Winter and Spring Semester should be eligible for the summer Pell Grant. The Summer Pell Grants covers 3 to 6 semester hours, roughly two classes and is only available for one session. A student who would like to attend another summer session will have to pay for those classes out of pocket.

Overall, the decision to reduce financial aid funds is a lose-lose situation for students, but a full-time student who presents a need can complete a degree on-time with little to no student debt. There is no need to settle for a community college or to skip a semester, if a student takes the time to apply early every year they attend plan to attend college.

For more information, please visit http:// www.pellgranteligibility.net. Students who are ready to apply a http://www.fafsa.ed.gov



Search, and People and Pages. Personal Results will take results found within a friend or family member's Google+

posts and deliver them to you in your search results, including photos related to your search. If you want to look at photos of your new nephew without skimming through all of your family and friend's profile albums, Search plus would be more than happy to do that for you, bringing up only his face in the search results.

People and Pages is a feature that lets you find other like-minded people in a certain subject by connecting you with communities where your search query is a common topic of discussion.

The third feature, Profiles in Search, will help you track down a friend's Google+ profile as well as any relevant web pages that may be associated with that person.

For those times when you don't care about your friend's opinions, Google is also incorporating an on/off toggle switch, which will omit any Personal Content results; it also omits personalized search results based on your web history.

The Personal Content option can also be controlled via the Search Settings menu, so you can choose to never see what other people are thinking about your search subject.

If you're interested in trying out the new features, just go to http://google.com.

What to do with all of those unwanted gift cards

AARON STOMMEL

Staff Writer

Buy, sell and exchange Website, http:// Plasticjungle.com (Plasticjungle), offers different options for those unwanted or unused gift cards.

For students needing to purchase textbooks, meals or clothing gift cards, are a much needed blessing. Yet, sometimes gift card receivers are left confused when the non-coffee drinker receives a gift card to Starbucks, when the person on a diet is given a gift card to McDonald's or when someone only interested in the latest fashions is offered a gift card to Old Navy.

It used to be that the only options were to use the gift card for items not really wanted, to regift the card or buy a gift for someone else, but not anymore.

Visitors to Plastic Jungle can sell their unwanted gift cards to the site which will sell those gift cards at a discount to others. The Website has been featured in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and featured on "Good Morning America."

According to Plasticjungle, all a user needs to do is "Enter details about your gift card - the retailer, gift card number, etc. We'll tell you how much we'll pay you for the gift card. We pay up to 92 percent of the gift card's value."

Users can choose from multiple payment options, including cashier's check, Amazon. com gift card via Email or a deposit into PayPal account. Then, if applicable the user sends their gift card to Plastic Jungle. They [Plasticjungle.com] even pay for the ship-

Once the gift card is received they will verify the value and then pay the sender.

Along with selling gift cards users of the Plasticjungle also buys discounted gift cards from over 400 retailers, including Wal-Mart, Shell, Home Depot and Target. Once a gift card is selected, depending on the retailer, a user can pay up to 35 percent less than the current face value. Payment options include credit card or PayPal. Once payment is received, the gift card will be mailed to the buyer or an eCode will be Emailed.

Plasticjungle guarantees all transactions,

always has free shipping with no fees and no expiration dates. If a user has any problems they can call or Email customer service which promises to resolve it immediately.

Plastic Jungle "is the Web's largest secured gift card exchange." Discounted gift cards can be purchased for up to 35 percent off or sold for up to 92 percent of the face value.

Any unused gift cards can be sold for cash, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Visitors can sign up for notifications in order to be the first to know when the gift cards they want are available to purchase.





Exercise can promote memory

Uwire-While students may forget to work out regularly, a recent study on cognitive health suggested that students who exercise may have better memory.

The University of Dublin study, cited in a Nov. 30 article in *The New York Times*, suggested that physical activity increases the level of the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BONF)protein that improves memory. The researchers tested male college students who exercised to varying degrees on their performance on memory tests. old adage, 'Healthy body, healthy mind' is apt," said Bunce.

Students said they have heard that exercise can prevent future diseases, such as Alzheimer's, but never knew physical activity could improve your mental processes in the mean time.

"Now that I know it's not just for the aging population, I might test out the theory for myself," said Harsha Reddy, a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Craig Baldino, a BU sophomore, said this study has prompted him to consider his dai-



Courtesy Photo

Jamie Bunce, a Boston University researcher who is not affiliated with the original study, said the exact role this protein plays in cognition and recall is still being researched.

"This study raises some interesting questions about the way exercise affects cognitive performance," Bunce said. "It's still unclear what role BDNF is playing, as the study shows increases in BDNF levels didn't necessarily correlate with more accurate memory performance."

Karin Schon, senior postdoctoral associate at the BU Cognitive Neuroimaging Lab, said researchers at the BU Center for Memory and Brain are looking into the effects of cardio-respiratory fitness on memory-task performance.

The study suggested that a healthy lifestyle consisting of regular exercise promotes good brain health and may even protect individuals from neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's Disease, according to the Times.

"The more we learn, the more it seems the

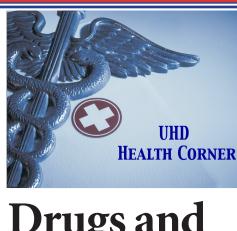
ly routine's impact on his academic performance, especially as the Fall semester's final grades approach.

"When I work out I definitely feel rejuvenated and more productive," Baldino said. "I'm going to rethink my daily schedule if working out more would help me retain more information and bring up my GPA."

BU sophomore Michalis Michaelides, however, said while exercise may improve your temporary cognition and memory, it probably does not mean that you will be a better or more productive student.

Despite what the study suggests about BDNF protein levels impact on memory, Bunce said she thinks students should not be quick to make assumptions about how much exercise can affect their academic performances.

"While the authors may argue that acute exercise is enough to increase performance on a memory task, I would hazard a guess that sprinting to your final, in and of itself, may not be sufficient to get that A," Bunce said.



Drugs and your health

Any visit to your health care provider is an important visit - even routine screening visits such as the well woman examination or a vaccination. Your health care provider needs to know about any updates with your health status, including visits to other providers, hospitalizations, immunizations or medication changes. Other things to mention include health related behaviours such as exercise, diet, smoking, alcohol use or drug use as all of these are important factors for the health care provider to know about.

One of the most critical items to mention to your health care provider is the use of all prescribed medications, even those prescribed by other health care providers. If you bring an accurate list of all medications and dosages that will help the provider in the case they want to change or add a medication. If you don't have a list prepared, bring in the medications in their original containers from the pharmacy. The phar-

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macy label will contain the information the provider will need for your visit.

An area that patients often forget to mention is the use of over the counter medications, herbal preparations or any nutritional supplements you may be taking. Many over the counter products can counteract the beneficial effects of prescribed medications even when the over the counter product is used as directed.

A good example of this interaction is using a decongestant, such as Sudafed, or a cold-and-cough preparation such as Nyquil that contains an ingredient called pseudoephedrine. If a person has high blood pressure and is taking medication to control the high blood pressure, the pseudoephedrine will raise the blood pressure and counteract the beneficial effect of the blood pressure medication. However, unless the patient mentions the use of the decongestant to the health care provider, the provider may be trying to treat a high blood pressure reading raised due to the effect of the decongestant. Even some herbal preparations can raise blood pressure, but many people don't necessarily know the side effects of herbs, as they are not required to be listed on the container.

The next time you visit your health care provider, help the provider help you by mentioning all of the health related activities that have changed from the previous visits-even the seemingly mundane, and all over the counter products, herbal products, or nutritional supplements that you may be taking, even if occasionally used.

Robert Hanks, PhD, FNP-BC, RNC Assistant Professor University of Texas Health Science Center Houston School of Nursing Department of Family Health

Studies show effects of Facebook on GPA

Uwire-During the intensive studying and last minute cram sessions of finals week, students often blame Facebook for interfering in their study efforts and fueling procrastination.

While Facebook might not be helpful when it comes to studying, it doesn't mean students' grades have to suffer. According to a recent study, some types of Facebook use actually correlate with higher grade point averages.

Published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, the study analyzed 1,839 college students' grades and Facebook usage.

These students reported spending an average of 106 minutes each day on Facebook. How those 106 minutes of time on Facebook were spent determines the kind of impact Facebook has on the student, according to the study.

Engaging in activities that involve collecting and sharing information, such as sharing informative links, proved to have a positive impact on students' GPAs. Posting frequent status updates and using Facebook chat, however, were determined to negatively affect GPA.

This distinction is one that can also be seen offline and around campus.

"Those students who spend more time so-

cializing to the exclusion of engaging in academic work have poor academic outcomes," the study said.

At the same time, those who post links and use Facebook to communicate useful information are more likely to be engaged with the outside environment and in the classroom, the study said.

Penn State Learning Community Associate, Leagh Anderson said that the impact on GPA could also depend on when the students are accessing Facebook. Those who are frequently updating their statuses are often those who are on Facebook intermittently throughout the day.

This intermittent and frequent checking of Facebook can interfere with the time needed to digest and absorb course material, Anderson said.

Students Greg Brulo and Amy Niedbala both reported spending up to two hours each day on Facebook. Niedbala said that it sometimes interferes with her studying, but they both agreed that it does not have any sort of negative impact on their grades.

"I use Facebook to take a break so I don't get mentally drained while studying," Brulo said. "My time management has a stronger correlation to my grades than Facebook.

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The history of Black History Month

AMANDA WHITE

Staff Writer

February has been a month dedicated to celebrating African American history for thirty-five years, and although most Americans are aware of Black History Month, and use the time to embrace black culture, the history of how Black History Month evolved remains unknown to most.

Black history month is a very important time in American history, the history behind it was actually formed quickly, and it is also easy to understand.

The origins of Black History Month date back to 1915, which was the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment that outlawed slavery. A black historian of the time named Carter G. Woodson founded an organization called the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH). The goal of the ASNLH was to highlight the achievements and accomplishments of black Americans

and people of African descent. As the organization grew in popularity, it established and began observing Negro History Week in February 1926.

Negro History Week was set in the second week of February to coincide with Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass' birthdays (two men who were directly involved with the emancipation of African Americans from slavery). As the decades continued after the 1920s, schools, community organizations and mayors in major cities began to recognize Negro History Week as an annual American tradition.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Negro History Week became extended into a month long celebration on many college campuses.

In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially designated February as Black History Month. President Ford emphasized that it is important for Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history".

Since 1976, every president has observed and designated February as Black History Month

Over its nearly four-decade lifespan, every Black History Month has been based on a theme central to black history and culture. Over the years, Black History Month themes have ranged from African American success in politics, economics and education. The theme of 2012 is Black Women in American Culture and History.

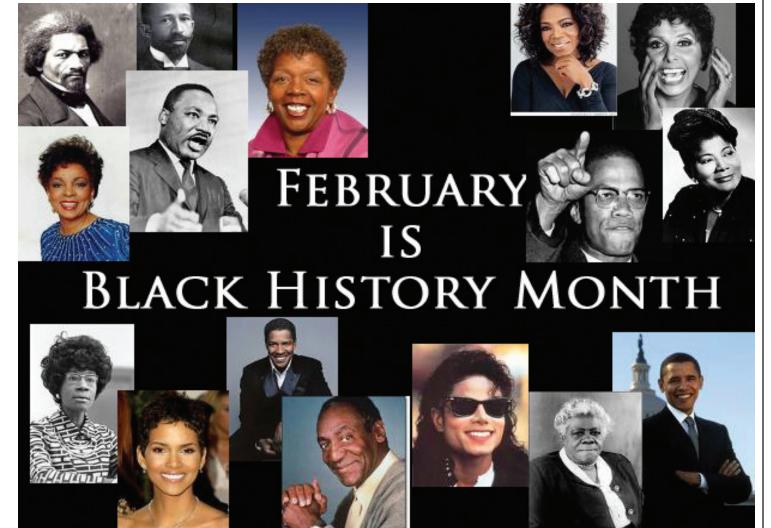
This year's theme will focus on the roles and contributions of African American women to their culture and our nation. According to the Association for the study of African American Life and History, the story of black women in American history is unique. "Subjected to a long history of stereotypes about their sexuality, morality, spirituality, and intellect, African American Women have never succumbed to victimhood and have pressed forward to uplift themselves, their families, and their community."



Panel: "I Am Not My Hair or Am I?"

When: Feb. 1, 7p.m. to 10p.m. Where: Room A-350 Cost: Free

Opening Reception of African Tribal Art in Context: Then and Now When: Feb. 2, 6 p.m.to 8 p.m. Exhibit open Feb. 2 to Mar. 15 Where: O'Kane Gallery Cost: Free



1 SOPA, continuted from pa,

"This strike is about a struggle between a people with a means to communicate freely and the government's ability to threaten it," said Cheng. "It's a fundamental fight for free speech.'

Something, however, must be done to protect the industries that are hurt by illegal activity on the web, said radio-televisionfilm junior Eric Antonowicz.

"Both sides of the issue have salient points," Antonowicz said. "You can't just keep breaking copyright law but at the same time I don't think that censorship is right in any way. I'm glad that they are taking a stand against it but I also think that something has to be done. Copyright gets broken way too much and the industry loses a lot of money."

This type of Internet protest is historically significant given the size, credibility and usage of Wikipedia and Google, said government lecturer James Henson.

"SOPA is activating a libertarian streak in Internet users that was the stance 10 to 15 years ago that fell on the wayside as the Internet had become a corporate enterprise," Henson said. "I don't think that the world is

Event When: Feb. 7, 11:30 a.m. to 1p.m. Where: Cullen Robertson Auditorium Cost: Free

Black History Month Speaking

Writer's Bloc Poetry Club When: Feb 8, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Where: Third floor Coffee House Cost: Free

Black History Month Documentary When: Feb 15, 4p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Where: N-1099 Cost: Free

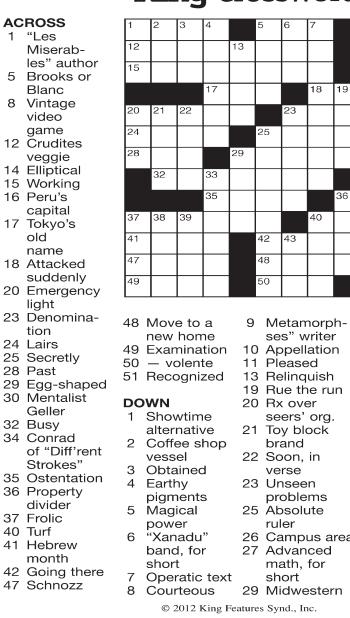
Black History Month Speaking Event When: Feb 21, 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Where: A-350 Cost: Free

going to stop turning because you can't use Wikipedia, but I do think it's going to raise visibility. It's still to be seen whether or not this is going to catch on."



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King Crossword



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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: N equals R

ASNROS MTIVONUIRXUY UWOU WTJG SXGRNZRON MTSJG AR NRLRNNRG UT OY GNOZRNY LTN

GNOZRNY.

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CryptoQuote

AXYDLBAAXR is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.

> QX Q IWPOWUWB OG \mathbf{O}

KEGVHEQPOHF HCTEYC ОН

XQSWL XW UWBF PTGWPF.

W.U. PEVQL

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

		7	1				4		
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1					9			6	
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		6			5		3		
Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way									

that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: **

★★ Challenging ★ Moderate $\star \star \star$ HOO BOY!

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Art & Leisure

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The Back Page

UHD SPORTS & FITNESS

PLAYERS

TEAMS

NEEDED

INTRAMURAL

BASKETBALL LEAGUE

Men's & Women's

ENTRY PERIOD JANUARY 17 - JANUARY 29

ENTRY FEE \$20.00 PER TEAM

START DATE & LOCATION

SUNDAY JANUARY 29 AT 1PM THE INTRAMURAL BASKETBALL LEAGUE WILL LAST ABOUT 5 WEEKS AND WILL TAKE PLACE ON SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN THE STUDENT LIFE CENTER

DPEN TO CURRENT UHD STUDENTS, FACULTY, STAFF AND OTHER SPORTS & FITNESS MEMBERS. To register, stop by the Student Life Center or Call 713-221-8225 Visit us at www.uhd.edu/sports&fitenss

THE SPORTS & FITNESS TOMEN'S CLUB VOLLETEEN SPRING 2012

THINK YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES? TRYOUTS ON JAN. 25 @ 6PM PRACTICES ON MONDAYS 6-8PM 6 FRIDAYS 5-7PM GAMES WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

REGISTER ONLINE CENTRE Facebook