What a special day here in St. Pete! Amidst all the activities, one stands out that I must tell you about.

Our cheerleaders rose to the occasion this afternoon at St. Pete Beach. They were pitted against Marshall’s cheerleaders in a classic beach tug-of-war contest.

FIU had a great day of fun, spirited competition, winning the Battle of the Bands, the Cheerleader Tug of War, and the Wing-Eating Contest.

Our FIU team started out slowly, giving ground grudgingly to the determined and equally balanced Marshall opponent. Marshall’s fans — outnumbering the FIU onlookers 2:1, used a common voice to urge on their straining team. FIU gave ground to the point of near defeat, as both teams exhaustingly pulled and yanked the rope across the hot sun-filled beach.

Then, as if injected with adrenalin, our FIU cheerleaders took on a new life! What had happened? Out of nowhere, dozens of blue-shirted FIU fans — the notorious 12th Panther — appeared. Initially chanting “go, go, go,” the voice then changed to “F-I-U! F-I-U! “ as if they were one, rather than many. At that precise moment, the taut rope
started moving in the opposite direction, pulling an oxygen-starved Marshall troop across the line, allowing the referee to declare an FIU victory, and leaving the Thundering Herd’s followers in stunned disbelief.