

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 17
April 23, 2003

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AUSU Anniversary AGM

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Why Marry At All?

Prior Learning Assessment

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THE VOICE

April 23, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 17

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CLASSIFIEDS!



We love to hear from you! Please continue providing your opinions, comments and ideas; any submissions can be sent to voice@ausu.org. Please indicate if we may publish your letter.

Dear Ms Editor of the Voice;

First let's start out by saying that I really like the new website. Well done!

I read Ms Jabbour's article on the Tuition Hikes. I have to say that I agree with the Board that AU should cut all tuition for all students. Information Technology does make it cheaper to deliver their education. However, the comments made by the University regarding:

"That we are already competitively priced in Alberta, and lowering fees in this province would be harmful to our positioning - underpricing distance education would damage our credibility."

This is a weak position. If it's cheaper then lower tuition and AU should have more confidence in their curriculum than that. I believe in AU why doesn't AU? If the University of Toronto raises its tuition to \$22,000 does that mean that AU will too? Maybe AU should be using the power of information technology to lower its tuitions and attracting more Ontario students.

BUT! and a big but is that tuition is not the same for all students. One thing that the report didn't take into account is the cost for writing tests. I don't have a AU testing centre in Ontario like most people in Alberta. I have to pay \$25 per test! So this is something that I think should also be taken into consideration.

Here in Ontario the Ernie Eves government is hanging on! Like in Quebec there will be a change in government. A Ontario Liberal government will freeze all tuition for the next 2 years. I want to stress to students again and if possible if this could be passed on to Ms Jabbour "You get the government you elect you get the government you deserve." Albertans gave the Klein government an overwhelming large majority. What you pay in tuition is your problem not mine. I can't vote that redneck out so he is your problem.

The board that represents students does not reflect the student body. This should be very strongly noted. Minutes could be sent to out of province students for feedback like I am doing now.

THE VOICE

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Tuition has to be competitive for me as compared with Ontario. Raising tuition is a big issue for me. I will look for other avenues if I don't get a fair deal as compared with other Ontario Universities. Unlike Alberta I am working very hard to vote this neo-right redneck out of office!

Arthur Setka
Peterborough, Ontario

Arthur,

You make a good point about testing costs. I don't know how much AU takes this into consideration, but I'm sure for many students it is a factor. If tuition for a course is, say, \$500 and someone pays another \$50 for exams, then their tuition is effectively 10% higher. It may also affect how students select courses. Some AU courses don't have invigilated exams, while others have two invigilated exams in a single semester. It would be great if AU could work out agreements with other schools to provide low-cost testing space for AU students.

Regarding AUSU: Anyone who wishes to attend a council meeting may contact ausu@ausu.org and ask them to book you a teleconference line. You can do this from anywhere in the world. If you are interested in receiving minutes of the meetings, you may contact the office about that as well.

Regarding Mr. Klein: Albertans must consider many issues, including education funding, when voting for Premier, whereas out-of-province AU students may judge the Alberta government on this one issue alone. We don't have the luxury of simply voting for the candidate with the best education policy.

That said, I'm as baffled as anyone as to who is voting for Mr. Klein. I'm glad you like the new website!



For a long time, Distance Education [DE] was considered inferior to traditional learning. That stigma is slowly being eroded, and AU has played a large role in legitimizing DE. For the next Sounding Off, tell me about your experiences as an AU student. How do people react to when they hear that you are attending AU? Have those reactions changed over time? I'll go first...

Some people still think that AU is that certificate-mill that Sally Struthers hawks on TV. In the first couple of years I was repeatedly refused student discounts when I tried to use my lame cardboard AU ID card. Once I got a plastic photo ID from AUSU, things improved a lot. My bank, however, refused me student rates because they "don't count community colleges." I asked, "How many community colleges give out master's degrees?" In the last couple of years, however, people have been responding with more interest when I mention AU. The worst bias used to come from students of other universities, but just last month the editor of an eastern Canadian university newspaper asked me for more info about taking courses at AU. It felt great! Each year, more people know what AU is, and I get more respect for working toward my degree, and less flak for going to a 'correspondence' school.

What have your experiences been like?

Send your responses to voice@ausu.org with Sounding Off in the subject line. Please indicate if I may print your name.

EDITORIAL PAGES

THIS WEEK

We have a really big issue for you this week, including contributions from two new writers [Trevor Siwak and Donna Koziak], the official announcement for the Athabasca University Students' Union 10th Anniversary AGM [and no, you don't have to live in Edmonton to be involved], a letter from a student, and a lot more!

If anyone planned to respond to AU's request for input on their website but didn't get around to it, you have until the 25th of April. For more information, see the News section of this issue.

CONCERNS OVER TUTOR EVALUATION FORMS

This week I received a disturbing letter from a student. It described an occurrence that should never happen to an AU student, and one to which I am all too vulnerable.

I can't print the letter in its entirety, because the student was understandably concerned about revealing her identity, but she wanted to let other students know what happened to her. I should note at this point that I can't back up the claims of the letter, but I'll give you what information I have.

The gist of the letter was this: This student – I'll call her Jane – filled out a tutor evaluation form which was sent to her upon completion of her course. She was honest on the form, and mentioned a few problems that she had encountered with her tutor. About a week after she returned the form, she received "a very unpleasant phone call from the tutor involved. Although he did not specifically say anything inappropriate, he did raise his voice and seemed angry and very defensive." To add to the unpleasantness, Jane is set to enrol in another course within the same faculty, and believes that she may get the same tutor again. She is understandably concerned that this tutor may be biased against her because of the incident.

I might also add that even if the tutor is not biased, she would be rather uncomfortable telephoning this tutor for assistance.

This is the first report I have heard of a tutor contacting a student about an evaluation, and clearly it is inappropriate. The question is, how did the tutor know who had sent in the form?

I have heard a few times from AU students that the tutor evaluation forms are sent to tutors. After speaking with Cindy Kilborn in tutor services, I found out that this was the case quite some time ago, but it is no longer true. Also, at one time the forms were pre labelled with the student's identifying information, but this is also no longer true [although Jane tells me that her form had a sticker with her name and ID number on it]. The new forms were apparently only just introduced, so it's possible that Jane received the old form.

It used to be that there were two forms – one which asked about features of the course, and one which asked about tutor support. The new form combines the two. According to Cindy, the older forms had a message on the top clearly stating how the information on the form would be used, and to whom it would be sent. When the forms were being sent to tutors she says they were clearly marked with this information. Now that tutor services has moved to providing tutors with aggregate reports only, the new forms are said to contain a notice indicating that this is how the information will be used. I have not received an evaluation form in quite some time, so I can't confirm what is written on them. For the record I don't recall a notice like this on the forms I did receive a couple of years ago, but I can't claim that my memory is perfect. I have one stuffed away somewhere in my files – I'll find it eventually.

I have, however, heard from an AU tutor [not directly] that the evaluation information is indeed compiled into a report and sent out every few months for the tutor's reference. This being the case, however, it's hard to explain why Jane was contacted so quickly by her tutor, as you would expect there would be a delay between the time the form is received by tutor services, the data processed, and a compiled report prepared for the tutor. As the reports are only sent out every few months, it seems strange that Jane was contacted within a week.

I can't say how this would have happened, and I can only speculate as to how the tutor became aware of who had sent in the negative evaluation. Perhaps the tutor did somehow get a peek at the original form, but it is just as likely that he surmised who the complainant was based on details that were provided. It could even be that this tutor has only a small number of students, and making the connection was easy.

There is no reason to believe at this time that the information was in any way mishandled by Tutor services, though I think it's important that students are aware that there is this potential for trouble. For the record, Cindy Kilborn strongly encourages any student encountering a problem of this kind – or any tutor related problem – to contact Tutor Services so that the problem can be addressed. Tutors are not permitted to use the evaluation information to confront students who complain.

While it is not clear how the tutor found out about Jane's review, what is clear is that his actions were reprehensible. To contact a student about a confidential evaluation, even if the student's identity can be ascertained, is clearly inappropriate. First there is the issue of confidential contact information. In order for tutors to do their jobs, they have to have access to a student's home address, phone number, and possibly their email address. There is an understanding, however, that this information is only to be used for course related purposes. Confronting a student about an evaluation is clearly a misuse of that information.

Second, there is the nature of the student/tutor relationship. Students and instructors are not peers. There is an inherent imbalance in the relationship, because students are so reliant on a tutor's approval of their work. When a tutor calls to express anger or disapproval of a student, it amounts to bullying. This behaviour would be improper even from a peer or a subordinate, such as if a Denny's waitress called you about something you printed on a feedback card. In the future, anyone in Jane's situation would probably not fill out a review on this tutor [or perhaps any other], or if she does, it will only contain positive comments. I can't imagine any tutor not being aware how much power they have over students, or how distressing such a confrontation might be.

It also must be noted that when a tutor uses a student's home phone number to confront them on a matter like this, a student might feel quite threatened, knowing that this unprofessional person also has their home address and other private information.

Fortunately I suspect that this tutor is the exception, and that most would never behave like this. Tutors are, in general, educated, mature, and intelligent people. However, students might be concerned that if they fill out a negative review and their identity becomes known, that they may not be marked fairly in the future even if they never hear from the angry tutor.

I have to admit that I have this concern, because I've filled out a few negative reviews in the past. I have also filled out many positive ones, and strongly encouraged other students to fill out the forms. I would hate to see people stop doing so, because this type of review can be extremely valuable in helping the university track tutor performance, and in ensuring top quality service for students. Because AU tutors work at a distance, this is really the only way to know how satisfied students are.

While I cannot say for sure what went wrong with Jane's evaluation form, I can tell you that according to Tutor Services the new system should increase the confidentiality of the reports, and reduce any chance of this type of occurrence. I would encourage any student who has had a problem of this kind, or any problem with the tutor at all, to contact tutor services, but I would also encourage anyone who said a problem to contact the students' union at ausu@ausu.org as the union would like to track these problems, and can provide a means for your issue to be investigated without you having to contact university directly.

Also, if you have received an evaluation form but you are not done the course, you may delay filling it out until the course is completed, or you may choose to simply discard the form. Sending it in is always optional.

I'll try to provide an update on this issue in the coming weeks.

I hope you all had a great long weekend!

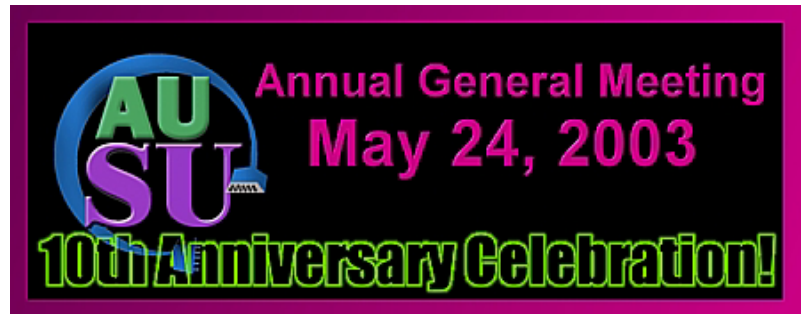
Tamra Ross Low - Editor in Chief
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AUSU's 10th Anniversary AGM

What is it all about?

On May 24, 2003, AUSU will be hosting our 10th anniversary Annual General Meeting in Edmonton. We hope many students will be in attendance. So you may be wondering, what is an AGM and why is this one special?

As an organization incorporated under Alberta's Societies Act* we are required by law to have an Annual General Meeting each year. This is done to make an accounting to our members, particularly regarding the financial statements for the previous fiscal year. It is also the only occasion, besides elections, where each student member of AUSU is allowed to vote.



This year students will be voting on two main items. The first is the adoption of the financial statements for the fiscal year 2001-2002. Students will have the opportunity to review the financial statements and ask questions of the VP Finance.

The second is the approval of a new set of bylaws. Bylaws are the foundation of any organization, and AUSU has been working with bylaws created when we first became an organization back in 1992. Although these were revised in 1996, many of the articles are outdated and no longer applicable to how we conduct our business. During the last few years, several attempts have been made to write new bylaws, but unfortunately each set was far too detailed and unwieldy and we kept ending up back at the "drawing board".

After doing some research into the whole bylaw process and examining the structure of our board, we decided that simplicity was the key. Our goal became to create a streamlined set of bylaws; one that covers only the basic, most important issues of board governance. The only things that should be defined in bylaws are items that we are not likely to change in the near future. All other matters will be defined in policy. After many months of work by the legislative committee and AUSU Council, we finally have a proposed set of bylaws that will be on the agenda for the AGM. To view a pdf document of the proposed bylaws, click [here](#) [you will require the free

Acrobat reader to use this file. See the Voice pdf archives page for information on obtaining this program.]



Student members of AUSU who are in attendance at the AGM will have the opportunity to discuss these bylaws, and amendments can be suggested before they are approved.

This AGM, of course, is of special interest since it represents our 10th anniversary. AUSU was incorporated in late 1992 by a group of students who worked alongside the university to create a student union that would be an independent advocate for students, and our first AGM was held in November 1993. Since its inception, AUSU has undergone many transitions and suffered many growing pains.

Our organization has had a sometimes turbulent history, but a very interesting one, and we will be presenting a brief history and overview of the first 10 years at the AGM.

Council reports are also a feature of the AGM. Each Council member will be presenting a report of their activities over the past year, along with their plans and goals for the future of AUSU. Students in attendance will have the opportunity to question Council members and offer suggestions regarding what they would like to see from their student union. You can check out the AGM reports from the 2000-2001 meeting, held in September of 2002, [here](#).

We are also very pleased to have AU President Dominique Abrioux, and AU Acting VP Academic, Judith Hughes, in attendance this year. Both Dominique and Judith were part of the AU community when AUSU was formed ten years ago, and they have provided invaluable support and guidance through the years. This is your opportunity to meet them both!

After the AGM, we will be holding an informal reception, including a light supper and cash bar, at which students will have an opportunity to socialize. Keep watching the [AGM page](#) as details are finalized regarding location and events planned.

Please join us for this very special 10th Anniversary Annual General Meeting!

Debbie Jabbour, President
Athabasca University Students' Union

**AUSU is governed by the Societies' Act currently, rather than the Universities' Act. Neither Athabasca University nor the University of Lethbridge are part of the Universities' Act, but exist through a government Order in Council. AU has made application for inclusion in the Universities' Act, an important move which will place all four of Alberta's universities under the same regulations. This is expected to occur during the fall of 2003. At that time, AUSU's legal status will also be affected, since we will be included under the Universities' Act as well. Details on the Universities' Act are available at: <http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/Documents/acts/U03.CFM>*

TUITION INCREASES AND NEWS ABOUT UNIVERSITY FUNDING AT ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

The Extension Policy

By Debbie Jabbour



This week Debbie explains the proposed changes to the course extension policy at AU [a subject on which many readers voiced their opinions in the [March 19th Sounding Off](#). Perhaps some of you went the extra step and contacted the university with your concerns as well, because it appears that the policy is being reconsidered, as Debbie explains.

For the rest of the articles in this series about AU tuition and fee increases, see the [April 2nd \(v11 i14\)](#), [April 9th \(v11 i15\)](#), and [April 16th \(v11 i16\)](#), editions of The Voice.

At the Academic Council [AUAC] meeting of March 5, a Notice of Motion from Athabasca University VP Academic Alan Davis was on the agenda. This indicated an item that would be placed on the upcoming agenda for the April 16, 2003 AUAC meeting. The Notice of motion concerned a proposed change to the current course extension policy that would require that students apply for an extension a full month ahead of the contract date. Currently students can apply for an extension right up to the last day of their contract, and according to AU Tutor Services, the majority of students have been doing this, extending during the final four days of the month. This situation has been placing tutors in an overload situation and creating extra work for Tutor Services, therefore they had proposed that students be required to request (and pay for) extensions a month in advance as a solution to the problem.

AUAC tutor rep, Nanci Langford, was sitting next to me at that meeting, and I immediately turned to her to ask what her viewpoint was on the matter. I indicated to her that I felt this proposed change went against the idea of flexibility and the removal of barriers, and that I felt it would create a hardship for students and result in increased non-completion rates. I asked if she thought tutors were in support of this. She agreed with me that the policy would create problems for students, and it was her opinion that tutors would not be agreeable to seeing this implemented, since they support policies that contribute to student success, not failure. After a brief discussion, we decided to take the issue back to our respective members. We would ask what everyone thought about the proposal, and we would seek suggestions regarding some better alternatives to the overload situation than what was being proposed.

Alan Davis was advised that both AUSU and CUPE (the tutor's union) had concerns about this proposal, and that we would be opposing its implementation. He indicated that the proposal was being done at the request of tutors, and that it had already passed several sub-committees and been approved by each. I later confirmed with Shirley Barg, our AUSU rep on one of those sub-committees (Student Services Group), that she had objected to the proposal at that committee, but that her objection had been overruled. She had asked that the committee look at alternatives, such as bringing back "incomplete status," an arrangement that was in existence at the university several years ago that allowed students an unpaid extension without access to tutor support. The other sub-committee, Council of Centre Chairs, has no student representative. Alan requested that we meet with him, and that we provide any information or suggestions that we might have as to alternate ways to handle the matter. A meeting was set for April 10.

In the subsequent weeks, AUSU made an effort to gather student feedback on the proposal, and CUPE polled the tutors to see what they thought about it as well. Students were overwhelmingly against this change, citing a

variety of reasons why this would negatively impact us. We also came up with several suggestions for other ways AU could solve the problem of tutor overload, and AUSU drafted a formal policy to state our stand on the issue (see below).

CUPE did the same, and a few days before the April 10th meeting, I spoke with Nanci and Donna Koziak (CUPE representative) to compare notes. As Nanci and I had suspected, both students and tutors were very much in agreement on the issue. We all wanted the extension policy left as is, and both groups had come up with some excellent suggestions that we felt AU should consider. The suggestion we felt made the most sense was to plan in advance for extensions by building some extra room in each tutor block [the block system is explained in detail below]. This was based on the idea that there is always a minimum percentage of students who will extend in any given course, therefore room could always be left in advance for this. Another suggestion was to provide a financial incentive to students who extended early, such as a reduction in the extension fee.

The tutors were not in favour of bringing back “incomplete status” as an option. This was because in the past, even though incomplete status meant students were not allowed access to tutorial support, many would still continue to contact their tutors. Rather than turn down these student requests for help, tutors would end up working for free. AUSU suggested that rather than incomplete status, an option be considered that would allow students 15 days after the contract date to write their exam. This would mean students would be required to have all their course work done by the contract date, but if unexpected circumstances came up, they could delay the writing of the exam without having to pay for an extension. Since tutors are paid for marking assignments and exams separately, this would not impact their workload the way an extension does.

Another option both CUPE and AUSU were very much in favour of was the idea of reminding students a month in advance that their contract end date was coming up, and asking them to extend immediately if they felt they would not be able to complete the course in time. Many tutors already do this, and students have reported that this is very effective (and greatly appreciated) in motivating them to get their course work done. Such an arrangement could even be programmed into the Banner registration system, so that an email reminder would be automatically generated.

On April 10, Alan and Cindy Kilbourne (Tutor Services) met with myself, Nanci, and Donna. We presented our concerns about the negative impact this policy change would have on students, and offered our alternative suggestions. Alan was very amenable to trying out some different options. Cindy, however, was quite adamant that there was no other way to solve the tutor overload situation than implementing the policy. She provided a detailed explanation of how the whole process works, and it was quite informative.

The Academic Council agenda for April 16 also provided further background to the matter, and provided insight into why we have tutor overloads, and why students are often met with constant busy signals when trying to contact their tutors. According to the terms of the CUPE contract with AU, students are allocated to tutors in blocks. The number of students allowed per block varies from course to course. An individual tutor may have, for example, six spots in a course block, but only four registrations. When new registrations are received, the Banner registration system automatically distributes these students to tutors who have free space in their block. This is completed by the 10th of each month, which is the course registration deadline. However, at the end of the month, several of that tutor's current students may extend, placing the tutor in an overload situation. Because there is currently no way to predict which students will extend, some tutors may end up with far more extensions than others. Tutors are paid for the overloads, however, it is still a frustrating situation when they are unexpectedly allocated extra students.

Hiring new tutors is also subject to the block structure, since new tutors can only be hired once a minimum block of ½ has been reached, and increases are always done in ¼ block increments. Existing tutors are always given seniority preference when adding new blocks, and it is only once all existing tutor blocks are completely

full that a new tutor can be hired. This means that, for example, in a course with blocks of eight students each, four new enrollments must occur before a new block will be created, and no new tutors will be hired unless all existing tutors are unable or unwilling to take on the extra hours. From discussions with Nanci and Donna, I also learned that tutor hours are allocated according to the block system, and that many tutors feel their telephone hours are inadequate.

In our meeting with Alan Davis, we acknowledged the need to solve the problem, but stated that we felt that implementing our suggestions would do this – without the negative impact that requiring one month's advance notice for extensions would have on students. Rather than punishing students who extend in the last four days, we urged the university to accept that this is what students want, and we asked AU to find ways to be flexible and accommodating in accordance with the mission statement. Athabasca University is built on the notion of flexibility, a university that meets the needs of individual students. The reality is that students will keep trying to finish their courses right up to the last minute, only extending as a last resort. Donna pointed out that she would much rather see students have the option of extending at the last minute rather than seeing them dump all their assignments on their tutor in the last day in a desperate attempt to meet the deadline. We asked the university to plan in advance for extensions and encourage students to finish on time. Sending reminders would not only help course completion rates, it would also be a proactive, positive way for the university and tutors to maintain communication with students.

Although we felt our suggestions were excellent ones, and although Alan seemed quite favourable, Cindy's insistence that there was no other way to deal with the problem left us feeling that the new policy would be implemented regardless of our objections. At the conclusion of the meeting, Alan said he would be discussing the matter with AU President Dominique Abrioux and would advise us regarding the final decision. I went home from that meeting very discouraged and advised AUSU Council that I felt we had been unsuccessful in our proposal.

Several days later, we were pleasantly surprised! I received an email from Alan Davis, in which he advised us that the proposed policy on course extensions was being pulled and that the university would be looking at other ways to solve the problem.

Although we were very pleased that this policy will not be implemented, it remains to be seen whether alternative measures will solve the problem. Overall, the conclusion was reached that the whole issue of course extensions was one that should be investigated and studied further. Some questions worthy of further study:

- Do some tutors have higher rates of extension than others? Do some tutors have very low rates of extension? If so, what would be the factors causing this and could this information be used to improve student retention rates?
- Do reminders work? Do they result in higher course completion rates?
- How can tutors and students work together to improve successful completion of courses?
- Is the current tutor block system to blame for tutor overload problems? Is there a possibility that a per-student system could be agreed upon by AU and the tutors?

Nanci suggested to AU that she would be willing to undertake a study to seek answers in this regard, and I offered our assistance.

Student awareness is also an important factor. Understanding how the system works, and seeing things from the tutor perspective, can be helpful in reducing frustration on both sides. It is apparent that the current system has many flaws. It was also encouraging to note that when AUSU and the tutors communicated, we were successful in finding potential solutions. For this reason I would encourage students to continue to come

forward with issues of concern, whether they involve tutors, coursework, or a problem with the university itself. Problems can only be solved if we know they exist.

It's been a difficult few months, and our advocacy on behalf of students has not always been successful. We are facing a 7.3% tuition increase, but out-of-province students will receive a benefit in the reduction of their fee. We were unsuccessful in having a benefit for multiple course takers implemented this year, but we have an agreement that AU will work on this for the next budget. And we were successful in having the proposed change to the course extension policy withdrawn.

As funding for post secondary education continues to decrease, and the pressures on universities, instructors and students increase, it is likely that students will be faced with more and more policy changes, fee hikes, and other alterations to how post-secondary education is delivered. Athabasca University is treading new ground as a national university and a leader in distance education, and will be affected by changes to education policy across the country. With so much uncertainty, your best defence is to learn as much as you can about the changing world of post-secondary education. Take time to inform yourself regarding the issues, and speak out regarding those that affect you and your university education.

Following is the formal policy that AUSU presented to the AU Academic Council regarding the proposed extension policy changes.

Athabasca University Academic Council

Agenda Item Number:

Subject: Course Extension Policy

Submitted By: Debbie Jabbour – AUSU President

Date Submitted:

Action Recommended: That Academic Council not approve the Course Extension Policy as proposed in the March 4, 2003 Notice of Motion, unless significant revisions are made.

Background: The proposed Course Extension Policy will significantly impact the ability of students to complete their courses successfully and will cause a hardship, especially to students with special needs or those on student financing.

Given Athabasca University's unique situation, many students are working under unusual or difficult situations that preclude them from a normal university education. The flexible nature of Athabasca University's courses provide these non-traditional students with a means of successfully completing their education.

Part of this flexibility is embodied in the Course Extension program, as this allows a student to cope with exceptional or unexpected situations such as: an increase in outside work requirements; temporary personal hardships (eg the sickness of a child or spouse); a temporary escalation in the symptoms of a mental, physical, or emotional difficulty; an extended unavoidable absence (such as being called for active military duty); or a difficulty arranging for an invigilator for an exam (such as may happen in a rural, aboriginal, or far north setting)

Since these situations are unexpected by definition, it is impossible to expect students to be able to plan for their occurrence – especially if such planning involves a significant expense (approximately 1/3rd the tuition fee of the course) that they will not be reimbursed for if the extension turns out to be unnecessary.

To address these difficulties and those raised by VP Academic Alan Davis, AUSU endorses a policy that allows maximum flexibility and support to students and uses administrative solutions to facilitate such flexibility and support by:

1. leaving the final date for arranging extensions as the contract date.
2. to reduce the need for extensions, instituting and formalizing a policy whereby students may reschedule a final exam to within two weeks of their previous exam, even if such a rescheduling would fall outside of their normal contract date
3. to encourage early extension registration, building an electronic prompt into Banner (or other appropriate technology) to remind students one month in advance of their contract date to arrange for an extension if needed,
4. to reward early extension registration, giving a reduced extension fee to students who arrange for an extension a minimum of 25 days before the end of their contract
5. to not penalize early extension registration, allowing the course extension to be cancelled and the fee refunded to the student if the student completes the course by the previous contract date.

Debbie is a native Edmontonian, and a single parent with four daughters. She has worked as a professional musician for most of her life, and has enjoyed a rich variety of life experiences - with many more to come! Debbie is working towards an eventual doctorate in psychology, and currently serves as the president of the Athabasca University Students Union.

CANADIAN ACHIEVEMENT AND THE PM'S MISPLACED PRIORITIES

Trevor Siwak



Corks popped and the Champagne flowed amongst the Prime Minister's staff to celebrate a great Canadian achievement one day after The Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre completed the sequencing of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus that is plaguing China as well as Canada. The Prime Minister even called, immediately, to congratulate the person responsible for the accomplishment. "You don't know how proud we are," Chretien said in a phone call. "We were cheering. We were toasting you. You're so cool and so good we were jumping in the room..." An aide to the PM said Chretien was so excited he shouted "let's have champagne," shook the bottle and the cork hit the ceiling.

Well could you blame him? The sequencing of this virus is fundamental for vaccine development, a vaccine that could stop this worldwide killer in its tracks. It is definitely time to celebrate - celebrate a possible cure, celebrate Canadian science, and celebrate our health care system. Well no one could blame him, except the PM was risking a coronary in excitement about a golf championship.

You see the PM was celebrating a Canadian Golfer's victory at the Masters golf tournament in Augusta Georgia only moments before. He wasted no time making the congratulatory phone call, and he wasted no time in popping the cork on the bottle of champagne he was probably saving for the day his legacy showed up. The

priority, it would seem, when it comes to Canadian achievement, is sports and not medicine; although this should be no surprise looking at how the Liberals have handled our health care system.

Don't get me wrong, I am not anti-sport or anti-golf, I love walking around in nicely groomed parks as much as the next guy. What does bug me is that there was no mention of The Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre getting a toast, there was no mention of the PM "jumping around" in joy, there was no mention of a phone call on the same day telling the scientists "You're so cool." It seems to me that sports and things that give us a testosterone rush and make us want to beat our chests and grunt often overshadow the real achievements in this country. I mean really, what would usher in the end of civilization sooner, a lack of golf and professional sports, or a lack of medical professionals and scientists? The mainstream media does not help much in this area either. The Ottawa Sun had the Masters story ahead of the SARS sequencing accomplishment, and even gave it extra coverage on pages 48 and 54; sorry no extra room available for the SARS accomplishment unfortunately.

So while it may seem that the PM's priorities are misplaced, maybe we should all examine ourselves when it comes to national pride. If you don't think the PM, the media, or even Joe Canadian are victims of misplaced priorities when it comes to national pride then tell me, what's the name of ANY of the Canadian scientists who helped discover the SARS sequence? What's the name of the Canadian golfer who just won the Masters?

If you knew the name of a scientist then kudos to you; I am guessing that most could only come up with the golfer's name, Mike Weir. If you could guess none, you may want to consider getting out a little between study sessions.

My point is this, some say Canadians need a deeper, more tangible sense of national pride. I would say there is a lot more to be proud of than sports championships, you just have to look for it; often mind you, after the third page.

BTW, Dr. Marco Marra is the laboratory director for The Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre in BC. Congratulations Dr. Marra and staff, the rest of us toast you!

Quotes and references from the April 13th and 14th 2003 editions of the Ottawa Sun:

Canadian Press Report, Canadian lab cracks virus code, *Ottawa Sun*. April 13, 2003 Volume 15 Number 33 Page 3.

Canadian Press Report, Weir at the top of the sports world, *Ottawa Sun*. April 14, 2003 Volume 15 Number 111 Page 2.



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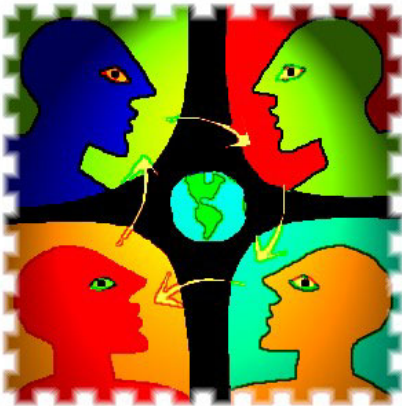
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NOTES FROM COCAL-V, OCT. 5TH, 2002 : DISTANCE EDUCATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PANEL

DONNA KOZIAK

On October 5th, 2002, Donna Koziak was a panellist at the 5th National Conference on Contingent Academic Labor [COCAL-V] in Montreal, Quebec. Following are her notes from the presentation.



:: Since 1986 I have worked as a tutor for Athabasca University. AU is an institution completely dedicated to distance education at both the undergraduate and graduate university level. Distance ed is what we at AU do, it is all we do.

:: While I was engaged in my own graduate studies in education during the mid -1990's I worked in the distance education programme of the Department of Education at the University of Alberta. In contrast to AU, the U of A's distance education programme is carried on as *one component* of the offerings of an otherwise traditional educational institution.

:: Athabasca University was founded in the 1970's, and has always been the kind of institution that Otto Peters was alluding to when he wrote that "distance teaching is – compared to other forms of instruction – the most *industrialized* form of teaching." (i) What others have called the "*Taylorization*" of teaching is a fundamental characteristic of the organization of distance educational practices at AU. Put as simply as possible, this means that teaching practices at AU are split up into *parts*, assembly-line fashion, becoming "de-skilled" along the way. The "part" that tutors do is, in theory, extremely "de-skilled" (and this provides the rationale for our severe marginalization in the academic community of the university).

:: In spite of all this, it is still important to understand that a tremendous amount of idealism of educational purpose motivates the academic and teaching community of AU, including tutors. The AU mission statement asserts that we are "dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level studies." These barriers can include geographical, work or family situation, physical handicap, and others. Many of us are inspired by this mission, and derive great satisfaction from our opportunities to work in its service.

:: The distance education practices of the U of A Department of Education programme, in contrast, have never in any sense been industrialized or Taylorized, and based on my own experience, any attempt to make them so would meet with extreme resistance on the part of distance teaching faculty, both contingent and regular.

:: However, in both institutions, that is, at Athabasca University and at the distance education programme of the U of A Education Faculty, the debates over the newest wave of "tech change" in education have raged just as strongly during the last decade as they have in other educational institutions. This is a point that must be understood – distance education and electronic or on-line education are not synonymous. On-line delivery is a newcomer to distance education just as it is to traditional education. Distance educators must think carefully and critically about tech change and its implications just as traditional educators must do.

:: Now, educators have been working with technology ever since a stick was first used to draw a lesson on a clay tablet. Print presses, blackboards, whiteboards, gestetner machines, educational slide tapes, papercutters, laminators, videos, photocopiers – all of these are, or have been, "educational technology."

:: In *distance* education, technology has always assumed a particular importance, because distance educators must rely on some form of technology to carry the educational interaction over distance. At Athabasca University that technology has traditionally been print correspondence supported by telephone communication, including some teleconferencing, and there have been some experiments with television and radio transmission. The U of A programme I mentioned uses what they have nicknamed “silver bird and silver Toyota” technology – that is, professors drive or are flown to sites in the Alberta hinterland to deliver face-to-face classes to students who may themselves have traveled many miles from remote locations to attend.

:: So, as educators, and particularly as distance educators, we are already familiar with educational “technology”.

:: I submit that educational technologies have not IMPOSED philosophical or political values on us. However, their USES have never been philosophically or politically neutral. Those uses are always informed by the values of the human educators who make the choices that shape them. This is as true of the new on-line technologies as any others.

:: So – at Athabasca University, the possibilities offered by the new on-line technologies are currently being exploited in some very different ways, for example,

- :: by certain educators who appear to be dedicated to using new computer technologies to actually *increase* the interactive distance between students and teachers, to intensify the compartmentalization, deskilling, or “Taylorization” of teaching practices, in the name of cost-cutting and efficiency, as well as what I consider to be reductionist views of teaching/learning dynamics;

- :: by other, possibly more humanistically oriented educators, to *decrease* interactive distance, to bridge that distance, and to bring learning communities together in the name of constructing knowledge and developing critical thinking abilities.

:: "Our first concern should be about the impact of the social order on technology rather than the reverse...Technology is never neutral. It embodies a set of human values often latent, obscure, or deliberately disguised...technology creates no new values...Serious students of technological change must participate in value decisions."(ii)

:: My point is that, when educators engage in identifying the political implications of educational technology we have to look beneath and beyond the surface of the technology itself, to the philosophical and political choices that have determined particular uses of that technology. And when we do, in my opinion we find that the political issues we face as educators - the ones upon which we should really be focusing - are the ones we already know, such as:

- :: What I refer to as the colossal “dumbing-down” of Western, or at least of North American, culture (and whose interests does THAT serve?) paradoxically combined with the intense marketing and necessitization of “credentialing”;

- :: the corporatization of post-secondary educational institutions and commodification of post-secondary education;

- :: a global withdrawal from support for education that, I would argue, has to be perceived as anti-intellectual and ultimately anti-democratic.

AS WELL, as educational *workers*, we must be alert to the fact that the current wave of technological change is bringing about changes to the *organization of work* in almost every area of human endeavour that are far more

profound than those wrought by the Industrial Revolution. In this arena, too, it is our responsibility, to join with other workers to discern the underlying political values that inform change, to take control of this change, to direct it to the service of human needs and quality of human life, rather than to the service of dehumanizing and exploitive interests.

OTHER PANELLISTS:

Other panellists spoke from personal experience about the difficulties that can arise when new educational technologies are employed without adequate planning for the needs of students, or without adequate training or equipment or technological supports.

One panellist, the President of the American National Council of Higher Education, reported on an American research project that has found that it takes *more* time per student for quality on-line delivery of education than it does for in-classroom instruction. This project found that on-line delivery could not properly be used as a way to generate new profits because overall, it costs more to deliver quality education on-line. However, on-line delivery can provide a service by reaching out to students who would otherwise not be able to participate in face-to-face or on-campus learning, for reasons as varied as being required to work during classroom hours to being overweight and fearing not being able to fit into desks.

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(i) Distance Education in a Postindustrial Society, by Otto Peters, in Theoretical Principles of Distance Education edited by Desmond Keegan, Routledge, Studies in Distance Education, 1993, p. 38

(ii) Critical Essay on Technology in Distance Education, by Michael Campion in Beyond the Text: Contemporary Writings on Distance Education, edited by Terry Evans and Bruce King, 1995, p. 200

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WHY MARRY AT ALL?

By Heather Wrigley



My mother has been married three times; every time it has ended badly. I have seen her move repeatedly through stages that are now predictable to me: from excitement and giddiness at meeting someone new, to the desire to be free of a life that restricts her movements like a too-tight skirt. She is now beginning yet another new relationship, and I wonder at the instinct that draws her to this: how the promise of another chance has her enthralled, drawn moth-like to its flame.

Lifelong pair-bonding is uncommon among non-human animals, but it does occur. It is practiced by many kinds of creatures, from seahorses and spiny mice to wolves and whistling ducks.

Monogamy evolved as a reproductive strategy because it helps to ensure the survival of babies to adulthood; the female can care for her young more effectively if she has the male's assistance, ensuring the continuation of both parents' genes. However, the restriction to a single mate prevents promiscuity (which has its own reproductive advantages) and, in humans at least, obligatory monogamy can lead to boredom and bitterness.

We would like to imagine that our complex culture makes us immune to the dictates of biology, but we are not as civilized as all that. Nearly all of us will marry at some point, even those who do not plan to have children (like myself) and those who are past the age of reproductive possibility (like my mother). For many years, homosexuals have been fighting for the right to marry as well; while some of these people plan to adopt children, most simply want their bond to be recognized. But, if marriage is not related to reproduction, it leaves one to wonder why it still exists at all.

The man I love is tall, lean, and always occupied. Even sitting still, he works ceaselessly on projects in his mind. I have the same busy brain; this connects us. We understand each other's inability to be idle, and it is a relief not to have to explain it. There is more: he makes me laugh, and he is kind. The rest is inexplicable and nebulous: it is merely that I love him. We share a house and a dog, and there is a quiet and constant happiness to our days. It is an informal arrangement, but I can no longer imagine an end to our union. Still, I wish to declare it permanent somehow. I cannot explain why. He wishes to avoid any such confinement, and so we are stuck.

In the absence of any reproductive motive, why marry at all? Why voluntarily restrict future options? It seems to make more sense to stay with each person as long as you are happy there, and then to effortlessly move on when things get dull or unpleasant.

Still, some inexplicable instinct ensures that the desire to marry endures, although many of the marriages themselves may not.

In November 1998, researchers at Cornell University reported that humans are biologically programmed to stay in love (that is, to produce the heady infatuation chemicals dopamine, oxytocin and phenylethylamine) for a period of only 18 to 30 months at the beginning of a new relationship: just long enough for the conception and birth of children. After that, apparently only genuine affection, inertia, good sex or social conventions will keep a couple together, because the chemical effects of the hormones will wear off. Only a new mate can inspire those feelings again. Why, then, do we continue to marry, to appoint ourselves to a task that is so difficult? Which is stronger, the instinct to form a lifetime pair-bond, or the instinct for promiscuity?

Just a century ago the social taboo against divorce was strong enough to keep families together, but in recent generations hedonism has become the rule: if you aren't happy, your friends will recommend that you simply walk away. It is called 'liberation', but to me it looks like slavery to the biochemistry of those love hormones. It seems like doom: if you leave when there is a hiccup, when the bliss disappears for a time, you will be forever leaving.

The Cornell report tells of Emperor penguins, who generally mate for life; the pairs live separately but get together for two months each year to breed and incubate their eggs. The female has only so much patience, however, and woe betide the male that tests her limits. After their ten-month separation, the female arrives at a prearranged meeting place and waits for the male to show up. If he isn't there within twenty-four hours, she moves on and finds a new mate. That seems an inexplicably harsh expectation for a creature with no access to a calendar, but she is strict about violations. Her commitment to this male may be strong, but it has clearly-defined limits.

I, unmarried still at almost-thirty, have begun to experience the pull towards marriage and am stunned by its power. I know now what brings my mother back, over and over, to an arrangement that always leaves her wretched. Explaining the appeal of pledging one's eternal troth is impossible; the desire to do so is as primal as anything I have felt.

A man in Egypt claims that he has been married to a total of 203 women in his life (so far). Seventy-eight-year-old Mustafa Semeda says that he has fathered only three children as a result of these unions, and that in the wake of his most recent divorce, he is once again 'looking for love'.

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Cornell University, (July 30, 1999). A Tough Year For Monogamy. *Environmental News Network*. Website: http://www.enn.com/enn-features-archive/1999/07/073099/hiker730_4690.asp

Heather Wrigley recently abandoned a safe, but dull, Human Resources career to finish her Athabasca University B.Sc. in Human Science. When she's not studying, she volunteers at the local Children's Hospital and at the Women's Health Centre. She also loves to garden, bike, drum, fish, read, and take long walks with her Border Terrier. She lives in Calgary.

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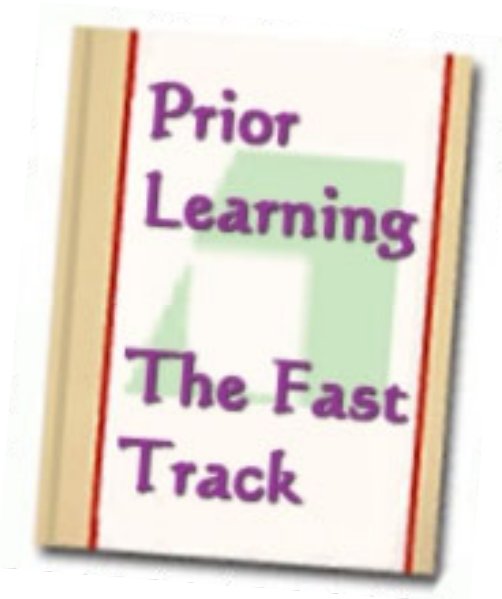


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WORTH A SECOND LOOK PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION A LIFETIME OF LEARNING.

By Teresa Neuman



Life experiences provide many learning opportunities, and the skills from this learning are applicable to work or education. Workers are returning to school to gain standing for professional advancement. Athabasca University students can access the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process to receive credit towards Athabasca University degrees and diplomas, reducing the time it takes to earn their degree. This optional process provides students the opportunity to identify past learning and present it for recognition towards formal education. In the adult education field, this process is considered to be an idea whose time has come (Young qtd. in Sansregret, 9).

When I enrolled at Athabasca University in the Bachelor of Professional Arts (Communications Studies) Undergraduate Degree program, my academic advisor suggested that once I had completed the challenge for credit process and had my previous diploma evaluated, I could submit a PLAR portfolio towards 30 further program credits. If I chose to use the PLAR assessment process, I could obtain my degree in as little as 10 courses. It seemed unbelievable, until I started investigating the theory and processes behind PLAR.

PLAR is a method of evaluating prior learning. Susan Kemper observes that learning can occur in the classroom, on the job, and through personal experiences and activities (Kemper qtd. in Sansregret, 7). In the book, *Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio*, adult educator Marthe Sansregret presents a clearer definition of the PLAR process. “Prior learning assessment is defined as the process by which an individual identifies learning acquired at different times in his life in various places and by different methods in order to eventually receive official accreditation by a reputable learning institution” (Sansregret, 13). Usually, PLAR refers to learning outside of the academic institution, but it can include prior post-secondary learning that has not been evaluated for credit for any other diploma or official accreditation. PLAR is not awarded based on years of work, taking workshops, or for writing and publishing. It is a method of assessing how life experiences link to the courses in a person’s chosen area of study. Sansregret observes that PLAR can apply to anyone, of any age, or social, religious, and economic background who wishes to review their life experiences to plan their future and possibly receive academic credits (5).

Athabasca University recommends assembling a PLAR once some learning outcomes of the student’s program are achieved. Having successfully completed some classes in my program and having challenged as many classes for credit as I could, I knew that I had reached the point where it was time to assemble my PLAR portfolio.

Students considering PLAR should read Athabasca University’s web site where a comprehensive FAQ and overview of PLAR are provided. Athabasca University recommends that students purchase a copy of Sansregret’s book *Prior Learning Assessment: The Portfolio*, prior to starting the PLAR process. It is not a requirement that this book be purchased; a portfolio could just as easily be assembled without it. Further, students can access a portfolio development class, *Psychology 205 – Prior Learning Assessment and Portfolio*

Development. I opted not to take the class, but I did purchase the book. It was helpful in assembling the PLAR portfolio and I probably would have missed some details had I proceeded without it.

The initial steps of the PLAR process caused me to reflect on my life's work, what I had learned, who I was, and how my attitudes from these experiences became defined. I had to determine how my life's experiences were applicable to my course of study. I ripped apart boxes to find pay stubs, transcripts, and proof of sports and leisure activities spanning over twenty years. I had to determine how these materials applied to who I am now. As a starting point, I created a detailed biography of my life and defined my educational goals. I then assembled my portfolio and wrote the essay for assessment required by my program. This process took three months to complete. The PLAR process might take less time for other students; it is worth taking time to complete the portfolio to your own level of satisfaction.

Outside of the academic environment, employers and unions are starting to examine PLAR. In Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB) views PLAR as a method of providing employers a means to maximize the potential of current and future employees. (SLFDB website) The Board, which is an advocate of building a learning culture in Saskatchewan, (SLFDB website) believes that the benefits of PLAR can apply to both small and large business. As part of its mandate, the Board provides leadership in areas of training and socio-economic development in the areas of Career Education, Promotion of Training Partnerships for Aboriginal People, Workplace Literacy, and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. The Board includes increased profitability, higher employee satisfaction, and efficient employee training as potential benefits from the PLAR process. With time and money in short supply for employers, the PLAR process could help employers respond to current and future skill shortages and access the non-traditional labour pool (SLFDB website).

PLAR is still under study in Saskatchewan, but the benefits of PLAR in the workplace are becoming clear. Resources and financial support must be available in Saskatchewan before PLAR can be fully implemented. More information on PLAR and the final report for pilot projects in Saskatchewan are available at the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board web site at <http://www.sfldb.com>.

Assembling the PLAR portfolio has been an interesting exercise and I await the comments of the evaluators. I condensed a lifetime of learning into a binder for evaluation for credit. The PLAR process identified the skills that I bring to my work and studies and showed that I continue to learn both in and out of the classroom. To me, that is what education is about.

Reference:

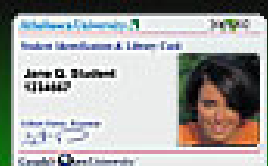
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Teresa is enrolled in the Bachelor of Professional Arts Program, Communications Studies, at Athabasca University and is enjoying returning to school after 18 years. Teresa enjoys writing, union activism and gardening, and lives and works in Regina, Saskatchewan, with her partner Kevin and son Adam.

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CANADIAN FED WATCH!

NEWS ACROSS THE NATION...

By Karl Low



Education Week

From April 27th to May 3rd, it's Education Week in Alberta. In typical Alberta fashion, this means a concentration on the kindergarten to grade 12 school system through-out the province and a near neglect of post-secondary institutions. If you go to the link, you'll see a number of events going on around Alberta at various elementary, junior, and senior high schools. What you won't see is any event at all being mentioned for any of the Alberta post-secondary schools.

This is nothing terribly new. Post-secondary students, by and large, don't vote and don't write letters to the Province [1]. Irate parents of school children most certainly do.

On the bright side, if you're one of the many AU students in Alberta that have children, you should be able to find an event somewhere nearby that might not only make an interesting diversion for a few hours, but will help your kid's education as well.

Good News in PEI

The Prince Edward Island Provincial Government is putting forward a new Education Budget that holds lots of good news for students in PEI and may even be an encouraging sign for AU students in Prince Edward Island as well. The budget includes an 8.2% increase in the total education budget, nearly double the increase that the "Alberta Advantage" has given Alberta citizens and AU students.

Earning limits for student loans have been dramatically increased, allowing more students to qualify and the weekly limits that can be obtained through student loans has also increased. It's not clear if the total allowable limit for student loans will be similarly increased, but we can always hope.

More to the point for AU students is that the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission will be given extra funding to support students who are taking courses in the Maritimes that are not available on PEI itself. That PEI is willing to provide additional support to students who are getting educated elsewhere bodes well for the idea of distance education. If you are an AU student living in PEI, it might be a good idea to let your provincial government know about Athabasca University and point out how its courses can not only fill the gaps in UPEI's programs, but can do so while allowing people to stay within the province.

A final interesting tidbit in this budget is a bursary program designed to provide bursaries for high school students who volunteer. This seems like a much better method to encourage volunteerism than the Ontario strategy of simply making volunteer hours a requirement for graduation.

Ontario Making More Space

The Ontario Provincial Government is adding a whopping 180 million dollars to post-secondary education. Unfortunately, as always, it is all going into creating more buildings. Hardly visionary in its approach, the Ontario Government seems to be convinced that if they just make enough buildings all the problems will go away. Rather than investing money into establishing or furthering a distance education system that can easily scale up or down to the number of students, they insist on putting the Ontario tax-payer dollars into creating expensive buildings that, once the double-cohort has graduated, are likely to be largely empty most of the time.

Then again, maybe AU can partner with the Ontario Government in some manner to use this extra space – even if it was just a place for examinations, it would still be a help to the Ontario AU students.

SARS Update

Living in Alberta, I am not terribly concerned yet about SARS affecting me, but that does not mean that there is no concern at all. It seems strange that Canada has a death rate almost twice that of any other country that is suffering SARS. If you look at the statistics that the Ontario Government has compiled, you see that those who have died are mostly elderly. It could be then that other countries are simply not attributing many SARS related deaths to the disease, or alternatively, that we are being too quick to attribute deaths to SARS rather than to natural causes.

I certainly hope that it is the latter, because when you consider that if our death rate is correct it means a death rate almost 4 times that of smallpox and we definitely have something to worry about. Fortunately for Athabasca University students, it is unlikely that the disease will have a serious effect on our education. One of the little acknowledged benefits of a distance education – with tutors and students in remote locations, local conditions are less likely to have an effect on the whole community.

[1] Generational Change And The Decline Of Political Participation: The Case Of Voter Turnout In Canada.
<http://www.youthconference.mcgill.ca/GidengilPaper.pdf>

A native Calgarian, Karl is perpetually nearing the completion of his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Information Studies. He also works for the Computer Sciences Virtual Helpdesk for Athabasca University and plans to eventually go on to tutor and obtain his Master's Degree.

ATTENTION PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS



Every Monday from 9:30 - 10:30 AM MST and Wednesday from 7-8 PM MST the Athabasca University Psychology Students' Society gets together to chat about issues pertaining to the world of psychology at AU.

To Join the chat, go to the AUPSS website, accessible through: <http://www.ausu.org/clubs/index.php> [you must be logged in to AUSU] and select the discussion forum link, from there click on Psychology at the top written in blue and choose the General Psychology Chat. NOTE: You need to be registered in a psychology course to access the AU psych discussions.

Hope to see you there!

Sandra Moore

Athabasca University Psychology Students' Society



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short fiction are accepted, from
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By Marilyn Oprisan

I'm convinced that people who live in Stratford-upon-Avon shouldn't be allowed to get married. This is not to consign all the residents of Shakespeare's hometown to lives of sin, but rather to protect tourists who, like me, want to see Shakespeare's tomb in Trinity Church.

I have only one day in Stratford at my disposal to see the sights in the daytime and "The Tempest" in the evening. On the plane from Vienna, I had studied the internet printouts and planned the whole day chronologically: to begin with Shakespeare's birthplace, and to end with a pilgrimage to his tomb in a chapel in Trinity Church.

Trinity Church is surrounded, not surprisingly, by a churchyard. All gravestones there are very old and very mossy. Gravestones should be dry things, representing the dead with permanence, to make up for the quick dissolution of that which lies beneath. They should stand fixed, immutable. But these stones are covered with some kind of green scum, no doubt living matter, crawling all over the names and dates, eating away at that which should by rights be sharp, clean and dead.

The wind blows droplets from the Avon against me. I want to get away from all these damp, dead people I don't know. I need to get into the church and see what I came all this way to see: Shakespeare's nice, dry tomb.

I walk through the yard to the oak and iron door

of the church. There is a wedding party on the path between me and the entrance. I ease past the celebrants to see a piece of computer paper taped to the door. In an unassuming font it states, just as calmly as you please, "Closed for wedding. Re-opening tomorrow 9:00 a.m."

The church door opens and out comes a priest in black robes. He motions to the wedding party and they move around me, ignoring me as though I were one of those rotting tombstones. One by one they enter where I cannot go.

First goes the brazen bride in her unseemly spaghetti straps. Is that any way to dress for a holy day? Then, her bunch of cherry-coloured, simpering bridesmaids, each wearing far too much perfume. Their fumes must have been etching away another few lines off these already maltreated stones. Finally the groom and his men go in, still barking at some unseemly joke. Doubtless they all derive their living from tourists' pounds such as I have spent today. They waltz into the sacred presence, while I, to whom they owe their very livelihood, remain outside.

There is nothing for me here, the outsider, the foreigner, the tourist. My love for Shakespeare won't buy me entrance. But these lusting unworthies, they will go in and leave with the priest's blessing, to go forth and bring more of their loathsome kind into the world, to spread like moss.

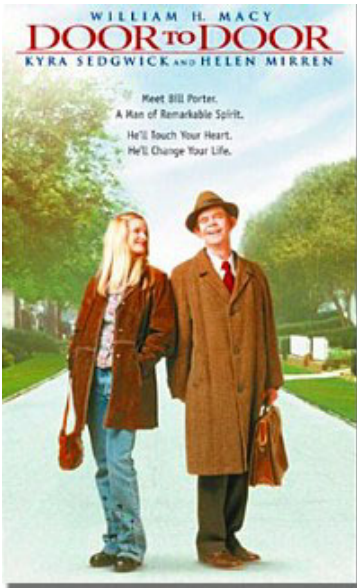
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DOOR TO DOOR

A Film Review

By Laura Seymour



Most of the time I watch films that have able-bodied characters – don't we all? But *Door to Door* is a whole different - and delightful - kettle of film. The star, William H. Macy, is the humble, cerebral palsy victim Bill Porter. His appearance won't win him any Academy Awards but his acting did! His role bowled over every person in the audience at this year's awards show. If you weren't JUST remembering Adrian Brodie's kiss planted on Hallie Berry you might remember William's award. Fellow academy members wildly supported his win.

As co-author of the script, Mr. Macy is partly responsible for the brilliant moments in this film. There are so many to chose from...

This wonderful, true story is about Bill Porter, who was born in Portland Oregon. The film spans from the beginning of his career in 1955 as a door-to-door salesman right through to his "retirement" in the 1990s. Like any good film, this isn't about the career points although we do see them ... it's about Bill and his relationships. At first the Watkins Company boss sees him as a waste of time.

He doesn't want to give Bill any kind of job. With slurred speech and a spastic walk he doesn't impress anyone at first.

His mother is beautifully played by Helen Mirren. She is supportive to Bill but firm. She teaches Bill "patience and persistence." Bill listens to her and marches back into the Watkins company office and asks for the "worst route" - the one no-one else wants. "What have you got to lose?" he asks. That's exactly what he's given. As his mother is older and starting to slip mentally Bill tries a number of times before he can find a safe and healthy place where she will be cared for.

He goes to work and despite a decaying spinal condition keeps it up. We follow his clients over the years and the ridiculous problems he had to deal with to get sales. But these ridiculous moments feed the film; they fill it with laughter and tears and draw us even more magically into his world.

When Bill is told by his doctor to stop making his own deliveries he complies as best he can. Since Bill walks 8-10 miles a day just doing his route is badly affecting his spine. But since he wins one Salesman of the Year award after another he doesn't want to quit. He loves his work. He puts up an ad for a delivery person but a young man freaks out at the sound and sight of Bill.

Bill has a real knee-jerk reaction to pity. He hates it. He is astonishingly proud of being able to work and he is good at his job. So when a few problems appear with his new employee, Shelley, played by Kyra Sedgwick, he has to fess up and ask for help. The real-life Mrs. Kevin Bacon plays a pretty, curvaceous student who is

always there for Bill. Bill has a monster crush on her - what a shame she doesn't think of him like that! And when Bill attends her graduation it's pretty clear who she has a crush on... her future husband.

A reclusive alcoholic played by Kathy Baker is the first person to buy Bill's products. She is the one with a crush on Bill but doesn't seem to notice. Throughout the film, we see glimpses of her lonely existence in a small apartment over the years. Bill can always count on a sale to this lonely woman and she always seems to need more... of everything. Years later, in a huge bawl-your-eyes-out moment, Bill goes to the woman's apartment only to find out from her son and his wife that she is dead. The son shows Bill his mother's back room FILLED with Watkins Company products, including bag upon bag of carefully wrapped dog treats. Except, as the son points out, "the dog died years ago." William's portrayal of Bill Porter's reaction is exquisite. He handles the moment with a simple blank look, but the overwhelming truth that she has been so loyal shines through his liquid-filled eyes. Me too.

We follow the little tricks of how Bill survived all these years with minimal use of his left hand and, from what we can see, none with his right. The details are lovely. Bill obviously has a great sense of humor and the jokes makes us laugh steadily - even if the jokes are awfully clean - even corny.

Door to Door debuted July 14, 2002, over the TNT cable network. Hal Erickson directed. It's now showing on MovieCentral cable television in Alberta.

Buy popcorn, but also a few Kleenex. And be ready to explode with a great feeling at the end. This film is a treasure.

Laura Seymour first published herself, at age 8. She has since gone on to publish a cookbook for the medical condition Candida. She is working toward her B.A. (Psyc).

ARE YOU GRADUATING THIS JUNE?



I want to feature graduating AU students for the profiles section in May and June. If you are graduating this year, write to me and I will send you a profile form to fill out or we can arrange for a more in-depth interview. Remember how hard it was when you started at distance education? Well here is your chance to share your wisdom with new students.

Also, if you plan to attend graduation in Athabasca, consider taking some photos to send along to the Voice. Many AU students can't make it to their convocation, so let's give them something that will help them feel like they were there. Anecdotes are welcome too. Photos used in my grad feature will be paid for! Write me for details.



Dear Sandra,

I'm in a cooking rut. My family is sick and tired of Hamburger Helper and fish sticks, but I don't have the time, money or the know how to do any better. Any suggestions?

Hamburgered-Out in the USA

Dear Hamburgered-Out,

You don't have to cook like Emeril and have Oprah's bank account to throw together awesome meals. It's hard if you are the only person responsible for putting together meals, as most women are. Make meal times a family affair. Ask your family what they would like to eat and also ask for their help in preparing meals. Even young children can help by washing vegetables and cutting with proper instructions. This keeps them occupied and also encourages their independence and sense of self-worth. My kids have their own plastic \$2 cutting boards and kid-size aprons and are ecstatic to help out in the kitchen. Remember though, it takes A LOT of patience to cook with kids.

As for cost, think of how much you are spending on hamburger helper and frozen fish sticks. Hamburger Helper is at least \$2.50 a box, and it only lasts one meal. Buying pasta in bulk will cost you the same amount and last at least 4 meals for a family of four. Really when you take time to think about it, for the time it takes to prepare Hamburger Helper you could just add your own macaroni and chili seasoning.

If you are short on ideas, type the keyword "recipes" into any Internet search and you will be bombarded with websites! Many sites offer you the option of inputting ingredients on hand, choosing ethnic dishes, and choosing the amount of time and effort you want to put into your meal. It may take awhile, but you'll soon come to find a site that becomes your bible. My favorite is <http://allrecipes.com/>. This site is easy to navigate and you can also sign up for a recipe of the day to be emailed to you. If surfing the web isn't your thing, go to the library or scrounge through rummage sale book bins to find cookbooks and spend an evening skimming through them looking for various recipes you'd like to try. Encourage your spouse and children to look through them as well to find any dishes that they may want to try.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to try new things. Experiment until you get it right.
Happy Cooking!

Sandra

I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! TELL ME YOUR TROUBLES. YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

This column is for entertainment only. Sandra is not a professional counsellor, but is an AU student who would like to give personal advice about school and life to her peers. Please forward your questions to Sandra care of smoore@ausu.org

FROM MY PERSPECTIVE SINGLE PARENTING, MY STORY [Pt. 3]

By Debbie Jabbour



For the first two parts of Debbie's story, see [The Voice April 2nd \[v11 i14\]](#) and [April 16th \[v11 i16\]](#) issues.

Being laid off was a traumatic experience, and I spent the first few days in shock. My immediate concern, of course, was how we would manage financially. But to my surprise...I was eligible for unemployment insurance! Since I had always been a self-employed musician I never had access to these kinds of benefits (even though I paid for them come tax time), and I was pleased to find myself suddenly able to take advantage of a government service that did not make me feel like a worthless loser.

My benefits ran out after a couple of months, but by then I had done some serious thinking. I had completed my first three courses at AU, and managed to add a couple more along the way in spite of the turmoil I was going through. I decided that I needed to start focusing on **me**. I had done enough crying for a lifetime, and it was time to move on. This new sense of purpose had the effect of eliminating my depression, and I suddenly found myself back in control of my life.

By this time my older two daughters had left home, and were in college and university, actively pursuing their dreams. We inspired each other, and I decided to apply for a student loan and try going to university full time. To my utter surprise, not only was my loan granted, but I received a high-needs bursary to get me on my way!

I eagerly planned out my full-time course schedule, and once I had my course work organized, I went back to the office temp agency I had started with, and they immediately found me part-time work with Capital Health. In contrast to my previous job, my new employers treated me with respect and encouraged my desire to pursue an education. In fact, they appreciated my work so much that they kept trying to give me full time hours even though I insisted that my schoolwork came first. I often found myself working far too much and my coursework was perpetually behind schedule. However I felt like I was finally back on track – my life was my own, and the future began to look positive again.

Things were not automatically resolved, of course, but since that time I've managed to reach the point in my coursework where I've finally applied to graduate this June. I've moved into a new job this past year where I'm utilizing many of the skills I'm learning at university, and I have plans to apply for the Masters of Counselling program next year. I've also been elected president of the student union, a position that has taught me a great deal and afforded me many opportunities for growth. I feel like I've achieved success, even though I'm still in the process of completing my goals. In contrast to where I was four short years ago, I'm happy with my life, and I embrace each new day as an exciting venture.

My story, of course, is far more complex and detailed than what I've written here. I've only shared a few of the surface elements, since most of my experience is far too personal and intimate to share with others. I've had some extremely difficult times in my life, and I'm sure things will not be perfect in the future. At a music therapy conference I attended several years ago, one of the speakers was Lorraine Sinclair; a Cree woman who is a successful writer and teacher. Lorraine had been through many of the same things I had in her life, and she commented that rather than feel sorry for herself because she had been abused, and rather than always dwelling on the difficulties she had endured, she took these events as something positive. She had become a stronger

person by going through them, and had developed valuable qualities such as empathy for others – adversity had contributed to personal growth. I took her comments to heart, and have tried to re-visualize the many trials I've endured as positives that have contributed to my becoming a better person.

For most of us women who are single parents, attending university represents a way to improve life for ourselves and our children. Unless you have been in the situation, it is hard to understand what a struggle going to school really is for single mothers. A father is expected to get an education and go out and work, and his time and devotion to his children is usually never questioned when he does so. This is not the case with mothers. We are expected to be there for our children, nurture them, support them. Our needs and our education take second place. Even in a traditional two-parent family, the mother bears most of this responsibility. When you are a single mother, you already deal with guilty feelings that you are neglecting your children when you are forced to work to support your family. To compound this “neglect” by going to school increases this sense of guilt.

Although I believe my ultimate goal will benefit both myself and my family, at times I still question whether I should have postponed my decision until all my children were independent. My daughters support me in what I'm doing, but I know that at times they are disappointed that I can't spend time with them. Even though our situation is greatly improved from where it was a few years ago, we still experience many difficulties. The lack of a supportive spouse is often very noticeable. When I hear my friends tell me that their husbands take their children out for the day when they need to focus on studying for a final exam, I am keenly aware that my children are fending for themselves while I study. When other women talk about how their husbands are making dinner or helping with housework while they are preparing a term paper, I give thanks that at least my girls are old enough to make their own meals – single mothers with young children don't have this option.

Financially too, we continue to struggle. A student budget is small enough when you need to support yourself – let alone as a single mother trying to also support a family. There is also the issue of emotional and moral support. My children are wonderfully supportive for me, but they have their own emotional needs. They need me to be able to listen to their problems, to help them with their homework, and to do things for them. When I'm stressed about schoolwork, or worried about something, there is only so much I can burden them with. Much of the time I have to keep things to myself, and at times it feels very lonely. I confess that sometimes I feel a twinge of jealousy when my married friends talk about how supportive their partners are of their studies.

In the long run, however, my choice to use my time going to university has been the right one. It took me from a place of discouragement and despair, where I was not able to see a better future for myself and my children; to one where I have a sense of purpose. Although I'm still a struggling single parent – my life is infinitely better than it was before I started university.

On those days when I feel guilty because I'm neglecting my children for my studies, I try to remember - I could be neglecting them because I'm off doing something with my spouse. I could be neglecting them because I'm consumed with trying to make a blended family function, my attention focused on a stepchild or a troublesome ex-wife. Or I could be neglecting them because I'm depressed and too ill to function. I could be neglecting them for many reasons. But I'm not. I'm neglecting them because I'm trying to build a better future for all of us. My achievement of my goals will have many benefits - and I know that in the end it will pay off.

To all intents and purposes, my schoolwork has become my spouse, and some have commented to me that once I graduate I may feel differently about remaining single. It's possible, but I doubt it. At this point in my life I have no room for a relationship and I do not see that changing. I've tried dating a few times, and it turned out badly. So I prefer to keep my focus on making *me* the best I can be, without any distractions.

There is a difference between being alone and being lonely. As women we are socialized to believe that we must nurture, and sacrifice ourselves for others. It is that type of thinking that can also lead us to believe that

we are failures if we do not have a “relationship” with a significant other. I no longer reason that way. I believe that when a person is strong and confident within themselves, they do not require a partner to make them whole. Perhaps once I’ve achieved my goals I may once again make room in my life for a man. First, however, I will become the person I want to be: a successful individual, a woman who has managed to achieve her dreams and goals. A woman who is independent and can choose whether or not she wants to remain single or whether she wants to share her life with another person.

I’ve learned some important lessons as a single parent:

- You don’t need a man to be successful.
- You can do it on your own.
- It is possible to rise above your problems no matter how bad it gets.
- Adversity builds strength.
- It is more important to be a whole person yourself than it is to be part of a relationship.
- You can be a single parent and be a success.
- If you are not content with who you are and the life you are living - you are no good to yourself or anyone else, regardless of whether you are married or single.
- Focusing on YOU benefits everyone - you become a better person and more capable of being a good mother to your children when you are content with who YOU are.

As I approach graduation and master’s studies, I find that my single status is becoming less of a liability, and I am able to celebrate my independence. I do not have to adjust my course goals to meet the needs or wishes of a partner, and this gives me freedom to fully develop myself as an individual. The prospect of holding a degree gives me increased confidence in my ability to support myself and my family, and my worries about financial security are lessened. My ability to learn and my sense of accomplishment have restored my self-esteem. I also have the sense of belonging to an academic community, one where I have increased self-respect and the respect of my peers. Most importantly, I am in control of my life. I am exactly where I want to be.

“You do not need to be loved, not at the cost of yourself. The single relationship that is truly central and crucial in a life is the relationship to the self. Of all the people you will know in a lifetime, you are the only one you will never lose.”

Jo Coudert, Advice From a Failure, Madison Books, 2001.

Debbie is a native Edmontonian, and a single parent with four daughters. She has worked as a professional musician for most of her life, and has enjoyed a rich variety of life experiences - with many more to come! Debbie is working towards an eventual doctorate in psychology, and currently serves as the president of the Athabasca University Students Union.



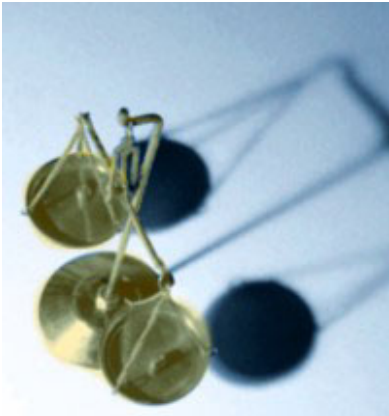
WRITE FOR THE VOICE!

Contact The Voice editor at voice@ausu.org for details on writing for The Voice. Provide a sample selection of writing and preferred genre.

THE ROLE OF LAW IN CANADIAN LABOUR RELATIONS

Conclusion

Wayne E. Benedict



Read last week's Voice [\[April 16, 2003; v11 i16\]](#) for part one of *The Role of Law*.

With class antagonisms and organizational conflict institutionalized, and productive peace preserved through a straightjacket of industrial legality, the democratic capitalist system is safe from serious working-class political challenge. And thus, Canadian labour-law is fulfilling its broad *raison d'être*. Understanding that the capitalist system itself is secured through legal incorporation and institutionalization of workers and their organizations, we can now examine the narrower roles and functions that Canadian labour-law fulfills within that system.

The official industrial relations ideology of the capitalist Canadian state(s) is Pluralism. Godard (1994, pp. 277-278) states that there are three general purposes underlying labour-law in Canada: first, to foster democracy—provides workers the ability to form unions (considered a basic democratic right); second, to establish a working balance of power between workers and management—enables workers to enhance their power while restricting union activities so that management does not find itself at a disadvantage; and third, to institutionalize and provide a means for resolution of conflict—ensures that stability and efficiency are maintained in the economy and that more radical changes to the *status quo* are forestalled.

In addition to these three purposes are three theoretical principles underlying contemporary labour-law: first, Majoritarianism—the majority should rule with respect to worker decisions about joining a union or going on strike; second, Exclusivity—a single union should represent workers in a given work situation, serving as their exclusive bargaining agent; and third, Voluntarism—unionized workers and their employers should be encouraged to resolve disputes and disagreements voluntarily and to the mutual satisfaction of both sides through “free” collective bargaining. In fulfilling these purposes and living up to these principles, Canadian labour-law exhibits two main aspects: it recognizes and protects the rights of workers to join unions and bargain collectively; it helps to maintain and protect the organizational basis and hence the strength of the labour movement in Canada. This, in a nutshell, is the official pluralist view of Canadian labour-law: its *raison d'être*, its underlying principles, and its objectives.

But does the reality that workers and their organizations experience reflect the stated purposes underlying Canadian labour-law? In my experience, the answer is: only in minute measure. The first purpose is to provide a quantum of occupational democracy. Canadian labour-law purports to do so by promoting the collective bargaining regime. But employees bargaining collectively are narrowly constrained in what they can bargain over (the terms and conditions of employment) and how they bargain and organize (certification; good faith bargaining; only timely strikes [if that option is not abrogated altogether]; unfair labour practices; etc.). I have previously written on the subject of occupational democracy:

...the employer-employee relationship embodied in the contract of employment, and the joint-stock capitalist corporation that depends on that relation, is incompatible with organizational democracy because employees have no vote to affect corporate activities (Benedict, 2002b).

True organizational democracy requires that employees have representative input into all aspects of the corporation for which they toil—not merely the terms and conditions of employment, which is all that labour-law allows.

The second stated purpose of Canadian labour-law is to provide a “working balance of power”. There has never been a near-equal balance of power between capital and labour in Canadian history. “Canadian working-class history is composed of *degrees* of subordination” (Benedict, 2002c) and contemporary labour-law, particularly since the mid-1970s, shows marked trends of regression which provide a power imbalance not seen since the pre-war years. Increasingly we see *ad hoc* and institutionalized anti-labour measures designed to disadvantage workers *vis-à-vis* employers: business-friendly labour code revisions; back-to-work legislation; legislated wage controls; abrogation of many employees’ right to strike; degeneration of labour standards legislation; etc. In British Columbia recently, the government has legislated the BC nurses back to work and legislated a new contract between itself and the nurses based on the “employer’s last offer”. It has enacted legislation forcing the BC teachers back to work and again resorted to its dictatorial legislative majority to impose a contract between the two parties. In both of the fore mentioned cases, the government did not turn to a “neutral” third party in the form of interest arbitration to settle the differences. In fact, the government has shown so much contempt for “neutral” third party intervention between it and its employees that it has used the legislature to quash a legally binding agreement that was imposed by an interest arbitrator between the government and the BC doctors. Amazingly, the government had agreed to the process and then utilized the legislature to renege when the results were not of its liking. Obviously, the balance of power between labour and capital in Canada is far from equal and all indications are that the power-gap will widen further before it narrows again (if it ever does).

The final purpose of labour-law that Godard advances is to institutionalize and provide a means for resolution of conflict. Industrial conflict has largely been institutionalized and constrained by contemporary labour-law, but merely outlawing certain forms and means of conflict does not mean that they will not occur:

Russell has studied 663 cases of labour-capital conflict in the years 1915-1924, all of which were covered by the IDIA. He finds that strike activity that actually pushed beyond the legally defined boundaries of the IDIA was the only strategy that offered labour any chance of success, with roughly 80 per cent of all labour victories secured by such means (Palmer, 1992, p. 207).

As workers’ collective perceptions of inequity rise in relation to increased constraints placed on worker freedoms and rights, common sense dictates that “illegal” worker actions will rise in defiance of labour-laws which appear unjust. Further, the mid-term means for the resolution of conflict (grievance arbitration) leaves much to be desired for workers and their organizations. For a more complete examination of this topic, see *The Canadian Grievance Arbitration System: Boon or Bane?* (Benedict, 2002a).

In conclusion, Canadian labour-law fulfills its broad role aptly, protecting the capitalist system itself by incorporating, redirecting, and weakening working-class discontent. However, the narrower role that labour-law is purported to play, by the pluralist state, within capitalist Canada is little more than a placatory sham perpetrated on the working-class. Far from providing true occupational democracy, real labour-capital balance of power, or equitable conflict resolution mechanisms; Canadian labour-law provides but a mere shadow of these ideals to the workers of Canada. Just enough to keep the working-class from mobilizing in potent political opposition, but in reality ensuring that their unions remain “...nothing more than one institution among many in the service of capitalism: a convenient organization for disciplining the workers, occupying their leisure time, and ensuring their profitability for business...”

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Wayne E. Benedict is a Locomotive Engineer at BC Rail and President of the National, Automobile, Aerospace, Transportation and General Workers Union of Canada (CAW) Local 110. He is working toward his Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations at Athabasca University.

HELP AU TO IMPROVE THEIR WEBSITE

The Athabasca University Public Affairs and Communications department is seeking student input on the AU website.

The current website contains a lot of useful content, but it is important to ensure that students can locate the information that they seek. You can help by letting AU know what you are looking for on the AU website, and if the current navigation is working for you.

Take a look at the current AU website at:
<http://www.athabascau.ca>.

Then answer the following questions:

1). From your perspective, what are the 6 most critical things **NEW** or **PROSPECTIVE** students are searching for from our site? Please prioritize your list from 1-6 (1 being the most important, 6 being of less importance).

2). From your perspective, what are the 6 most critical things **CURRENT** students are searching for from our site? Please prioritize your list from 1-6 (1 being the most important, 6 being of less importance).

The time limit on this project is rather short, so please respond as quickly as possible. If you do not have enough information to answer the above questions, any comment would be appreciated. Send your responses to voice@ausu.org with AU Website in the subject line, and I will forward the responses to AU in a bundle on the 25th of April.





NEW PROGRAM HELPS POST-SECONDARY GRADS LAUNCH CAREERS

University of Victoria News Release

For many post-secondary graduates, making the transition from school to the workplace can be difficult. However, thanks to a \$680,000 grant from The Counselling Foundation of Canada, UVic is offering a new career program that allows grads from UVic and other post-secondary institutions to receive the help they need to launch their professional careers.

The Applied Career Transitions (ACT) program offers three modules: career decision-making, career search skills, and supported career search with an optional internship. "While post-secondary graduates have education on their side, their transition to work is often hampered by limited work experience related to their interests and a lack of confidence in their ability to compete in a volatile labour market," says Career Services Manager Jennifer Margison. "Our goal is to help grads develop career management skills and apply them in the real world. These are the kind of skills that grads will be able to use throughout their lives to not only find work but to create it too."

While first preference is given to UVic grads, this free program is open to all recent post-secondary graduates who are permanent residents of Canada and who have little or no professional experience.

For more information call (205) 472-4274 or see:
www.careerservices.uvic.ca/alumni/act.html

<http://communications.uvic.ca/releases/mr030416.html>

GET MOVING OR GET SICK: UBC PROJECT TARGETS CHRONIC DISEASE FACTORS IN KIDS

UBC News Release

A new project led by UBC Human Kinetics Assoc. Prof. Heather McKay intends to get school-aged children moving and reduce chronic disease outcomes such as obesity, osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease.

"The ultimate costs of osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, hypertension and heart disease will be unaffordable," says McKay, principal investigator for the \$1.5 million project, which includes research, program design and policy outcomes. "We are so far beyond talking about treatment. Our only answer is prevention."

...

Programs have classroom activities, scheduled physical education, family and community initiatives, extra-curricular opportunities, and school environment/spirit projects such as the "Walking School Bus," whereby a designated adult supervisor "picks up" students, house by house, on foot and they walk as a group along a set route.

...

McKay says while many physical activity programs have previously been introduced in schools, few have been evaluated for effectiveness.

The ultimate goal of the program is to make physical activity part of the culture in the elementary school system. All provincial schools, including those in rural areas as well as aboriginal communities, will be invited to participate by 2005...

For more information, visit the Action Schools! BC web site at www.actionschoolsbc.ca

<http://www.publicaffairs.ubc.ca/media/releases/2003/mr-03-35.html>

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG: A VIBRANT RESEARCH CLIMATE

University of Winnipeg Press Release

WINNIPEG—Well known for its stellar faculty and award-winning students, The University of Winnipeg is also home to a vibrant research community. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) recently recognized the achievements of University of Winnipeg researchers with nearly a half-million dollars in grants, the highest amount ever received by The University of Winnipeg.

...

Ranked by Maclean's magazine as one of Canada's top four undergrad universities, UWinnipeg is home to more than 8,000 students [and] offers over 400 courses in 40 subject areas from filmmaking to forensics.

<http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/web/media/releasecurrent.shtm>

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN: WHAT'S COMING FOR AUTISM

CALGARY AREA FUNDRAISING EVENTS

AMANDA LYN BALDWIN

If you live in Calgary you've likely heard or seen information posted by Society for Treatment of Autism: radio spots, brochures, posters on the sides of Calgary's buses and bus stops, as well as all kinds of interviews and media coverage. This has been part of the communication objective that Society for Treatment of Autism had set in place during the last year. This communication objective is/was the preview for Capital Campaign.

In the last few years the increase in demand for treatment services (specifically for autism) has been colossal and it will continue to grow. This escalation has placed a strain on the services offered by Society for Treatment of Autism. For example, past growth has forced different portions of the society to operate out of multiple offices spread throughout the city of Calgary. The solution to this problem: more expansion.

Through expansion, Society for Treatment of Autism [STA] will be able to consolidate Services into one large building allowing for all employees to work as a more effective treatment team. The larger building will house offices and classrooms as well as locker rooms and gym equipment for the staff. As well, additional therapy and sensory equipment for the kids will be more accessible. The official Launch of Capital Campaign is May 2003. It is hoped that construction will begin within a year, and will take a year to complete: the goal is for the building to be completed in 2005.

Expansion will not only be through construction. STA hopes to expand their services to include more diagnostic capabilities as well as an enhancement in adult services (which are presently quite minimal). With a spending goal of three million dollars, the facility will better support both clients and employees. But where this budget come from? Since the government only provides enough money to keep STA operating, additional funding must be obtained through a fundraising drive: Capital Campaign. The drive includes many events ranging from press conferences to wine tasting. The most recent event was held in February at "The Garage."

STA even has a sponsor: Mark Knoll is one of Canada's speed skating champions. His accomplishments include being a member of the '98 Olympic Team, 13th in the 5000m at the World Single Distances Championships 2000, and having a national record in the 5000m at the 2001 World Cup. Mark's brother is diagnosed with autism.

There are many ways that you too, can help. Contact Isabelle Martin (Fund Development Officer) anytime at (403) 258-5529 to find **ways you can help**. All kinds of donations of both money and time (volunteering) are needed. You can also help the Society for Treatment of Autism by attending one of the fundraising events listed below:

❖ **Legends Alive Concert**

May 22, 2003, 7:30pm

Saddledome

Call (403) 531-6157 for Tickets (\$15 -\$20)

❖ **Groovy Garden Party/Auction**

June 19, 2003

Bow Valley Square

Contact Isabelle Martin: (403) 258-5529

❖ **Annual Fireman's Ball**

June 7, 2003

\$100.00 per ticket

Contact Isabelle Martin: (403) 258-5529

❖ **3rd Ann. Wine Tasting**

October 18, 2003

Art Space Art Gallery

\$75.00 per ticket

Contact Isabelle Martin: (403) 258-5529

Society For Treatment Of Autism: <http://www.sta-ab.com>

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

For scholarships available through the Athabasca University Student's Union, see the AUSU website at www.ausu.org



ESSAY CONTEST ON AYN RAND'S NOVEL

Value: \$5000

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

Administrator: Ayn Rand Institute

Notes: Essay should be written on Ayn Rand's novel "Atlas Shrugged." There are three second prizes worth \$1000 each and five third prizes worth \$400 each. Open to Canadian students.

Contact Information:

Anthem Essay Contest, Dept. W
The Ayn Rand Institute
P.O. Box 6099
Inglewood, CA 90312

Web Site: <http://www.aynrand.org/contests/atlas.html>

E-mail: essay@aynrand.org

PERSONS CASE SCHOLARSHIPS

Value: \$ 5000

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 30, 2003

Administrator: Alberta Scholarship Programs

Notes: Must be enrolled full time at a post-secondary institution in Alberta and in a program that is either non-traditional for their sex or a program that will contribute to the advancement of women. See the Web site for more details.

Contact Information:

Alberta Scholarship Program
9940 - 106 Street, 9th Floor, P.O. Box 28000, Station Main
Edmonton, AB T5J 4R4

Phone: (780) 427-8640

Fax: (780) 422-4516

Web Site: <http://www.alberta-learning.ab.ca/scholarships>

E-mail: heritage@gov.ab.ca

Application Address: <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/forms.asp>

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

Contributed By AU's *The Insider*



- **CU Expo** - Community-University Institute for Social Research - "Partnerships, Policy & Progress" - May 8-10, 2003, Saskatoon, SK. Details: <http://www.usask.ca/cuisr/cuexpo>
- **Distance Education Technology Symposium (DETS-03)** - sponsored by the Centre for Distance Education - May 15-17, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe. Details: <http://cde.athabasca.ca/DET/2003/> or contact [Pat Fahy](#).
- **AMTEC (Association of Media & Technology in Education in Canada)** - "E-convergence: Education, Media & Technology" - May 25-28, 2003, Montreal, PQ. Details: <http://www.amtec.ca>
- **ICDE World Conference** - 21st annual - June 1-5, 2003 - Hong Kong. Details: <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/HK2003>
- **CADE** - June 7-11, 2003 - St. John's, NF. Details: <http://www.cade-aced2003.ca/>
- **"Women and Leadership in Higher Education: How Thick is the Glass Ceiling?"** - International Conference - June 12-14, 2003 - Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. Details: http://www.swaac.ca/Prof_Dev.htm or <http://www.swaac.ca/Regional.htm>
- **Distance Teaching & Learning Conference:** - 19th annual - "Working Smarter - Building on Success" - Aug. 13-15, 2003 - Madison, Wisconsin. Details: <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference>
- **AU Learning Services Conference** - October 3 & 4, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe. Details to follow.

OTHER CONFERENCES

- **Teaching In A Digital Age** - the impact of new communication technologies on teaching and pedagogy. l'Université de Montréal. <http://profetic.org:16080/coll2003/> [French only]

Know of an educational conference that is not on this list? Contact voice@ausu.org with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.

Notice to AU Graduate Students and Those Considering Grad Studies at AU

Athabasca University Students' Union is in the process of establishing an AU Graduate Students' Association.

Here's a sampling of benefits of belonging to a grad students' association:

- Grad student representation on University Committees
- University and government advocacy and lobbying
- Affiliation with provincial and national graduate students' organizations.
- Assistance with university/student dispute resolution
- Information source
- Networking

For more information contact:

Shirley Barg [sbarg@ausu.org], Vice-President
Athabasca University Students' Union
Call: 1-800-788-9041 ext 3413

Community Networks Group

To suggest listings for events, conferences, or opportunities in your area, contact voice@ausu.org.

Finding Solutions for Alberta's Schools *A Public Forum Hosted by the Alberta Liberal Caucus*

April 24, 2003 7:30 p.m.
@ The Provincial Museum of Alberta
12845 - 102 Avenue / Info: 427-2292
<http://www.albertaliberals.ab.ca>

Panelists ...

Michael Griffith - Policy Analyst, Education Commission, US. Provided expert advise on school funding to many states including Illinois, New Jersey, Montana and Kansas.

Dr. Dean Neu, Ph. D., CA - Future fund professor of accounting, Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary. Expert on education funding in Alberta.

Les MacFadyen - Thirty-three years of teaching experience. Recognized by the Canadian College of Teachers for outstanding Peace Studies and recognized by the Province of Alberta as a 'Teacher of Excellence.'

Neil Evans - Former Assistant Vice Principal at W.P. WAGNER, Queen Elizabeth and Ross Shepherd high schools. Former Principal of Hardisty Junior High and Assistant Principal at Britannia Junior High and Killarney Junior High.

Kathy Howery - Edmonton parent and strong advocate for public education.

Hayle Grundy - Grade 10 student at Ross Shepherd High School. Organized hugely successful petition in support of public education this spring.

Karen Beaton - President, Edmonton Public School Teachers. School Principal since 1994 and teacher since 1968. Strong advocate for teachers and for public education.

Join us!

Courtesy of: The Community Networks Group Tel/Fax: 474-6058 / Cell: 995-6819

C A U S
Council of Alberta University Students
Athabasca • Calgary • Alberta • Lethbridge

CAUS represents university students across Alberta. Visit the CAUS and the Tuition CAUSE websites to learn more about what CAUS is doing to keep Alberta tuitions affordable.

CAUS: <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/caus/alpha/>
Tuition Cause: <http://tc.su.ualberta.ca/>



CLASSIFIEDS:

CLASSIFIED SPACE:

Students of AU may print classifieds in *The Voice* free of charge (maximum three per issue) as long as they are not representing a company or product.

Classified ads should be submitted to the editor at voice@ausu.org with 'CLASSIFIED AD' listed in the subject title.

The Editor reserves the right to refuse any classified advertisement at her discretion. Thank-you.

THE VOICE

c/o Athabasca University Students' Union
#306, 10030-107th Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3E4
800.788.9041 ext. 3413

Editor In Chief Tamra Ross Low

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