

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 34
August 20, 2003

Calculus and Crocs

Post secondary down under

Ontario in the dark

How did it happen?

How to conduct a successful salon

Reviving the lost art of conversation

The first ever Voice writing contest!

Win scholarship dollars and become a
published writer! Details inside...

Plus: Canadian FedWatch!, Flicks &
Folios, Dear Sandra, and news,
announcements and opportunities
from your university and beyond.

THE VOICE

Aug 20, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 34

Welcome To The Voice PDF

The Voice has an interactive table of contents. Click on a story title or author name to jump to an article. Click the bottom-right corner of any page to return to the contents. Some ads and graphics are also links.

FEATURES

EDITORIAL PAGES

ARTICLES

HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL SALON

Bill Pollett

JUNK TV

Rebecca Flan

CALCULUS AND CROCODILES: Studying in Australia

Stacey Steele

LIGHTS GO OUT IN ONTARIO AND THE NE UNITED STATES

Shannon Maguire

WORK REFORM: PART ONE

Wayne E. Benedict

AND THEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT

Debbie Jabbour

FICTION FEATURE

POETRY BY

Shahzadi Bhatti

COLUMNS

AU GRAD PROFILES - The final three grad profiles of 2003

Sandra Moore

DEAR SANDRA

FLICKS & FOLIOS - Terminator 3

Laura Seymour

CANADIAN FEDWATCH!

Karl Low

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

The Insider

FROM THE READERS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CLASSIFIEDS!

C A U S

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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/>



We love to hear from you! Send your letters to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter in the Voice.

The following letter is similar to one by the same author that was originally published in the Edmonton Journal on August 10. The Journal version of the letter was edited for brevity but contained the same information.

14 August, 2003

Once again, fellow students, education is under attack in Alberta. Unbelievably, this latest effort to increase the financial burden for students of higher education originates from within an educational institute. Athabasca University has asked the Alberta Government to let it “deregulate” tuition fees.

Is it a coincidence that recent Athabasca University advertisements featured Premier Ralph Klein as its star student? (Scary, isn't it?) Klein is the author of Alberta's ill-planned, and disastrously expensive energy deregulation program. In return for higher energy bills, Klein has offered Albertans the opportunity to buy energy services from Direct Energy/British Gas, a company with a history of unethical practices, including the illegal forging of customer signatures on energy contracts in Ontario. Welcome to Ralph's world!

Has the Ralph Klein deregulation disease now infected institutes of higher learning? It appears that “Canada's open university” will be the next victim of this “deregulation” mania. It is especially worrisome, though, that an institution which should be advocating the availability of higher learning would actually pursue a program that will be a deterrent for many students in financial need.

How can Athabasca University justify its request to charge fees higher than those of other public universities in Alberta? Ironically, Athabasca University should have lower expenses than other universities. The University of Alberta, for example, is a large complex of buildings that includes hundreds of classrooms, laboratories, and other facilities frequented by undergraduate students. In addition, the U of A is also faced with the costs of heating, cleaning, maintaining, and providing security for its sprawling campus. In comparison, Athabasca University offers very few classroom courses. Instead, most of its courses are offered almost exclusively as distance education, and therefore,

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Athabasca does not face the same large capital expenditures and associated expenses faced by other universities. If Athabasca U cannot offer courses for lower fees than other universities, it seems to me that there is something very wrong at Athabasca University. In short, although the President of the university has previously suggested that Athabasca University students do not have the same expenses as other students, **it is very clear that Athabasca University does not have the same expenses that other universities have.**

In the larger picture, however, we should all be concerned about the implications of tuition fee deregulation. If Athabasca University has no limits placed on its tuition fees, of course other educational institutions would want the same freedom. These changes would have catastrophic consequences for Albertans pursuing higher education. It is especially unfortunate when an institute of higher learning gets on the "deregulation" bandwagon.

**J.R. Buhler,
Student
Athabasca University**

Response to J. R. Buhler's letter by AU President Dominique Abrioux. Originally published in the Edmonton Journal on August 12, reprinted with permission of the author.

While I am very sympathetic to concerns around the escalating cost of post-secondary education, J.R. Buhler's letter (August 10) concerning Athabasca University's position on the proposed Alberta Tuition Fee Policy fails to recognize several extraordinary factors.

AU's undergraduate tuition has gone from being the highest in the province (1995/1996) to the lowest (2003/2004) and is now a full \$500 per year less than at the University of Alberta. Not once during these nine years did AU increase its fees by the permissible maximum. This shift in tuition positioning coincided with dramatic growth, from 11,000 students to over 26,000.

Under the proposed policy, AU would be penalized for its commitment to accessibility and would be mandated significantly lower tuition fee caps in future years than other universities. Alberta Learning recognizes this undesirable outcome and is recommending that distance education courses be exempted from the cap provisions of the proposed Regulation.

AU supports this proposal. Otherwise, it will be forced to cap (even reduce) enrolment until its tuition fee revenue falls below the mark that would allow it to consider increasing fees by the maximum permissible at sister institutions. This would serve neither the students' nor the institution's needs. It would represent an even greater disservice to accessibility than tuition fee increases that, for strategic reasons, would not result in AU students paying higher fees than students at other Albertan universities.

Lastly, tuition fees are only one of three significant financial barriers faced by students, the other two being foregone income and relocation-related living expenses. In all cases, Athabasca University students are significantly less disadvantaged than students attending traditional campuses.

**Dominique Abrioux, Ph.D.
President
Athabasca University**

Response to D. Abrioux's letter by AUSU President Debbie Jabbour. Originally published in the Edmonton Journal on August 14, reprinted with permission of the author.

I would like to thank Athabasca University president Dr. Dominique Abrioux for the information he has provided in response to the letter from concerned AU student J.R. Buhler.

While the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) understands the pressures the current tuition fee policy has created for our institution, we do not feel that removal from any type of legislated tuition limits is the answer.

What guarantee do current and future AU students have that the university, once removed from government policy restrictions, will continue to provide students with some degree of predictability and protection from excessive tuition increases?

Without such legislated protection, AUSU believes that the removal of distance education from the tuition fee policy, with no other guaranteed means of ensuring predictability or fiscal responsibility in terms of the financial demands on students, effectively deregulates distance education, placing Athabasca University students at a disadvantage.

Strategic reasons and market forces are insufficient to ensure tuition control.

Abrioux stated that AU students are less disadvantaged than students on traditional campuses due to no loss of foregone income and relocation-related living expenses. This is true. However, AU students are highly disadvantaged in that, as part-time mature students, most of us are unable to access forms of government assistance such as student loans and bursaries. We cannot be further disadvantaged by having our protection against excessive tuition increases removed.

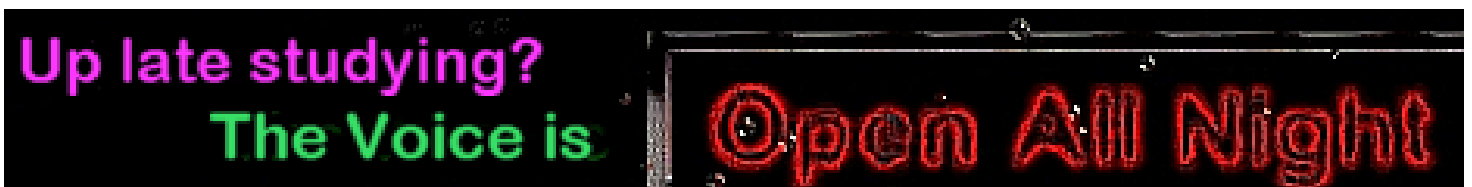
AUSU is therefore asking the Alberta government to keep AU within the tuition fee policy, and to ensure the university has adequate government funding to fulfil its mandate as an accessible open university of which Alberta and Canada can be proud.

Debbie Jabbour
President
Athabasca University Students' Union

Dear Voice Editor,

Last week's Voice was really good! I especially enjoyed the article on turning 50; it's nice to see a little humour, as well as the article on a day in the park. These little peeks into the lives of other AU students (which are superbly written), are interesting, entertaining and informative. Keep up the GREAT work!

Sandra Moore
Redcliff, AB



EDITORIAL PAGES

THIS WEEK

Three new Voice writers....

Bill Pollett, Rebecca Flan and Shannon Maguire join the Voice as writers this week.

HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL SALON - Bill Pollett and his friends are reviving the tradition of the conversational salon...

JUNK TV - Not everything on the tube is educational, but is that necessarily a bad thing? Rebecca Flan finds merit in televised escapism...

LIGHTS GO OUT IN ONTARIO AND THE NE UNITED STATES - Shannon Maguire covers the blackout, and how the re-powering of Ontario is progressing...

CALCULUS AND CROCODILES - What you need to know if you are considering post secondary study in Australia...

Report on Dr. Abrioux's statements delayed

Sorry folks. Transferring the interview with Dr. Abrioux from the tapes to mp3 format proved a bit trickier than I had imagined [actually, I just bought the wrong cable and thus the transfer was in muffled mono], so there is a delay on that report I promised. It is well in hand, though, and I hope to have the entire interview online very shortly along with the other materials presented by Dr. Abrioux.

Dominique has also responded to last week's editorial with some interesting new information, which I'll discuss next week because I have just received his e-mail.

So, you are spared my ramblings for this week, but expect an extensive report both on Dr. Abrioux's statements and the recent council meeting in next week's issue...

Watch the front page of the AUSU website for the mp3 files of the interview. The files will be posted on the AUSU website only, not directly on The Voice - though I'll provide links in The Voice next week.

Also, very shortly I'll be posting the first ***Voice Annual Reader Survey***. I know, I know, between AUSU and The Voice we are always surveying you guys, but given that you all attend this university from a distance, it's the only way to make sure that the Students' Union and The Voice are providing you with great services for your money.

This will be much more extensive than the last survey, and the prizes will also be much bigger. Watch for the survey, and please comment voluminously, so that the Voice can continue to provide information that is relevant to you.

And, on another topic entirely, I attended a meeting of the AU web editors today, and I can tell you that there are great plans in the works for improvements to the AU web site, which will in time allow you much greater access to all of your registration and course information. I think that all students will love the new site. As always, if you have comments on the AU site you can forward them to me at voice@ausu.org, since I will have an opportunity to forward these to the AU web unit as student rep at future meetings.

AUSU Survey on Tuition Deregulation at AU.

AU has asked the Alberta government for exemption from the cap which dictates how much tuition can be raised each year. So far, AU has not released a statement explaining the need for this change, but has communicated several reasons for this request to the Students' Union.

AUSU has created a small survey to assess student opinions on the move toward deregulated tuition for AU. You can access the survey, and read more information on this topic, here:

<http://www.ausu.org/tuitionsurvey/index.php>

All AU students are urged to voice their opinion on this very important matter.

The first Voice writing contest

See this issue for full details of the first Voice writing contest. Good luck to all entrants. Please ensure that you differentiate between items submitted for the contest, and those submitted for immediate publication!

Link of interest

The first thing most new students receive when they become registered at a university is a shiny new student ID card. What could make you feel more like a real student than having your name and a dorky pass-port style photo emblazoned on a university card? Well, AU has picture ID cards too, provided in conjunction with AUSU and the Office of the Registrar.

Ok, ID cards at most schools can be used for all sorts of nifty things like buy food in vending machines, pay for photo-copies, access reserved parking, etc, while the AU id card is really a very basic plastic card with your name, picture, and student ID number. Still, these little cards are invaluable for obtaining student discounts [remember, while many places don't allow student discounts for mature students, there are a number of places that do. Always ask!] and for proving that you are, in fact, a bona fide university student.

Make sure to obtain one of these cards if you plan on buying any software, because academic pricing is phenomenal. For information on how to get your AU student ID card, visit :

<http://www.ausu.org/services/studentid.php>

Fiction Wanted

The Voice fiction feature has become popular, but submissions have been slow. Send us your best fiction today, and it might become our next feature.

Attention Budding Writers

The Voice needs some new Voices! We know you have plenty to say, so why not get paid for it. Send us a writing sample or article for submission and you might be published in an upcoming issue. It's fun, it's easy, and it pays. Contact voice@ausu.org for more details.

A green banner with white and yellow text. On the left, it says "Missing out on all the deals?" in large white letters, with "www.ausu.org/services" below it in smaller white letters. On the right, it says "Get an AU ID card, today!" in large yellow letters. To the right of the text is a small image of a white AU student ID card with a photo of a student and the text "Alberta University of Education", "Student Identification & Access Card", "Jane K. Blumenthal", and "1234567".

Missing out on all the deals?

www.ausu.org/services

Get an AU ID card, today!



THE FIRST VOICE MAGAZINE WRITING CONTEST!

\$600 in scholarships to be awarded
\$300 each in the fiction and non-fiction categories

Write for The Voice and win money for your education.

The Voice is launching its very first writing contest, with categories for both fiction, and non fiction.

Non-Fiction: In 1500 words or less, tell us what you would do if you were the President of Athabasca University. Feel free to use research or statistics in your article [with proper citations], or write a creative opinion piece. Don't just write a critique of AU - tell us what you would do to make a difference and to make distance education even better!

Fiction: Free form - write a 1500 word or less fiction submission in any genre or any format. Short stories, poetry, a scene from a play, even a comic. Be creative!

Please read the contest rules and regulations and submission guidelines very carefully to ensure you are not disqualified. Good luck!

Rules and Regulations:

- Entrants must be students of Athabasca University. Student status will be confirmed with the AU registrar. Please ensure that the registrar has your current address and contact information.
- All entries become the property of The Voice. Winning entries will be published in an upcoming Voice issue. The Voice reserves the right to print non-winning entries at a rate of remuneration in accordance with current Voice freelance submission rates. The Voice may use information from non-fiction entries to create a composite article about what entrants would do as president of AU. No remuneration will be provided for such use.
- All decisions regarding this contest and the selection of winners remain with the judging panel and are final and binding.
- AU, AUSU, and Voice staff or council members are not eligible for the contest.
- Entries will be judged by a panel to be selected by the Voice Editor, and this panel may include: AU students, AU tutors, and/or AUSU council members. The panel will include at least 3 members.
- The Voice Editor will collect articles and oversee the judging, but will not be a judge.
- Entries must be original works which have not been printed or published elsewhere, and must not be course assignment papers or derivatives of.
- Entries must not contain any information that would make the identity of the author evident to judges. To insure fairness, all entries will be forwarded to the judging panel with a reference number attached, but no personally identifying information will be forwarded. The Voice Editor will keep the identity of the authors private until the contest closes. The Voice editor will keep a record of the authors of submissions, and will be the sole owner of this list.
- Entries will not be edited for grammar, spelling, or content, although The Voice Editor may black out any personally identifying information contained within the submission. Otherwise, entries will be forwarded to the judging panel, as is.
- **The deadline for submissions in both categories will be October 15, 2003. The winner will be announced by November 10, 2003. The Voice reserves the right to extend either deadline if necessary.**
- One grand prize winner will be selected in both the fiction and non-fiction categories. If no entries are received in one of the categories, the prize money will be returned to the Voice scholarship budget. Prizes will be awarded in the form of a cheque, payable in Canadian funds.
- The Voice reserves the right to add additional, secondary prizes.

- The Voice is not responsible for lost emails. The Voice editor will confirm receipt of all entries by email. Follow up if you do not receive a reply.
- All entrants agree to allow their name and city to be printed, along with their submission, should it be selected as a winning entry. No further remuneration will be paid to the contest winner when their entry is printed.
- Entrants will be asked to sign a standard Release and Indemnity form; each prize winner agrees to release the Sponsor and its agents from any liability in connection with the prizes awarded in this contest.
- Any entrant found to be tampering with the contest results, or attempting to influence any of the judging members, or using any forums or other public communications media to advise others of which entry is theirs will be disqualified; or if The Voice editor determines, at her sole discretion, that any other form of tampering has been attempted, that entrant will be disqualified.
- Where applicable, this contest is subject to all federal, provincial and municipal laws. Contest void where prohibited by law.

Submission Guidelines:

- Your submission must be an electronic file, sent as an attachment to email. Submissions sent as the body of an email will not be accepted. Contact voice@ausu.org if you require instructions on how to attach a file to an email.
- Submissions should be in Microsoft Word format [.doc], rich text format [.rtf] or plain text format [.txt]. If you use a Word Processor other than Word or work on a Mac computer, you can save a file in one of these alternate formats using the 'save as' function and selecting the desired format on the save menu. Contact The Voice editor if you require assistance in formatting your submission.
- All entries must be under 1500 words, due to judging time constraints. Length will be determined by the Word Count feature in Microsoft Word. Your References and Citations section will not be included in the word count.
- Entries should not include unnecessary formatting such as drop caps, graphics [unless the graphic is integral to the work], or unusual fonts. Times New Roman or Arial 12 point font are preferred. Entries must be text - scans of hand written or typed documents will not be accepted.
- All entries forwarded to the judging panel will be converted to the same file format, font style and font size.
- Submit your entry as an email attachment. The email should include the following information: Your full name, your AU student ID number, an email address and telephone number where we may contact you, your home address, the title of your entry, and whether you are submitting a fiction or non-fiction entry. Make sure non-fiction entries are based on the topic question detailed above. Fiction entries can be on any topic you like. Do not include your contact information within your article - but be sure to include a title. Your contact information and article will be coded, and filed separately.
- Entries will be judged on the following criteria:
 - Non Fiction entries: will be judged on originality, creativity, the plausibility of your suggestions, and how well your support your suggestions with data or argument. You will also be judged on the presentation of your article, including professionalism, proper spelling, grammar and syntax, and readability.
 - Fiction entries: will be judged on creativity, entertainment value, and the originality or your writing style. Regardless of the genre you choose, you will be judged on the effectiveness of your piece, and your technical writing skills.



AUSU STUDENT GIFT PACKS NOW AVAILABLE

AUSU students can now order their student gift packs, free courtesy of your students' union.

The packs are filled with AUSU logo items to help you study, relax, and learn more about AUSU.

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HOW TO CONDUCT A SUCCESSFUL SALON

Bill Pollett



Conversation is the essence of culture and civilization. Throughout the ages man has exchanged legends around paleolithic campfires and rumours across the backyard fence. We have made idle chit chat over cucumber sandwiches at the vicar's garden party and debated the fate of nations in solemn parliamentary proceedings. We have whispered in church, bantered on the surface of the moon, and spread malicious gossip about Wally, that gigolo from Customer Service, between toilet cubicles. Today, in the proliferation of book clubs, support groups, television talk shows and Satanic cults there is evidence the primal need for a good chin wag remains undiminished.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the popular revival of the Parisian tradition of conversational salons. Throughout the world, small groups of people are stepping away from their computer terminals, shutting off their cell phones and pagers, their fax machines and portable dialysis equipment. Shedding their isolating technological cocoons, they meet face-to-face in convivial surroundings, enjoying the peculiar music of the human voice and sharing important ideas about topics as diverse as theology, flamenco dancing, experimental haberdashery, and marsupial husbandry.

I freely admit that in the past the closest I came to this tradition was my semi-annual poker night; really nothing more than an excuse to smoke cheap cigars roughly the size of atomic-class submarines and to drink enough gin martinis (hold the vermouth) to float said submersibles. In keeping with the zeitgeist, however, I and a few friends have recently launched our own weekly salon, and I would like to pass on to you some valuable advice.

To begin with, it is important to choose comfortable surroundings with pleasing decor that will enhance the conversational flow. My place, for instance, is filthy and small, and is decorated in a style I like to call Early Opium Den, which is why we meet at Wally's condo.

Experienced *bon vivants* will tell you that pleasing food begets pleasing talk. Keep it simple. We have found that classic presentations such as European cheeses, seasonal fruits and vegetables, smoked oysters, and shrimp cocktails are invariably more appealing than showier and more outlandish fare. My Blowfish Surprise, for instance, was not well received, and brought about more than one threat of legal reprisal.

Of paramount importance, of course, is the selection of guests. Always try to invite people with a broad and diverse range of knowledge and interests. My cousin Vera, for example, is completing her doctoral thesis in an obscure field of quantum mechanics, whilst my friend Carl is easily amused by shiny things.

Try, also, to encourage the display of special talents. Aside from her academic interests, Vera is an accomplished mimic as well as an enthusiastic musician capable of capturing in spirit both the Elizabethan madrigal tradition and Norwegian death metal, albeit unintentionally and within the same Leonard Cohen song.


Provocative guest speakers will always spark lively discussion. Taxidermists, mimes, even politicians can provide interesting topical perspectives. At a recent gathering we were treated to a presentation from a local amateur dry cleaner who is currently engaged in translating the complete works of the tenth century Scandinavian epic poet, Ingmar Gokstad, from Swedish into Spanish and back into Swedish again.

Above all, invite guests who understand that effective listening is the mark of an accomplished Conversationalist. I have personally found that there is nothing more irritating than a boorish, verbose, self-absorbed lout who simply does not know when to stop talking, prattling on and on long past the point at which the listener begins to lose both interest and patience, tenaciously pursuing a stale idea, often using more banal

clichés than I've had hot dinners; a trait immeasurably worsened in those cases in which the speaker pompously attempts to display a degree of perspicacity far beyond his reach.

Finally, and above all else, remember that the art of conversation is one that requires balance. Be both challenging and tactful. To disagree with one's fellows, urging them on to more profound insight in defence of their ideas, is the very cornerstone of discourse. The application of the choke hold, however, is generally considered to be poor form.

And in case all else fails, stock up on gin.



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CALCULUS AND CROCODILES:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT POST SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Stacey Steele



Sun, sand, surf and studying. Ever dream about post secondary in Australia? Here's a breakdown of all you need to know.

What to study

Research the program best suited to you. Whether it is Landscape Architecture at the University of Adelaide in South Wales or Tropical Vet Science at James Cook University in Queensland, researching the right program is a must. A great website for checking out all the universities available to you is the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee site. Go to www.avcc.edu.au and select "Australia's

Universities." Most of the university websites have a section devoted to international students to answer any additional questions you may have.

Some questions to ask yourself

Before you settle on a program, ask yourself, "do I have all the requirements for this course/degree?" If you have an art history degree and you want to sign up for post grad studies in Aquaculture at the U of Queensland, you'd better do some checking to ensure that you qualify.

Also ask, "can I use this degree in my home country?" If you want professional accreditation in your country, will this degree get you that? And don't forget about future suitability, Sure marine studies sounds interesting, but are you still planning that move to Saskatchewan?

Another thing to consider is that almost all schools require English language proficiency.

Apply for studies

At most of Australia's university websites you can apply online, or request an application form. Some schools, such as the University of Melbourne, have overseas representatives that you can contact. Make sure that you are prepared to include full details of any secondary or post secondary studies you have completed, and possibly proof of English language proficiency.

Finances

Be aware that you might be required to pay full tuition fees before applying for your student visa, so start saving up now. The average tuition fees range between \$8000-\$12,000 (CDN). Check with the particular university, and your own government for scholarships and funding available. Expect to spend around \$350 a week for cost of living.

Still waiting for rich Aunt Hilda to kick? Spent your last dime on Pac Man? There are some options available to you. Consider a short-term stay such as an internship or semester exchange. Many universities have these options available for international students.

Do you want fries with that? With a student visa you can work twenty hours a week during school, and full time during vacation periods. While you are there, why not give Aunt Hilda something to do? Family members (spouse and/or dependants) who come with you can also get permission to work up to twenty hours a week, or full-time if you're obtaining a masters or doctorate. Other (non-dependent) family members can apply for temporary residence in Australia. Apply for permission to work at the same time as applying for your student visa. See www.immi.gov.au for more information on working and studying in Australia.

Applying for Your Visa

You have your sunscreen ready and a pocketful of cash, now what? Before paying tuition, contact the Australian embassy in your country to make sure you are eligible for a student visa (in Canada contact www.ahc-ottawa.org). The most important step is applying for your student visa, but there are some things you need first: a letter of offer from the university you plan to attend, and health insurance. Sometimes health insurance is covered in the fee to the university, who will pay the insurer for you. If you're not sure, find out from your contact at the university.

After all that there are a few routes you can take to apply. You can request the application from the Australian Embassy in your country (check out the Australian department of immigration website for contacts in your country: www.dima.gov.au) and mail or drop it off in person, or you can apply online. Check out www.ahc-ottawa.org/visa/ for all the tools you need to apply for a student visa and permission to work. They have some great information to download.

Pack your bags

Ok your dog's fed, your teeth are brushed, and you're ready to go. Well, not quite yet. After you have received your student visa it's time to make travel arrangements and research accommodations. Plan to arrive two to four weeks prior to your first day of classes (the Australian school year starts in February and ends in October- our winter is their summer). Acquaint yourself with the city, attend all orientation classes and seminars at your university and look for a part time job, if needed. Oh yeah, you might want to set up a bank account and convert some of your money to Australian dollars.

Need a place to hang your hat? Try living on campus. For example, the University of Tasmania has campus housing available for \$3200 (AUS) a year. Research the type of residences available. Single rooms and catered residences will be more expensive, but worth it if you need time alone or don't have time to cook.

If you want off-campus housing, ask the university for an off-campus rental list. Don't rent sight unseen though. Stay at a youth hostel or motel for a few weeks while you house/apartment hunt. Check out www.yha.org.au for listings of hostels in the area and some neat travel tips.

Try to arrange, if you can, for someone from your school to meet you at the airport and show you around. Many universities have representatives that are hired to do just that. If you plan on doing any driving, go to a local license bureau and inquire about obtaining an overseas driver's license. You might need your home province or country to fax a driver's abstract, so keep those phone numbers handy.

Once you've settled in, be sure to inform the University of your new address and phone number. Oh yeah, don't forget to call your mom. As for me, I'll be sitting in my beach chair having a middy, watching Crocodile Dundee, and staring at the snow.

Some Interesting Australian Slang

(taken from the Dictionary of Australian Slang at: <http://www.australiatravelsearch.com.au/trc/slang.html>.)

Av-ago-yer-mug - to encourage someone to put more effort into it

Big Smoke - the city

Bottlo - liquor store

Cakehole - the mouth

Date - the buttocks (a date roll is toilet paper)

Down the road - term indicating no particular range of distance, could be a few hundred metres or a few hundred kilometres

Dinkum - fair, honest

Full as a boot - drunk

Get Stuffed - go away

Middy - a middle sized glass of beer

Spit the Dummy - get very upset

Tinny - a can of beer

Up a gum tree - having difficulties

Wally - someone who keeps making mistakes

JUNK TV

Rebecca Flan



Last week my father-in-law overheard me discussing a popular TV show. He briefly asked why I wasted time on such "junk TV". I brushed off his comment, simply saying this was not junk TV and continued the conversation, explaining and laughing about the show's contents. My father-in-law continued to listen and eventually asked again, more adamantly this time, was this not junk TV? Was this not a waste of time? The comment threw me slightly for I realized, as I listened to myself, it could certainly come across that way. Literary or life changing it was not, but did that make it unintelligent or irrelevant? Did that make it "junk TV"? The show had made me laugh. It had served its sole purpose, which was to entertain me. Why then does television have to be more than entertainment to be respectable?

Much to my dismay, my father-in-law is not alone in his opinions. The point seems to be surfacing everywhere. In an English class I took a few months ago, one of the students and the professor got into a discussion on modern day movie directors. The professor was arguing why he preferred Stanley Kubrick to Steven Spielberg. A student backed him up by saying he felt directors like Spielberg insulted our intelligence, as an audience, by continually spelling out their message thus leaving little to be pondered or questioned. It occurred to me that this is where the argument stands. Television can be either thought provoking or a guilty pleasure. The middle ground seems to have evaded us entirely. Watching a program on television that provokes, or even demands, the viewer to question the issues certainly has its pros. The idleness of television makes a good enough argument that the least we could do, as we sit there with our popcorn, is think a little.

However, while the strong argument for intellect stands, one wonders how long we could go without entertainment. Certainly there is a time and a place for sheer amusement. At some point we need to relax and reenergize. At some point we all need to laugh, cry or just be entertained. The world is a hard and brutal place. It tests survival, strength of character and the very backbone of the human race. In such a place, why then does it often feel wrong to celebrate the lighter side of life. Terrorists, divorce, wars and abuse test humanity and we bombard ourselves with philosophical questions of right and wrong. Suddenly, a little *Friends* is a welcome change.

What we choose to watch, or if we choose to watch at all, depends on our wants and needs. Obviously, what constitutes "junk TV" varies between individuals. One person's trash is another person's treasure, if you will.

Our viewing choices depend entirely on the person in question and become merely a matter of opinion. Here, however, is where it gets tricky. Opinions get scoffed at as much as Jerry Springer and yet are significant contributors in our decisions.

Perhaps opinions face ridicule because they suggest there is no right or wrong in the situation. Opinions suggest we are basing our feelings on things other than proof or fact and we can't make a proper decision without being backed up by proof and fact, so end of discussion. This may be a valid point, however, the reality is that backed up or not, people and their opinions make decisions with consequences all the time. For example, our opinions elect world leaders. A war is but a large difference in opinion. A jury determines the fate of a man based on their opinion. Hopefully, such consequential opinions are backed up with proof or evidence, but this is not always the case. The consequences are felt regardless once the opinions have been cast. Therefore, we should really give opinion the significance it deserves. Opinions set things in motion and give shape to different aspects of our lives.

Television is not exempt from the influence of our opinions. What we want to see, what excites us and what interests us, appears on the screen. These ideas get made into news stories, movies, sitcoms, etc. In essence our opinions govern the channels. Television, in this way, feels calculated. It is no coincidence what we see on the screen, as it reflects what we wanted to see as a culture. If reality shows or daredevil stunts take precedence we need to accept that someone is watching these shows. As long as people tune in, the shows have value to the networks. It is the networks' job to provide shows people watch, not to provide shows that are morally respectable for people to watch. Our reasons for watching really only matter to us.

Hence, the argument stands that TV is too easy. The ease with which we can turn on the TV is astoundingly common and natural to most of us. It is easier to fill our time with television than it is to leave our homes and do something more active. The question becomes, do we constantly defer to the effortless activities in our leisure time? If it is easier to watch an entertaining show than one that requires us to think do we watch the entertainment and ignore the critical issues simply because it is easier to do so? Is this where the critics have a point? Does entertainment distract us from the important issues and is this where it loses our respect?

Such questions certainly surround the issue of respectable television. A solution to these worries comes from my mother. I can hear her now, nagging me to finish my vegetables. What she was really saying was to balance out my diet. The same principle applies with television. We all need a little variety. A week of *Friends* is no better and no worse, than a week of Kubrick. Go on, I say, and watch something profound, be inspired by that documentary or that abstract film. Watch something educational and fill up your TV viewing time with thought-provoking and analytical shows. But don't shy away from the seemingly senseless humour. Admit that you watched every episode of *The Bachelor* and that if *Fear Factor* is on you don't always change the channel. Admit that you thoroughly enjoyed it.

In the end we all have our guilty pleasure. We all find something on the mass of channels to keep us entertained. Perhaps pleasure should not make one guilty. Still, limits are necessary and knowing them makes us consciously aware of our possibilities. As the cliché says, too much of a good thing is bad for you. As we stumble along in life, one only hopes that we know what is best for ourselves, that we know when we need a good laugh and when we need a little motivation.

As I finished my discussion of the popular TV show, I thought about what my father-in-law had said. I decided to take the show for what it was worth to me, which was thoughtless, simple and welcomed entertainment. It was a matter of opinion but it was my matter of opinion and I decided that before I could drop the issue, the next time I caught my father-in-law watching an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie I should ask him if he considered it junk TV.



Innovative Approach Benefits Students

The provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador has announced that over 1600 students have found summer employment under their Student Work and Services Program. While many provinces subsidize some sort of summer employment program for students, the approach of Newfoundland and Labrador is particularly interesting.

Most employment programs work by basically providing some sort of support to employers to hire summer students (which may include wage subsidies), but the Newfoundland and Labrador approach also provides tuition vouchers for students who take on work projects for non-profit community organizations. Working eight weeks will gain a student a \$50/week stipend and a \$1400 tuition voucher. This strikes me as an all around winning situation. The students gain by having a non-taxable tuition voucher, the community gains by getting people to help with community projects over the summer, and the government gains by being able to do all of the above, plus encourage their youth to go on to post-secondary education.

It is these kind of innovative approaches that other provinces and institutions need to try to emulate. The reasoning that things just are not done a certain way is no excuse when we are dealing with difficult problems. Unique situations, such as funding a national distance education university or encouraging students to go to post-secondary in an area where many normally do not, require innovative solutions. It would be nice to actually see some evidence of innovation at Athabasca University.

Research Grants for the Fine Arts

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada is announcing grants to be delivered to researchers and creators of fine arts from post-secondary institutions. The research grants can be up to \$100,000 per year, with an upper limit of \$250,000 over three years. This includes artistic practice. Athabasca University has several professors and tutors who are engaged in artistic creations, from writing books and stories to movies and screenplays. This would be a great way for AU to work on subsidizing their wages.

However, the innovation doesn't have to stop there. Since the SSHRC seems to have a reasonable amount of money at its disposal, why not make proposals to it for further grants that Athabasca University would have an excellent chance of obtaining – such as research into teaching humanities remotely. This would be something almost designed for AU's MDE program to work on. It may not be customary for a university to provide suggestions to a grant delivering body, but then again, it is not customary for a university to be delivering full degrees via distance education. After all, the worst they can do is say no.

1 Billion Dollars for Climate Change

The Prime Minister of Canada has made remarks on the occasion of Ottawa earmarking a billion dollars for implementing the Canadian Climate Change Program. That is a lot of money to devote to this problem, but

given the continual expense of the trend in warming we are experiencing, it may be a smarter investment for our money than a lot of other things.

As fires rage through Alberta and lightning takes out a large electricity grid in Ontario, more and more people are starting to think that something has to be done about the weather. There are some arguments that perhaps the money could be better spent elsewhere as we still do not know for sure whether this climate change is a long-term trend or exactly how much effect man is having (and can have) on the weather patterns, but given the risks of doing nothing, I think we are making the right choice.

Some of this billion dollar expenditure will likely be going into providing grants to make homes more energy efficient. An interesting idea that comes from that is, that it may be possible for other larger institutions to some how tap into this money, say by approaching the government with proposals for cost sharing on making the institutional buildings more energy efficient as well – thus costing less to maintain over the longer term.

After all, a billion dollars is a lot of money, and the more money that is available, the easier it is to get some of it passed over to you.

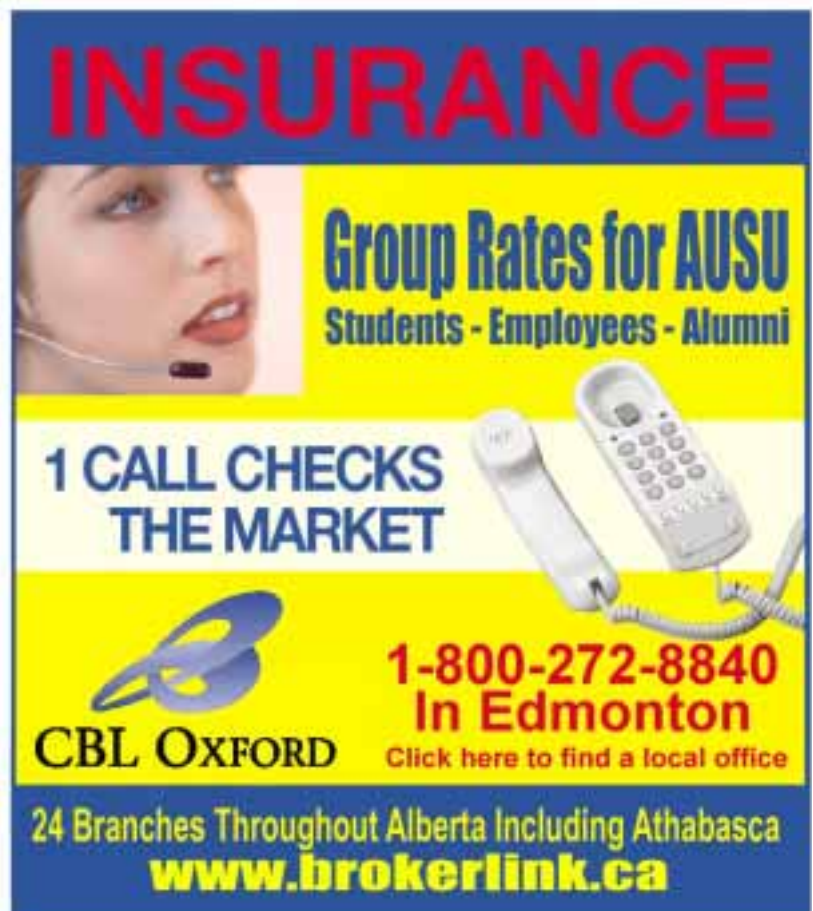
A native Calgarian, Karl is perpetually nearing the completion of his Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Information Studies. He also works for the Computer Sciences Virtual Helpdesk for Athabasca University and plans to eventually go on to tutor and obtain his Master's Degree.



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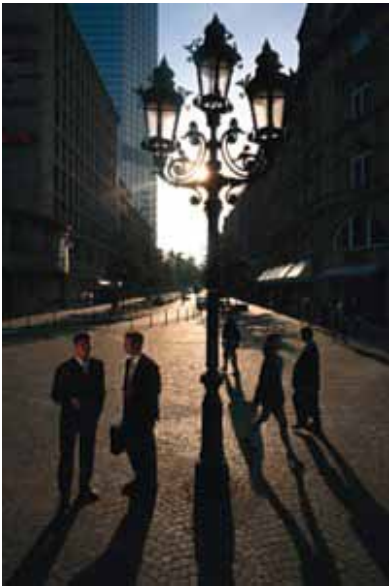
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LIGHTS GO OUT IN ONTARIO AND NORTH-EASTERN UNITED STATES

Shannon Maguire



50 million people in Ontario and the north-eastern United States were shocked on Thursday August 14 when they simultaneously lost their power at 4:15 p.m. ET. Later on that night at 11 p.m. ET Premier Ernie Eves declared a state of emergency for Ontario (CBC - State of Emergency). While most people remained calm and tried to make the best out of a bad situation, others were the victims of crime and misfortune. The Toronto Police reported receiving more than double the usual calls for a weeknight, making 38 major arrests and investigating 114 criminal occurrences. In Gloucester Ontario a 15 year-old boy died in a fire started by a candle and in Ottawa a pedestrian was hit by a car (Friscolanti).

Officials from Canada and the United States immediately started blaming each other for the blackout. At first Ottawa speculated that lightning striking a power plant on the American side of the Niagara Region was the cause of the blackout. The Ontario government later stated that it was a fire instead of lightning and then said it was in Pennsylvania instead of Niagara. The U.S. was blamed once again when Defence Minister John McCallum said that a U.S. section of a shared power grid was the source of the problem. On the U.S. side New York State officials blamed the blackout on Canada. The actual cause of the blackout was traced back to three failed transmission lines in northern Ohio, but experts still do not know how the situation escalated beyond those three lines. Michehl Gent, head of the North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) stated, "the system has been designed and rules have been created to prevent this escalation and cascading. It should have stopped, we think, after the first three line failures" (CBC, August 16).

As of Saturday, August 16 most of the power had returned to Ontario and the United States. Eves estimated that Ontario would not have the power fully restored until the middle of next week. Until that time the cities of Ontario will be experiencing rolling blackouts – the power will be rotated through neighbourhoods so that everyone gets a fair share of power (Friscolanti).

How did it happen

According to CNN (August 16) "electricity generation stations throughout the United States are interconnected in a system called power grids." If a problem occurs in one grid it can cause a blackout in that grid and also can cause a ripple effect that will shut down all of the adjoining grids one after another (CNN, August 16). Ontario and the affected U.S. regions have interconnected grids. Fortunately, Quebec has its own independent system that is only connected to the U.S. to supply them with power and it is protected against the kind of ripple effect described above. This is why they did not lose power in the blackout. Quebec is also sending power to the U.S. and Ontario in an effort to help them get back online (Travers).

Experts stated that the blackout was inevitable. "Critics insist the creaking energy infrastructure that serves the United States and Canada – built on 1950s technology – has been all but overwhelmed by huge increases in the power volume flowing through the grid" (Friscolanti). Bill Richardson, the former energy secretary and present governor of New Mexico said, "We're a superpower with a Third World grid".

The power is being brought back up slowly in order to avoid a "sudden, overwhelming demand" that could cause another blackout. When the system is brought back up and electrical devices are all started up again at the

same time it can put an excessive demand on the system. The power is being restored in stages to minimize the strain on the grid (CNN, August 16).

Blackout History

The current Blackout affecting 50 million people is the largest blackout in North American history. The other power outages worth comparing occurred in 1965, 1977 and 1998. In 1965, 30 million people in Canada and the north-eastern U.S. were left without power for over 13 hours. The 1977 blackout affected most of New York and its suburbs (CBC, August 14). More recently in 1998 an ice storm wiped out the power from eastern Ontario to Southern Quebec. I was present in Ontario in the current blackout and in the ice storm. I was lucky in this blackout to have my power returned at 2:00 p.m. ET on the 14th, although, it would not have been too hard to deal with a longer period since I already endured 8 days without power in freezing temperatures in the ice storm.

What's Being Done

Although the cause of the blackout has been determined there are still unanswered questions. The NERC is trying to determine why three failed power lines led to the largest blackout in North American History and Canada and the United States have agreed to form a joint task force to investigate the incident. The task force will also be investigating methods of preventing more problems from occurring in the future. Prime Minister Jean Chretien and President George Bush made the decision in a 10-minute telephone conversation (CNN, August 15) Hopefully these investigations will lead to a stronger North American power system and more policies for dealing with major blackouts. As for the general population, most people have now learned how dependant we are on electricity; whether this is technological improvement or unnecessary dependence is a matter of opinion.

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AU Profiles:

This column contains the last of our graduate profiles from Convocation 2003.
Congratulations to all grads. Next week, 2 new alumni profiles.

Sandra Moore caught up with Kilmeny, Murray and Shauna at convocation...

AU GRADUATE PROFILE OF KILMENY PEDERSON

AGE: 46

LIVES IN: Elbow, SK

TRAVEL TIME TO ATHABASCA: 8 hours

PROGRAM COMPLETED: Bachelor of Arts

YEARS IT TOOK TO COMPLETE: 5 years

FAVORITE COURSE: Experimental Psychology

LEAST FAVORITE COURSE: None

FAVORITE TUTOR: Jo-Anne Tomie

HIGHEST FINAL GRADE: 93

LOWEST FINAL GRADE: 65



One of the first students I interviewed, Kilmeny is an upbeat energetic woman with an obvious love of learning. Along with her partner Mel, Kilmeny made the eight hour trek to AU to obtain the degree that has changed her life. She has always wanted a degree, but never really followed through. Another bonus of obtaining a degree, besides personal satisfaction for Kilmeny, was that her studying inspired her children to be better students. Kilmeny's son is doing well in college and looks forward to learning even more.

Now that the ink on her degree is dry, Kilmeny plans to continue working with ESL students and learning disabled children, maybe do some counselling, and maybe, just maybe, obtain a graduate degree. Kilmeny encourages other students to organize their time, work hard, keep in contact with your tutors and ask LOTS of questions for success at AU.

Congratulations Kilmeny Pederson, BA

AU GRADUATE PROFILE OF MURRAY KOWALZIK

AGE: 46

LIVES IN: AB

TRAVEL TIME TO ATHABASCA: 8 hours

PROGRAM COMPLETED: Bachelor of General Studies
– Arts & Sciences

YEARS IT TOOK TO COMPLETE: Many!

FAVORITE COURSE: Abnormal Psychology & Medical Anthropology

LEAST FAVORITE COURSE: None



Along with his wife Hazel, Murray traveled 8 hours from southern Alberta to receive his Bachelor of General Studies from AU. Murray says that when his children entered university, and he was studying at AU, he developed a collegial rapport with them.

While working full-time, Murray realized how important it was to set up a routine for studying and encourages other students to do the same. Obtaining a degree has been the accomplishment of a personal goal, and he now plans to pursue a Masters degree through AU. Murray and his wife were very impressed with the way Athabasca University organized the convocation and they encourage other students to not miss the opportunity to participate in convocation ceremonies when their turn arises.

Congratulations Murray Kowalzik, BGS

AU GRADUATE PROFILE OF SHAUNA WATT-PORSCHID

AGE: 36

LIVES IN: Dauphin, Manitoba

TRAVEL TIME TO ATHABASCA: 14 hours (1 WAY!!)

PROGRAM COMPLETED: Bachelor of Nursing

YEARS IT TOOK TO COMPLETE: 4.5 years

FAVORITE COURSE: Nursing Trends

LEAST FAVORITE COURSE: Stats or English

HIGHEST FINAL GRADE: 92

LOWEST FINAL GRADE: 67 (English)

Shauna was one of the few students I meet from Manitoba, and unfortunately there will be no photo to accompany this profile, as she was my very last interview of the day and I had no film left. With three children at home, and while working full time, Shauna achieved her goal of obtaining this degree. She now would like to take her Master's, keep working, and spend more time with her family. She encourages other AU students to be patient (all good things must end, right?) and stated that convocation was such a wonderful experience for her.

Congratulations Shauna Watt-Porschid, BN.

Look for more profiles in upcoming Voice issues. If you are an AU grad and you were not interviewed on convocation day, contact voice@ausu.org to be a part of AU profiles.

As always, we are seeking undergrads, tutors and staff for profiles as well.



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THE VOICE FICTION FEATURE

Poetry by Shahzadi Bhatti

My feelings for you

I don't know how to put in words,
The feelings that I have towards you
All I know is that they are indeed very strong
Because I know my heart could never go wrong

Every time I try to express myself
Something strange comes over me
the words do not even begin to touch
the depths of my feelings, I love you that much

I am so lucky to have you here with me
I have never been blessed with so much happiness
You are a true miracle from God for me
I hope that is something you could only see

Although I can't explain these feelings
All I know is that they are for you and only you
I can't even begin to tell you how much
You've changed my life with your special touch

When I am with you I feel like a flower
Blooming under the petals of life
You are the air that I need to live longer
You are the seed that helps me grow stronger

When I am with you I feel like the waves in the ocean
That hit the shore yet they never come to an end
I want to cherish each and every moment between me and you
That you have given me the pleasure to spend with you

This is just a very small part of how wonderful I feel
Every time I am with you, every time I think of you
Sometimes my feelings tell me this is all a dream
And if that is true, I wish I never wake- up myself
from this dream, because I love you more than life itself

My One And Only...

You are the first ray of sunshine
Early in the morning that shines in my eyes
You are the dream that I've dreamt of
On you I wish I could always rely

You have changed my life
In such a way that I can't explain
You have given me so much love and care
And taken away all my sorrows and pain

You are the shining star in my dark, misty sky
That gives me hope to dream each night
You fulfill all my wishes and hopes
Your presence makes each and every day get bright

You have so much charm in you
That comforts me and protects me
You are like a miracle from God
That no one else but I could see

I wish you could stay in my life forever
But no one can stop what is meant to be
I will always cherish our precious memories in my heart
Because you will always be my one and only...

The Voice buys short fiction in all formats and genres. Submit your poems, short stories, comics or other creative writing to voice@ausu.org. Or, try out for the \$300 prize in the fiction category of the first Voice Writing Contest. See this issue for more details.



Dear Sandra,

How can I get in contact with other AU student in my area (Calgary)?

Lonely Calgarian

Dear Lonely Calgarian,

Unfortunately, the one downfall to studying at a distance is the isolation from other students, many of whom are scattered all across the country or even the globe.

First, I'd suggest visiting the Athabasca University Students' Union discussion forum (go to www.ausu.org and click on the link across the top of the page that says "Message Forums" and then click on discussion forum). There are many students from across Canada and the globe registered on the AUSU discussion forum discussing everything from local politics to AU politics. It could end up getting you in physical contact with other Calgarians as many students swap emails if they find they are in the same area or in the same area of study.

Option #2, if you are a mom or a psychology student, is to check out the AU Psychology Students' Society [AUPSS] or Student Moms' Club [SMC] websites through the "Groups and Clubs" link on the side of the AUSU page (and soon the Groups and Clubs Committee at AU will be unveiling an English Club). The psychology club has in-person coffee group contacts in Calgary, and various other locations across Canada, for students interested in psychology to get together and discuss their studies.

Finally, option #3, contact the AUSU office at ausu@ausu.org with your name, student ID#, email address and city with a note saying you would be interested in getting together with other students in your area. AUSU is working toward a database of interested students in various areas who would like to get together with other students. This database is currently quite small, but it is in the beginning stages.

Hey, maybe there is a student from Calgary on the database waiting for another student to join! It doesn't matter where you live, you never know if another AU student is in your vicinity. With almost 30,000 students world-wide it's a pretty good bet that one may even live next door to you!

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



Work reform takes numerous forms ranging from various management oriented human resource management (HRM) techniques, through industrial democracy and humanization of work, to outright worker ownership and control of the means of production. North American work reform has come about in response to several examinable conditions which have, according to proponents, made their implementation necessary to sustained global competitiveness. This article will examine various components of work reform, explain its purported necessity, evaluate it empirically and theoretically, and conclude with a position on its viability. Part 1 of "Work Reform" will examine North American variants of the subject and next week Part 2 will examine some of the more effective (from labour's perspective) European models.

Japanese management systems are the examples upon which most North American industries that implement HRM have based their work reform initiatives. Japanese methods include: Quality Circles, which "seem to place responsibility for monitoring quality and troubleshooting problems on production workers without a parallel expansion of their authority or increased rewards" (Krahn & Lowe, 1998, p. 246); just-in-time (JIT) systems of production, which utilize contingent workers to save on labour costs and JIT inventory management to reduce "warehousing costs considerably by ordering and receiving parts only as needed" (Zeidenberg, 1993, p. 237); Quality of Working Life (QWL), which is "an umbrella term covering many different strategies for humanizing work, improving employee-employer cooperation, redesigning jobs, and giving employees greater participation in management" (Krahn & Lowe, 1998, p. 239); and Total Quality Management (TQM), which "is a way of managing an organization so that every job, every process, is carried out right, first time and every time" (Morgan & Murgatroyd, 1994, p. 5).

Components of these Japanese systems have evolved in North America into the "new" HRM paradigm, which contains, according to Betcherman *et al* (1994, p. 50) organizational-specific combinations of the following components: formal employee-participation programs such as those previously mentioned; formal job design programs; variable (incentive) pay arrangements for non-managerial employees; employer-sponsored vocational-skills training; employer-sponsored organizational cultural training (group problem solving/decision-making, team building, communications); internal labour markets (internal promotion vis-à-vis external hiring); merit-based promotion (as opposed to seniority-based); alternative scheduling arrangements (flexibility—contingent workers); family-care benefits offered; comprehensive fringe benefits plans; above-average industry wages and benefits; and formal (strategic) human-resource planning.

North American work organizations which have implemented HRM work reforms have done so in response to increased competition as a result of the globalization of trade, and in furtherance of their search for ever-increasing productivity in the face of technology's inability to continue the deliverance of same. Storey (1995, p. 5) states that: "[HRM] is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural, and personnel techniques." In order to acquire the requisite highly committed and capable workforce, organizations pursuing the "high-performance path" must provide training/education to employees, and, at least the appearance of, reciprocity of commitment to the employees in the form of increased intrinsic and extrinsic job rewards. But does work reform, as practiced in North America, actually deliver what it promises to management and labour respectively: increased organizational productivity; and, increased job satisfaction, democratic workplace participation, and challenging work?

Ichniowski *et al* (1996, pp. 322-329) arrive at several conclusions as a result of their examination of empirical evidence from various sources. According to the authors, "innovative HRM practices can improve business productivity, primarily through the use of systems of related work practices designed to enhance worker participation and flexibility in the design of work and decentralization of managerial tasks and responsibilities.

New systems of participatory work practices have large, economically important effects on the performance of the businesses that adopt new practices." But only a tiny percentage of North American businesses have adopted a comprehensive system of work reform, which is required in order for the organization to achieve the highest levels of performance and productivity; *ad hoc* implementation of one or several innovations is generally not successful. The productivity-effectiveness and diffusion of HRM work reforms throughout industries is far more limited than contemporary management literature would profess.

From much of Canadian labour's perspective, HRM work reform initiatives represent merely another form of worker control, not the emancipating work-democratizing revolution that many HRM advocates purport. Job enrichment and job enlargement equate to increased workload without a corresponding increase in job rewards and responsibility. Employee Involvement (EI) initiatives become self-management schemes wherein peers put pressure on each other to maintain increased production (job speed-up), a task formerly performed by management. Workers and their organizations have little, if any, input into the design and adoption of organizational HRM work reform and the decision as to whether to adopt them; and all other issues related to strategic decisions remain the exclusive domain of management—a far cry from true organizational democracy. Not surprisingly, North American unions can, and do, oppose the introduction of HRM initiatives, unless guaranteed certain rights in the labour-management participation process: "the right to know; the right to participate; the right to 'security with change'; and the right to share benefits" (Carr, 1989, p. 102). For instance, the CAW has adopted a policy that "supports the involvement and empowerment of workers provided there is a true partnership and union objectives are not undermined" (Krahn & Lowe, 1998, p. 242).

Contrary to the claims of some authors that HRM workplace reforms not only work well in unionized sites, but actually depend on strong unions (see Jenkins, 1981; Davis, L & Sullivan, 1980), empirical evidence shows that corporations have learned that HRM is only truly viable when set up at "Greenfield" sites—those that are initially designed and built to operate under redesigned jobs, flexible specialization, lean production, so-called "participative management", and the "new" HRM paradigm. In short, North American workplace reforms, initiated by management and based on the Japanese designs, and seek to attain "cost reduction and work intensification" (Rosenfeld et al, 1993, p. 24) under the insidious guise of "humanizing" work reform. Workers are offered participation in the management and organization of work, but in fact, they are delivered neither. "Job redesign facilitates capital accumulation less through altering workers' consciousness and reducing resistance than by rationalizing the work process" (Rinehart, 1986, p. 300). From this perspective, North American work reform could be termed neo-scientific management. However, as we will see in next week's edition of *The Voice*, work reform can actually deliver true industrial democracy to workers; both intra-organizationally and societally.

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FROM MY PERSPECTIVE and then the lights went out!

Debbie Jabbour



About a week ago, Edmonton experienced a particularly violent storm, one that resulted in power failures, and our LRT (Light Rail Transit) being shut down for almost a day when an underground portion of the route flooded. My daughter was relaxing and watching television, and I was just finishing up some work on the computer with the intention of joining her, when a loud rumble of thunder and immediate flash of lightning crashed very close overhead. Within moments, our lights flickered and our power went out. As the minutes ticked by, we resigned ourselves to being without electricity for a while and went to bed. Upon rising next morning, we discovered that the power outage had lasted several hours - fortunately we had a battery-operated alarm clock, since we almost certainly would not have got up in time for work.

Power outages don't happen all that often, nor do they last long when they occur, but we are always well-prepared with flashlights and candles. Still, they are an irritation, an unwelcome interruption that interferes with your activities. My computer remained operational on battery power, but it was

too hard on my eyes to work with the surrounding darkness. Watching TV was out, and we couldn't go warm up a snack in the microwave. No fans to keep the house cool, and no relaxing whirlpool bath before bed. Although I tried to read in bed by candlelight, it was difficult to see, and I was ever conscious of the danger of falling asleep with a candle burning. Minor irritations for the most part.

Whenever we experience one of these rare outages, I always wonder what it would be like to cope if they lasted for a long time. Its fairly easy to cope on a small scale - bring out the candles, cook supper on the barbeque, etc.; but it's quite another matter when companies that supply us with the "necessities" of life lose their power too. When grocery stores cannot keep food refrigerated, when gas stations cannot pump gas, when water cannot be safely processed, when mass transit is halted, and when hospitals are running on auxiliary power, to just mention a few - serious damage can result, in addition to heavy financial costs.

In reading reports of last week's massive power outage in Toronto, New York, and the eastern coast of Canada and the U.S., I could not help but think back to 1965 when the first major power outage occurred in that area, and to 1977 - the legendary New York blackout. Both of these previous power blackouts had significant impacts (including a baby boom in New York 9 months later!), but they did not affect people in quite the same way as this most recent one. Last week's is considered the biggest outage in North American history, affecting 50 million people, and in many ways, its impact is far more severe, given the increased reliance we have on electricity in every aspect of our lives.

For me, the most interesting part of the whole incident is the human response. As energy company executives scrambled to find the source of the problem, politicians on either side of the border were quick to lay blame. In an early news report, the mayor of New York insisted that the problem started in Canada, while in Canada the Prime minister's office claimed that the reverse was true. It almost seemed like fault-finding was more important than working cooperatively to solve the problem. Gasoline pumps were inoperable in most locations and of those few stations that relied on older non-electrical pumping systems, many were selling gasoline at inflated prices. There were reports of looting, although nowhere near the scale experienced in the 1977 New York blackout. Opportunistic cell-phone owners were selling phone calls on the street at \$2.00 a call, while street food vendors did a brisk business.

Once the lights began to come back on there were other issues. In spite of official pleas to use minimal power, many large companies kept their neon billboards brilliantly lit, and in many areas people ignored requests to conserve water and electricity. Politicians continued with their sparring, including Toronto's mayor Mel Lastman, who prompted an outcry when he arrogantly insisted that Toronto should not have to experience the same rolling blackouts that other areas would as power was being restored, since Toronto is "the engine that drives the whole province, the whole country in fact" (Canada.com).

But generally it seems that people were responding positively, with a sense of neighbourliness and caring. On the CBC news coverage the first night, we were treated to scenes of a businessman with briefcase tucked under one arm, directing traffic in the middle of a busy Toronto intersection. This scene was played out repeatedly in other areas, with impromptu traffic directors of every age and walk of life stepping into the breach to help move things along. There were reports of restaurants bringing out bottled water to motorists stranded in traffic in the above-30 degree heat, and ice-cream parlours giving away cones before it all melted. We saw images of by-passers helping panicked passengers out of subways in New York City, reassuring them and keeping them calm. Many were forced to walk miles to get home, with one pregnant woman managing 80 blocks before a policeman passing by took pity on her and gave her a lift. Restaurants and grocery stores gave away food rather than see it spoil. Overall people pitched in and tried to help one another, and government officials credited the people of Toronto for the fact that very little looting or violence had occurred in that city and that everyone remained calm.

I couldn't help but wonder how our fellow students might have fared. Many of them were likely working on assignments or even writing exams when the blackout occurred. Others were at work and may have been among those forced to walk miles to get home. Tonight I received an interesting email from a friend, a former AU student who has been accepted into master's studies in genetics at a university in New York city. She arrived there a few weeks ago and is just in the process of getting settled in, with only one class started so far. She told me that they were without power for 26 hours. All the students were recruited to help out in the hospital since many regular staff could not get to work without the subways running. Students took on the tasks of transporting patients, delivering water and meals, doing lab pickups, even providing manual oxygen to patients when ventilators failed. Since elevators were not operational, all this was done by running up and down 11 flights of stairs! At the end of an obviously exhausting day, she described finding her way back to her apartment in complete darkness (flashlights had run out of batteries). Just getting across the street without streetlights was the first challenge, then she had to go up the stairs, trying to guess which floor she was on, and trying to find her apartment door in total darkness - and many others had to climb 32 flights of stairs or more to get home.

She made the almost comedic observation that when the power failure occurred at first, there were fears of a repeat September 11 attack - but once they heard that Canada was affected, no one worried anymore since, "no one wants to attack Canada!" In conclusion she noted that although classes were already behind due to the power failure - it had been an eventful and interesting start to her New York experience.

That is somewhat of an understatement, I'm sure. But her comments also illustrate how everyone pulled together calmly and with good humour to cope with a difficult situation. This is something we have seen repeatedly with recent major disasters - people banding together in a show of caring and compassion to help each other survive the situation, and it reinforces my faith in human nature.

Electricity is something most of us could not do without, and an event like this provides apt proof of just how essential power is to us. The question "where were you when the lights went out?" was a common indicator of how profoundly people were affected by the 1965 and 1977 outages, and this blackout will be no different. With our reliance on the Internet and electronic means of communication, we at AU are especially vulnerable to the effects of a power outage. Hopefully we won't ever have to find out just how vulnerable. We hear

environmentalists warning us of the importance of protecting and preserving our energy sources, but many of us don't really listen until it touches us personally. This incident has made me stop and think about how important electricity is to me, and how different my life would be without it. Yes, I could manage without electricity. But I don't think I would ever want to.

Canada.com: Ontario seems to avoid rolling blackouts.

<http://www.canada.com/national/features/blackout/story.html?id=79279261-5332-46A6-85E3-74A137D0A0F9>

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.

Edmonton Events

To list events of interest to students taking place anywhere in Canada, contact voice@ausu.org

A Tribute Banquet to Celebrate Outstanding Albertans Neil & Merry Reimer - Ivor & Aileen Dent

Saturday September 13, 2003 @ The Polish Hall, 10960 - 104 St.
Cocktails - 5:30 p.m. (cash bar) / Dinner - 6:30 p.m. (family style)
Program & Entertainment - 7:30 p.m. **Tickets @ 474-2415**

The Alberta New Democrats and FRIENDS invite you to join with us in showing our appreciation to Neil & Merry Reimer and Ivor & Aileen Dent. We are proud to honour these very special people for their role in the founding of the Alberta New Democrats in the 1960's.

These two men, Neil as Leader and Ivor as President with the support of many other Albertans, brought the provincial NDP into being. Ivor and Aileen were teachers and Ivor went on to play a major role in Edmonton civic politics. He was Mayor from 1968 - 1974 while Neil went on to have a major role in the transition of the unions that were forerunners to the Communications, Energy & Paper Workers Union. Merry, Aileen, Ivor and Neil have all maintained their involvement in the New Democratic Party and their active engagement in charitable organizations is legion, as you would expect from community leaders who set out to build a better world.

Neil is an Officer of the Order of Canada, Ivor a member of the Order of Canada. Come and join us as we honour four outstanding citizens - Albertans who laid the foundation on which many of us strive to build.

PS. Tickets - \$40 each (\$20 tax receipt)
Sponsors - \$200 (receive 2 tickets and \$160 tax receipt)
Info & Reservations: 452-8483 (Alex) / 466-2718 (Elizabeth)

Courtesy of: The Community Networks Group © Tel/Fax: (780) 474-6058 / Cell: (780) 995-6819

AUSU THIS MONTH

SURVEY ON AU's PROPOSED REMOVAL FROM THE TUITION CAP

How do you feel about AU being removed from the tuition cap?

Athabasca University, like other universities and colleges in the province, currently falls under Alberta's tuition fee policy that enforces a ceiling on allowable tuition increases. **AU has asked the Alberta government for exemption from the tuition fee policy.** If passed, tuition increases for undergraduate courses at AU will no longer be regulated by specific government controls.

To find out how students feel about this proposed change, AUSU has placed a short survey on the AUSU web site at: <http://www.ausu.org/tuitionsurvey/index.php>. More information can also be found on this page. To learn more about this issue, students are encouraged to visit the AUSU discussion forums [accessible from the "Message Forums" link on the AUSU front page] and to browse the past several issues of The Voice.

Please take a minute to fill out this simple survey, to ensure that the students' union is representing you.



CHAT WITH AUSU ONLINE

If you have a question for AUSU, or would like to get to know your council, drop by the chat-room [accessible through the 'Message Forums' option on the AUSU home page www.ausu.org. You will need an AUSU web site account.] during one of our chat times and talk live with AUSU council members or your Voice editor. **All times are MST**

Wednesday, August 20th	3:00 PM	Karl
Friday, August 22nd	12:00 PM	Voice Editor, Tamra
Sunday, August 31	3:00 PM	Sandra

More chat times to be posted soon...

FEATURED TUTOR ON THE AUSU WEB SITE

Judi Malone
Psychology

Hmmm, what to say . . . I am very open but I do not usually write about myself. I do ask new students about themselves so I can see them as persons first, students second. Usually they do not ask for the same in return so I guess this is my chance...

Read more at: <http://www.ausu.org/tutor/index.php>



AUSU COMMITTEE SEEKS MEMBERS

AUSU Committees are looking for student members who can volunteer just a few hours a month to answer email or attend teleconferences. Anyone who wants to become involved with AUSU Student Council can gain great experience and insight through committee work.

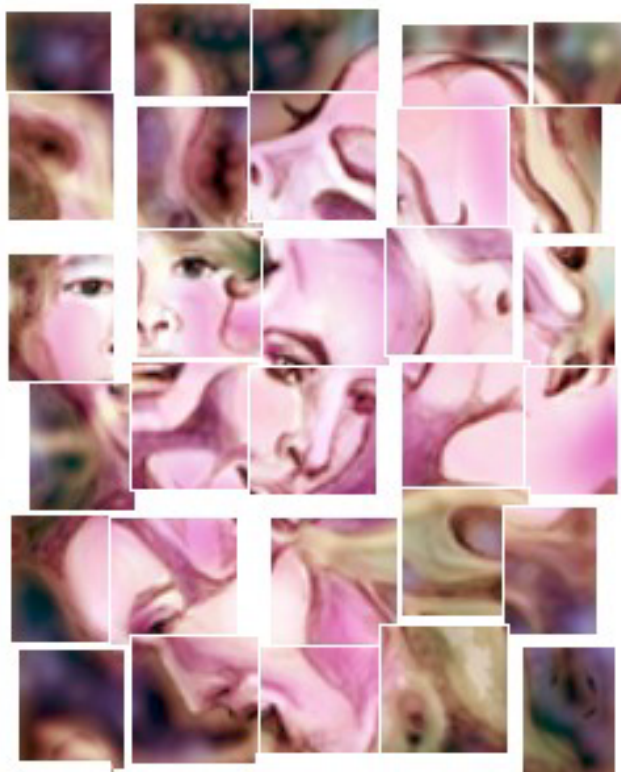
The External Committee, chaired by Shirley Barg, needs representatives from Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, and Northern Canada. Contact Shirley at sbarg@ausu.org if you would like to get involved, and help improve services to AU students in your area.

NEEDED – VOLUNTEER MENTORS FOR NEW STUDENTS

Do you remember your first few months at AU? Do you remember all the questions you had and the confusions you encountered? Every month at AU there are close to 1500 new registrations and these new students will be in the same boat you were once in. How about helping these students out by offering to be an AUSU mentor? AUSU mentors are “experienced” AU students who are willing to provide a little guidance and support to new AU students. If you are interested in participating in this new venture of AUSU's or if you'd like more information please contact Sandra Moore at smoore@ausu.org

STRATEGIC PLANNING WEEKEND

On the weekend of August 10th, AUSU convened in person for a strategic planning weekend, which coincided with the August 11th council meeting and the presentation of Dominique Abrioux. Over the weekend AUSU discussed the budget for the coming year, and other goals and plans of the union that will take it through the remainder of this council term and beyond.



**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.



TERMINATOR 3 Film Review

By Laura Seymour

"OOOOOwwwww, my ears! Turn that down!" That was my whiny comment upon my return to a film theatre after five years staying home. I am surely suffering hearing problems now. Thank heavens others have made the same general comment.

The film that prompted our return to the theatre was the third installment in the Terminator series. 55 year-old Arnold Schwarzenegger returns, this time as a T10 model, but the amazing Linda Hamilton as Sarah Connor is written out as dead from leukemia. Rats! Her son John is back, but the role is now filled by Nick Stahl instead of Edward Furlong, while new director, Jonathan Mostow replaces the famous James Cameron. Somehow with all the changes, the film manages to hold water and my attention, though I'm not as in love with it as the first two.



The story, too, is slanted differently. The film has better than a half hour of action as an opening and is one frightening smash up after another coming right at you on screen. I know some of you will say, "Wow!" and run to the theatre but I found myself wishing I didn't have to cower in my seat with my ears covered! The action is literally hard for the writer and director to end. They must have had some real fun with it, but I felt it was the weak point of the film.

My husband said some people had gone to see the film for new body on the scene, Kristanna Loken, who does the same type of entrance as was created in the second film, naked and murdering a human for their clothes. Flashes of breast yield no real looks, so avoid running to the theatre just for an eye-full. Arnold's entrance is a close copy of his T2 scene into a local bar to get the leather clothes off a pool player, except this time there is a cute, apparently gay, stripper at Ladies' Night and Arnold takes his clothes - by force of course. When he reaches into the pocket for the guy's sunglasses, out come some star-shaped glitter shades! Since these are not Terminator style, he crushes them.

During the rest of the film, Kristanna does some serious poker-faced slash and crash as she attempts to kill her rival Terminator. As a T-X, she is of course far superior to Arnold's outdated model. Yet, despite all this she is still defeated at the end. We smell a T4 in the works anyway.

Plot wise the story is similar story to the previous films. The T-X Terminator was sent back in time to destroy John Connor's future wife Kate, played by Claire Danes. It's a shame that Kate and John are having a really hard time liking one another. Since Kate doesn't even respect him until the final moments of the film, they have a hard time believing that their future children will save the world. Kate becomes a key player in the story when they figure out that her father, played by David Andrews, works directly with Skynet in his high-security military work. This is the beginning of the world of Skynet, when a virus shuts down every computer and satellite link the American government has. Since the government is virtually blind and wide open to attack the father is ordered, against his better judgment, to start up Skynet in the hope it will defeat the virus. Unfortunately that's what the machines were waiting for. They launch an attack on humans and more than half

the earth's population is rubbed out in a nuclear bomb that the machines launch. We do have the new couple hidden in an underground bomb shelter and ready to fight the dastardly machines to the death though. Fear not.

In the bunker there are no government folk to join them... or to get in their way. When a voice pipes in on a speaker and asks who's in charge, John takes his future power in his hands. "I am," he announces hesitantly. And he is.

This film made me wonder - really - whether it is possible for the computer viruses we have floating around in Cyberspace to actually gain that much "awareness." If you laugh at the idea let me ask you would you have imagined the Twin Towers falling, or the idea of the Internet being so huge or even in our existence thirty years ago? (It was originally a U.S. government invention used for secret communications). I wouldn't have.

So now we wonder, will there be a Terminator 4? I think so. I don't know the whole story of why there was so much legal hold up for the last 12 years on the production of a new film but it obviously got sorted out and the next film should therefore be a shorter time away.

Anyway, I want to ask you readers a question: "Any ideas how the machines will be defeated in the next (possible) film?" My guess is if a virus activated the machines then a virus can take them down. Any other suggestions out there? Email [The Voice](#) and tell us.

Just don't tell Hollywood, we don't want our genius ideas stolen!

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).

THE VOICE FICTION



The Voice wants your fiction.

We are accepting creative writing in all genres for a Voice fiction feature.

Send us your stories, poems, and other short fiction.

Send submissions to voice@ausu.org

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

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



Athabasca University Awards and Scholarship Information

The Office of the Registrar would like to advise students of pending deadlines for scholarships and awards:

Award Name: Syncrude Aboriginal Scholarship

Value: \$2,500

Program: Various - see website

Basic Criteria: 1st year student preferred but other years may apply

Application Deadline: August 31

Award Name: Alberta Blue Cross 50th Anniversary Scholarship

Value: \$375

Program: Bachelor of Nursing

Basic Criteria: Highest GPA in last two courses

Application Deadline: September 30

Award Name: Persons Case Scholarship

Value: \$1,000 to \$5,000

Program: All programs are eligible

Basic Criteria: Female; Full-time; Resident of Alberta

Application Deadline: September 30

Award Name: Bursary Program for Indigenous Students

Value: \$Varies

Program: School of Business programs

Basic Criteria: Students of Indigenous Heritage

Application Deadline: On-going, contact Paulette Windsor at 1-800-788-9042, ext. 6149

For more information on the specific criteria for these awards, please visit the AU website at:
<http://www.athabascau.ca/html/depts/registry/studawrd.htm>

Applications for these awards can be obtained by calling the Office of the Registrar at 1-780-675-6705 or by email at awardsinfo@athabascau.ca.

PERSONS CASE SCHOLARSHIPS

Value: \$1000 - \$5000

DEADLINE: September 30, 2003

Administrator: Alberta Scholarship Programs

Notes: Awards range from \$1 000 to \$5 000. 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, Alberta 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*

- **AU Learning Services Conference** - October 3 & 4, 2003 - Edmonton, Crowne Plaza Chateau Lacombe. Details to follow.



OTHER CONFERENCES

- **CAPDHHE [Canadian Association for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment in Higher Education]** - To be held in Calgary, October 29 - November 1, 2003. <http://www.capdhhe.org/conference2/index.htm>
- **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]
- **China Conference 2003** - Edinburgh July 2003. China Conference Info welcomes people from the commercial and educational sector involved in E-Learning, Distance Learning, Training, HR, IT Training, Localisation, ICT or Knowledge Management, to this world first international event. China represents the biggest target market for these sectors ever and is still largely untapped.

Entering the Chinese market place is a complex move. This conference provides a forum on exchange of market information not only on product and service requirements, but on specialist market entrance requirements. If you are working in any of these sectors you should seriously consider entering this event in your diary. The conference will be patronised by professionals from, China, the USA, Europe and Australia and represents the largest collective gathering of these specialists centred around the Chinese market ever!

For more information:

<http://www.chinaconferenceinfo.com>

Summer Symposium on Health Ethics

Wednesday 6 August 2003

The John Dossetor Health Ethics Centre (JDHEC) invites you to attend a one-day symposium on health ethics. This course will offer a series of presentations by JDHEC Faculty that will challenge you to examine and explore the essential place of ethics in health care practice.

For more information:

Website www.ualberta.ca/bioethics

Email Dossetor.Centre@ualberta.ca

Phone 780-492-6676

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.



CLASSIFIEDS:

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

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