

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 11 Issue 50  
December 10, 2003

**Christmas Thoughts**  
The magic is still there

**Fast Food Nation**  
How much harm can it do?

**The Next Step**  
They never talked about  
this in life skills class

**What you need to know about your student  
magazine -- Editorial Report**

Plus: From My Perspective, FedWatch!, Flicks & Folios, Primetime Update, Net Nerd's Profiles,  
Dear Sandra, and news, announcements and opportunities from your university and beyond.

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Dec 10, 2003

Volume 11, Issue 50

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**We love to hear from you! Send your letters to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and please indicate if we may publish your letter in the Voice.**

Dear Editor - The Voice.

Re: Cold Prevention

With the cold season quickly approaching, there is a simple health tip I'd like to share with the readers. Load up on lemons, blueberries or cranberries. They have been quite effective in saving me from the curse of the runny nose.

I'm not a health professional, but I noticed that since I started regularly taking these fruits a few years ago, I haven't had a cold.

The oldest generations (70+) in my family grow blue/cranberries in Nova Scotia, and they have never had cold or flu-related illnesses. Fit as fiddles they are!

**Sincerely,  
Nimra Ahmed  
Alberta AU student**

*Thanks Nimra. As someone who has not had a full-blown cold in 8 years, I agree! Good health to all AU students over the holiday season.*

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## THE VOICE

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**Editor In Chief** Tamra Ross Low

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**THE VOICE ONLINE:  
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FIRST IT WAS ELECTRICITY  
THEN IT WAS NATURAL GAS

NOW THEY'RE COMING FOR EDUCATION

a bill 43 policy  
ALBERTA'S STUDENTS ARE GOING TO PAY

deregulation  
NATION

The ALBERTA POST-SECONDARY STUDENT ALLIANCE comprised of CAUS and ACTISEC presents a campaign to STOP BILL 43 AND THE DEREGULATION OF TUITION IN ALBERTA. The education deregulation experiences of Ontario and British Columbia have seriously COMPROMISED ACCESSIBILITY. Suffering over 180 000 ALBERTA STUDENTS. Co-starring an UNDERFUNDED EDUCATION SYSTEM and a SURPLUS RICH, EDUCATION POOR ALBERTA GOVERNMENT.

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RESTRICTED ACCESS TO HUMANITY'S POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

Only students who can afford to pay exorbitant tuition fees will be admitted. Contains graphic images of student  
buses and dorms and thousands of published and restricted libraries being left behind.

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# EDITORIAL PAGES

## THIS WEEK

**CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS** - Despite the troubles of our world, for Bill Pollett, the magic is still there...

**FAST FOOD NATION: THE DARK SIDE OF THE ALL-AMERICAN MEAL** - A new book that will make you think twice before ordering that hamburger. John Buhler provides a frightening overview...

**THE NEXT STEP** - New contributor Nadine Boulos-Jarvis learns the hard way that life skills classes can't prepare you for the hardest parts of life...

## **SURVEY RESULTS SHOW VOICE IS STILL VIEWED AS AUSU CONTROLLED** *Students also leery about privacy of Voice communications*

The first online *Voice Annual Reader Survey* closed last week, and response rates were high. Although students were not strictly required to fill out the entire survey, most respondents answered a majority of the questions, and provided excellent written feedback via the final write-in fields.

The results will be extremely helpful in planning the direction of The Voice over the coming year. They also provide a perspective on how the Voice is perceived by its financial backers - the AU student body. Based on the response rate to the very short survey we ran in March of this year, our readership has grown considerably. Despite this survey being much larger, we received over twice the number of responses over the same number of weeks! Subscriptions are also up by about 34%.

However, many of the results have raised concerns. For example, a full 24% of Voice readers believe that The Voice is entirely controlled by the AU Students' Union [AUSU] and that AUSU decides what does, and does not get printed in The Voice!

This is a dangerous perception for many reasons. First, AU students - who do not have a means to congregate on campus - are even more in need of an autonomous publication than students at other universities. If The Voice is not a forum for student views and concerns, then what is?

Second, AU students need a public forum where they can receive news about their students' union, and how their fees are being spent. AUSU collects over \$300,000 of student money each year, and you have a right to know what the council is doing with it.

The Voice is the only place where students who are not part of AUSU council can publish articles for other AU students - whether it is a personal reflection, a political diatribe, a work of fiction, education news, or yes, coverage of a students' union event or decision.

With the proposed Alberta education Bill 43 impending, the need for such a publication is even greater. The Bill clarifies the government position that all student's groups need to have watch-dog systems in place so that those who pay into the union can be made aware of what is being done with their funds. It is because the government fears that such watch-dog organizations are not in place that the new education bill contains a provision which would allow the government to step in and audit or dissolve a student's union if there is evidence of "financial irregularities."

The AUSU is probably more vulnerable to such action than many other students' organizations because they operate at a distance. Students may not know what the SU is doing unless they make an effort to attend council meetings (which any student may do for free via teleconference - there is a meeting on December 14th Contact [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org) for info).

If you happen to feel that the government provisions are a good thing, think again. Yes, everyone wants to know that their student organization is being evaluated and held to high ethical and financial standards, but who would you rather do this: the government, or you? It is you who pays into the SU, not the government, and it is you who stands to benefit from a well running SU. The government, on the other hand, is likely to least like an SU that is working well, since a strong SU often stands in opposition to government initiatives that are detrimental to students.

So the need for a student run publication at AU is clear. Unfortunately, the survey results indicate that many of you don't feel that there is such a publication. I suspect that the 24% who feel that the paper is controlled by AUSU would be reluctant to write letters about the SU in The Voice. The results bear that out too. The survey asked if readers would feel comfortable sending The Voice a negative opinion of AU, AUSU, or The Voice. You indicated that you would feel more comfortable writing us with a criticism of The Voice than of the SU!

What is most alarming to me, however, is the result that indicates a low level of trust in the Voice editor, and concerns over the security of Voice email: an astounding 58% of you feel that any email you send to the Voice may be shared with AUSU council!

I cannot be emphatic enough in stating that this is not the case! I would never directly share a Voice email with the SU or any member of council. Yes, sometimes students send me concerns that would be more appropriately directed to AUSU (given that 24% of you feel that writing The Voice and writing AUSU is the same, that is not surprising), and in those cases I suggest that the writer send their email to council. Yes, sometimes students express concerns that I feel the SU should know about, and in these cases I may share the concern, generically, and without identifying information, with a member of the SU if I feel that they may be able to rectify the situation. I may even urge a student to ask the SU for advocacy, but this would always be the students' decision.

But share the emails? Never! If I did this, I would be guilty of a serious breach of confidentiality, not to mention trust. I'm not aware of the previous editor having ever done this either.

I want Voice readers to feel secure that if they send an email to The Voice, it will go to The Voice only, and it will not be sent to the SU unless I am given specific permission to do so. By the same token, please be aware that if you have a concern that you want AUSU to address, you should send it to AUSU, not the student magazine. Even the university needs to be aware of this. Often they will send an email to the SU, asking for them to include something in The Voice.

Now on to the biggest misconception: 62% of readers think that I'm a member of AUSU council! Wow! I knew that some people thought this, but 62%?

Ok, here is the deal. I was a member of AUSU council - acclaimed in the election of March 2002. In December of 2002 the Voice editor got a full time teaching job and she was not able to handle The Voice on her own. I helped her out for the next two months. When it became clear that she would not be able to continue as editor, the job was posted.

I resigned from AUSU council and gave up my honorarium in order to apply for the full time Voice job. I didn't know if I'd get the job, though I knew I had a bit of an edge because I'd already been doing it part time. However, if someone with significant newspaper experience had applied, I'd have been out on my kiester. I submitted a resume and cover letter, I went through the interview process (an gruelling one-hour interview with a panel of three interroga.... Oops.. interviewers), and about a month later, I was hired. Everything was very formal.

I am an employee of the students' council, not a councillor. Through AUSU policy, I am granted editorial autonomy, which means that AUSU cannot tell me what to print.

So now begins a campaign to let readers know that I'm not on council, which I hope will address this perceived conflict of interest. I have close ties with council, but my ethical responsibility is to the students who pay for the

paper, and I take this seriously. I encourage students to write the Voice with any concerns they have, even if they are about AUSU. Of course you can also praise AUSU if you wish!

I will also be working to erase the perception that email communication with the Voice is anything but confidential.

I want to explain, now, how your student paper is funded and run.

The Voice is funded by AUSU. What this means is, AUSU takes a portion of the \$8 per course that you pay in to the union, and allocates it to The Voice. Right now that amount is about \$1 of each \$8 fee. This budget is then managed by the Voice Editor and is not subject to direct SU control - or at least it was not until last month, when a new policy specified that I must get pre-approval for all expenditures. This policy is said to be a temporary measure while some finance policies are revised.

The amount of money that goes to The Voice is determined by AUSU. AUSU may decide next year to give more money to your student paper, or they could decide to discontinue funding at any time. Fortunately, the current council is a strong supporter of The Voice.

The editorial autonomy of The Voice is granted by AUSU. Yes, AUSU could take this autonomy away, but council has agreed that The Voice should be a student paper. I do not have to accept submissions from AUSU council members, though many councillors provide great input and I'm glad to have it. Readers have indicated that they enjoy these contributions as well, which is the most important reason to include them. I have asked councillors to revise articles, however, and I will continue to do so as needed.

I would love to hear some feedback from AU students on how you feel your student newspaper should be funded. I realize now that there is one question I should have asked on the survey, and it would go like this:

Compared to other projects and services offered by your students Union and paid for with your students Union fees, how important is the voice?

- it is the most important service?
- is a very important service?
- is neither more nor less important than any other service?
- it is less important than other services?
- it is of no importance?

I hope this clarifies how The Voice is funded and run. It's important for students to know this, because every AU student benefits when all students feel comfortable expressing their views in the student publication. If you think your point of view is missing from The Voice, let me know!

**Tamra Ross Low**  
**Editor in Chief**



The question this week is simple. What is your favorite family Christmas tradition? Send your comments to [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org), and indicate if we can print your response.

## STRESS *Wayne E. Benedict*



Before coming to law school I considered myself to have relatively sufficient control over my stress levels. I had a busier than average life, juggling fulltime work, part-time distance university education, labour advocacy, wife, children, dogs, cars, bills, mortgage, writing... Well, you get the picture. Even with an accumulation of multiple stressors such as those, my stress level rarely reached more than an easy boil.

Then my wife and I quit our jobs and moved the family across two provinces so that I could attend law school. A well-worn and well-known adage amongst the legal community

pertaining to law school goes something like this: "the first year they scare you to death, the second year they work you to death, and the third year they bore you to death". If "scare" is synonymous with "stress" then I can attest to the validity of the saying. My easy boiling stress pot has morphed into a heavy-duty pressure cooker; the intermittent twitch over my left eye could represent a pressure release valve blowing off steam. I am putting far more time and energy into law school than I expended in my previous life. Granted, many of my responsibilities have remained, but other than my familial duties, I devote myself fully to the law.

A lawyer-friend of mine insists that the law school program is designed so that it is practically impossible for a student to complete all of the assigned readings; thus one learns to sift through the masses of legal cases and commentary, prioritize, and extract only pertinent rules and information. Lawyers need to be efficient. It is a difficult skill to master and until one does, the experience could be related to a non-swimmer being thrown into the ocean to sink or swim on his/her own. At its worst, my stress has manifested itself physically, which I have never knowingly experienced before. In its more mild form, I experience a combination of agitation, panic, and anxiety.

Sleep has never been one of my greatest abilities. I often feel like I am suspended between sleep and wakefulness, being aware of my surroundings and concomitantly that I am asleep. This state occurs nightly now and my seemingly conscious mind becomes a reluctant observer as my subconscious brain endlessly reviews a Boolean loop of legal rules. I have discovered over the years that this is how my brain internalizes information when I am learning new skills; however, the process results in substandard sleep and contributes to fatigue—and stress. I had an amusing dream a few weeks ago. I was running desperately while being chased by a tidal wave. Glancing over my shoulder I noted that the foamy froth riding the top of the wave sported the grimacing faces of my five law professors (if you've seen *The Fellowship of the Ring* just picture the horse heads in the river-froth that dismounted the Nazgul at Rivendell).

Last Saturday my family moved for the second time in three months. I hired three men and a moving truck and we worked for 13.5 hours before the job was done. I spent Sunday gimping around or lying in bed recovering from the exertion; all the while knowing that the wave was approaching ever closer as I fell further behind in my readings. Presently I am not very stressed. I find this rather surprising since the first of my midterm exams is tomorrow afternoon—Property Law. I am not sure if I have outdistanced the wave or if it has washed over me and finally dissipated... Either way, I am feeling contented for the first time in weeks (months). The point of this long-winded diatribe is a round-about explanation as to why I missed my Voice article last week—the first since I became a columnist over two years ago. If the wave returns, I'll try to surf it and keep on writing...

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*Wayne E. Benedict has a varied career history and strong links to the Canadian labour movement. He is working part-time toward his Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations at AU, and is a fulltime first-year student of the University of Saskatchewan College of Law. For a more detailed writer bio, see The Voice writers' feature page. Wayne can be reached at [wayneben@sasktel.net](mailto:wayneben@sasktel.net)*

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# FAST FOOD NATION: THE DARK SIDE OF THE ALL-AMERICAN MEAL

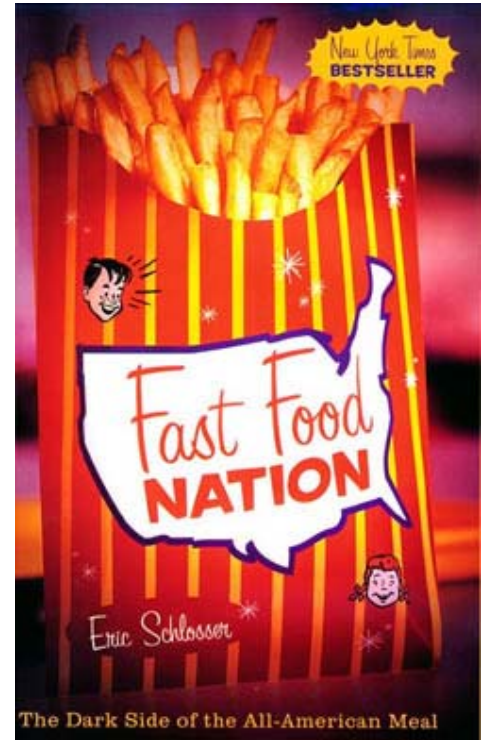
by Eric Schlosser

Perennial, 2002

383 pp.; ISBN 0-06-093845-5; \$21.00

*Reviewed by John Buhler*

In *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, Eric Schlosser follows the evolution of fast food from its birth in California after the Second World War, to its present status in the global market. In the U.S., the fast food industry has had far-reaching effects as its "demand for standardized products have given a handful of corporations an unprecedented degree of power over the nation's food supply" (p.5). In looking at these effects, Schlosser interviews a franchise founder, restaurant owners, employees, slaughterhouse workers, ranchers and farmers. His description of the fast food industry's growth contrasts sharply with the loss of independence and livelihood experienced by the farmers and ranchers that he meets. Schlosser also warns us about the industry's role in spreading infectious pathogens, its contribution to the obesity epidemic, the shameful exploitation of slaughterhouse workers, and even workplace violence associated with fast food restaurants. "The profits of the fast food chains", the author writes, "have been made possible by losses imposed on the rest of society." (p. 261). Schlosser's portrayal of the industry should make everyone think twice before placing their next burger and fries order.



From crowded, manure-laden feedlots, to feces-spattered slaughterhouses and the admixtures of meat fed into industrial hamburger grinding equipment, the spread of pathogens like *E.coli* 0157:H7 in the U.S. has been facilitated by modern practices of raising, slaughtering, and processing cattle. For example, Schlosser informs us that old newspaper and sawdust used as litter in poultry plants are turned into cattle feed. He then cites a *Preventative Medicine* article reporting that in Arkansas in 1994, cattle consumed "about 3 million pounds of chicken manure" (pp202-3). Among other potentially harmful substances, chicken feces may contain *Campylobacter* and *Salmonella*.

We also learn about the role of slaughterhouses in the spread of bacterial pathogens. The speed at which slaughterhouses now operate makes it more likely that a butchered animal's digestive tract will spill feces about and contaminate meat intended for human consumption. Employees, who are often overworked and illiterate, may fail to properly sterilize their knives. Following processing in the U.S.'s massive ground beef manufacturing plants, one "fast food hamburger now contains meat from dozens or even hundreds of different cattle" (p. 204). It is not surprising then, as Schlosser reports, that *E.coli* 0157:H7 has become the main cause of kidney failure among American children.

Schlosser's description of a modern slaughterhouse is thoroughly disturbing. He walks through the plant, following the process from end to start: he traces smaller portions of meat through to the cattle waiting to be butchered. On the killing floor thick with the smell of manure, cattle are sliced in half. Workers must dodge suspended slabs of meat that threaten to knock them to the bloody floor. He watches, as unsuspecting cattle are stunned with a bolt to the head, their bodies hoisted up by a leg before their throats are slit. The author exits the slaughterhouse after he witnesses a steer fall from the shackle, and its head becomes jammed in a conveyor belt. The animal is still alive. Elsewhere in *Fast Food Nation*, Schlosser reports that sometimes animals are dismembered while they are still fully conscious.

In Schlosser's depiction of the slaughterhouse, the human workers are also victims. Meatpacking, "the most dangerous job in the United States" produces three times the rate of injury seen in most other factories (p.172). In some plants, bonus programs for supervisors and foremen, partially based on safety reports, discourage injuries from being reported. Lacerations, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, back and shoulder injuries are common. The meatpacking industry's rate of cumulative trauma injuries is about "thirty-three times higher than the national average in industry" (p.173). According to *Fast Food Nation*, some of these U.S. corporations have had a history of falsifying injury logs, and failing to provide adequate compensation to injured workers.

The high rate of injury is related to the high speed at which employees are forced to work. Higher speed -- higher profits. U.S. slaughterhouse workers have been known to use methamphetamine, or "crank," in order to keep up to pace. In some instances supervisors sell crank to employees, or offer it as a reward for working a double shift.

In the past, unions helped to protect employees from having to work at a dangerous pace, and the injuries that result from it. Today, however, many U.S. slaughterhouses employ immigrants and foreign workers, often illiterate and unable to speak English. Poor pay and miserable working conditions lead to a high employee turnover rate, helping to ensure that unionization cannot take place. Often these workers do not receive any health benefits. In its efforts to keeping costs low, meatpacking corporations have been aided by the Republican Party, which has weakened worker safety legislation, and opposed improvements to the minimum wage.

The demands of the fast food industry also, of course, influence the working conditions for millions of restaurant employees. Although Schlosser acknowledges that some franchisees do treat their employees well, he illustrates how the fast food industry's labour record is nothing to be proud of. McDonald's has made a point of employing unskilled teenagers because, as Schlosser explains, they "accept low pay" and "their youthful inexperience makes them easier to control" (p.68). He details how shabbily McDonald's has tended to treat employees. In 1973, for example, one group of San Francisco McDonald's employees was subjected to lie detector tests, in violation of state law. Fast food workers, interviewed by Schlosser in Colorado Springs, indicated that state and federal labour laws were commonly violated in their restaurants. And although fast food restaurants in the U.S. have surpassed gas stations or convenience stores as attractive targets for armed robbery, restaurants, however have fought against "not only guidelines on workplace violence, but any enforcement of OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] regulations" (p.85).

Furthermore, the fast food industry has often lobbied the Republican Party to help keep wages low. In 1972, McDonald's Ray Kroc gave \$250,000 to Richard Nixon's campaign fund. At the time, according to Schlosser, fast food chains were promoting legislation aimed at lowering the wages of 16 and 17 year old fast food employees from around \$1.60/hour to as low as \$1.28/hour. Nixon's administration gave its support to the "McDonald's Bill" (p.37).

Schlosser criticizes his government's failure to ensure the safety of the food supply, as well as its efforts to limit the powers of food inspection agencies. George W. Bush's administration attempted to end testing for *Salmonella* in ground beef destined for the National School Lunch Program, until the public outcry forced his administration to reverse its decision.

Bacteria are not the only health risk that Schlosser associates with the consumption of fast food. He asserts that the proportion of obesity among U.S. adults "soared during the last few decades, along with the consumption of fast food" (p.240). Fast food restaurants provide large servings of inexpensive, high-fat meals, to a sedentary society. Years of mass marketing by these same businesses helped American society to develop a taste for food high in fat and calories, and low in fiber. "The annual cost of obesity alone is now twice as large as the fast food industry's total revenues", Schlosser asserts (p.261).

Fast food has grown into an international force, but its incursions into foreign markets have often met with resistance. In England, McDonald's tried to sue members of London's Greenpeace movement who distributed anti-McDonald's leaflets (even though the two protesters were not responsible for printing the material). According to Schlosser, McDonald's hired spies to delve into the private lives of the activists, and "McDonald's spies inadvertently spied on each other, unaware that the company was using at least two different detective agencies" (p.247-8). McDonald's even used its police connections to spy on the protesters. Scotland Yard eventually apologized and paid £10,000 in an out of court settlement for its role in spying on the anti-McDonald's protesters. *Fast Food Nation* reports that the prolonged trial has entered its twelfth year.

As a result of disastrous publicity resulting from the "McLibel" case, McDonald's has worked to improve its image. Benefits have been offered to some employees, and the corporation has required its suppliers to treat animals more humanely. This latter policy, however, developed after animal rights groups applied public pressure to the restaurant chain. McDonald's, Schlosser advises, should also demand that the slaughterhouses that supply it also treat employees ethically.

*Fast Food Nation* includes a frightening examination of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) issue. One British expert suggests that "BSE may easily cross the species barrier" (p.286). Indeed, the European Union has banned "[t]he feeding of all animal proteins to all farm animals" (p.286). These concerns have not been taken seriously in the United States where it remained legal to feed horse meat, cattle blood, pigs and poultry to cattle.

Aimed at a general audience, *Fast Food Nation* is very readable, though sometimes disturbing. Schlosser concentrates his study on the U.S., but given the ubiquitous nature of fast food restaurants in our own country, this book is a must-read for Canadians who are concerned about what they eat.

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## VOICE MERCHANDISE INTRODUCTORY SPECIALS!



The same Voice mugs and fleece jackets that you have seen pictured as prizes on the Annual Reader Survey page, are also for sale at great introductory prices.

Own your own Voice logo merchandize, and let everyone know that you are a student of Canada's premier distance education provider!

The Voice coffee mug is a white fired ceramic with a two colour Voice logo on both sides.

The Voice logo fleece jacket is soft, cozy arctic fleece in moss green with navy trim and a matching navy embroidered Voice logo on the breast. It features a full zip front, slash pockets, and a drawstring waist cord. Worn alone, it's perfect for spring and fall, and with a wind breaker on top, it's a light, cozy winter jacket.

Because these jackets are a special purchase, we only have the one colour combination, but they are available in roomy small, medium and large sizes. Don't delay, quantities are very limited.

Mugs are just \$8 each, and the jackets are \$35 each until the end of January. Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for information on shipping costs and for ordering information.



## THE NEXT STEP

Nadine Boulos-Jarvis



I remember filling out a stress survey in high school. It was on a white piece of paper with blue writing, simply entitled *Stress Survey*. I was not the only one who had to fill it out mind you, everyone in our class did. It was one of those things that had twenty scenarios of events that could happen in your life, with the death of a spouse or immediate family member as the number one cause of stress and emotional disturbance. The idea was to check off all the boxes that applied, and in the end calculate the total points earned. I think I started checking off the boxes around number four, which was the loss of a pet. It was an actual loss, however. Hammie the hamster

escaped from his cage never to return. So my number one scenario probably did not even count. Our teacher then took each stress level indicator listed on the survey and turned it into a class. We discussed death of family and friends, suicide, alcoholism and failing grades, all pertaining to the stress survey.

But never was there a class set aside for break-ups. There was never a class about a partner intentionally leaving you. There was never any instruction on how to recover from someone punching their hand right through your chest and pulling your heart out, following a quick run through a meat processor and then a soak in acid...

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I sat across the restaurant table from him, listening to his pitiful explanations and apologies. He began to explain that the night it happened it wasn't *really* planned. And that quite honestly, if it helped - she really wasn't that good.

Feeling completely comforted by this fact, I tried to figure out the next step. But the step was nowhere to be found. I couldn't even find the staircase. I knew how to deal with the turmoil of poor grades and how to say no to drugs. Hell, I even knew the damn jingle: "*Drugs, drugs, drugs! Which are good? Which are bad?*"

And cheques. I knew how to sign them like a pro. That was covered in two classes, which is beyond me - I mean who even uses them anymore? But this, now this was definitely not covered. I would have remembered this cause of stress. I looked around the restaurant and noticed a sign about their Christmas party. Bellinis for only \$2.99? I bet they were the peach bellinis with the little pink umbrellas too.

I looked across the table at his mouth. Was he still talking?

I kept telling myself that nothing is worse than the death of a family member! It was number one, I remember it was number one. And this is not a death, it's just a break-up. Although the more I thought about it, I realized that both are incredibly final. Both death and a break-up are a physical removal. And, while I might not get any days off work or condolence cards, there would be ice cream. Girlfriends would bring ice cream. I saw that in a movie once.

But hang on a second here! In death the loved one does not want to leave. They do not stop loving you. They certainly do not reject you, and they're definitely not intentionally abandoning you. And once that loved one is buried, you can pretty much bet that you will not be running into them holding hands with someone else any time soon.



Ok, maybe this was worse then I thought. Maybe, just maybe, that class that taught you all about life and its grievances was wrong. Or maybe he wasn't serious.

*"One thing lead to another and before we knew it we slept together..."*

He's serious. The stages! Weren't there five stages that someone goes through when something traumatic happens? Actually, that is for death too. But what were they? Denial, anger, bargaining? Or was anger first? No, it had to be denial. Must be denial because I just had that I swear. Almost there...

*"That night when you were sick and I went out..."*

The waitress wants to refill my root beer. It's only then when I look down at my glass that I see and remember the star cluster of diamonds sitting on a band of white gold decorating my ring finger. I thought diamonds were forever? Now *that* I learned in chemistry class. Or did I learn it from James Bond? He loves James Bond and I do not want any more root beer.

I should go, but I can't move. Where do I find that step? Where was the staircase? At this point I would take a conveyor belt.

*"Our five years together have been wonderful..."*

Moisture is dripping down the outside of my root beer glass and it's beginning to look like the glass is crying. Oh no, please no tears. No tears, because the five years have been wonderful, and in all honestly she really wasn't that good.

Look at the drops of water. Look at the drops. Look at the drops. Christmas party, bellinis for only \$2.99. There's no place like home. There's no place like home. Just stand up and go. But I haven't ordered anything and the waitress might get mad. I should leave a tip.

Why am I still here? I know why. Because the second I walk out that door there is no more us. This is the last time we will be sitting together. The last time I hear his voice. The last time we will breathe the same air. The last time I will look into his eyes. This is a death. This is a final goodbye.

Somewhere along the way someone forgot to include this in our class. Someone forgot to include this in the *Stress Survey* in the space between "Your name here" and "The number one cause of stress and emotional disturbance is..." Just a mere oversight. It happens. This is just one of those things that they don't teach in high school. One of those "life moments" that Dr. Phil keeps referring too. One of those situations that you can only survive is by singing Gloria Gaynor in your head.

I think I found my feet. Still no staircase but there is a front door. And where there is a door there is a getaway vehicle on the other side. So I grab my keys. I look at him and stand up. I can do this. At first I'll spend so many nights wondering how you did me wrong. But I will survive. I have no other choice.

I take one more breath of our air and one more look at our stare. Turning for the door I walk over a pool of hydrochloric acid that contains my heart on the floor. Acid or not, that heart is still mine. It will take some time and some bandages but it will be ok. Acids, now I know for a fact *that* was covered in chemistry.



Christmas must be in the air, because we're sitting in the food court of the hermetically sealed biosphere/shopping mall and drinking four-dollar eggnog lattes from the evil Starbuckian Empire. The overhead sound system is playing a gloopy-sounding, new-agey version of the Wexford Carol arranged for synthesized strings and harp. The joke shop next door is selling painted ceramic reindeer poop to put under the Christmas tree. Through the window we can see parents balancing shopping bags and babies. A mother is grabbing her child by the arm while swivelling her head to look for potential witnesses to the righteous tongue-lashing she's about to deliver.

I know it sounds like I'm a dyed-in-the-wool grinch, but the truth is I really do love the Yuletide season. It's just that it seems to get harder and harder for me to understand why. As most everybody over the age of eight or nine knows, Christmas has largely been reduced to a plastic dollar-store snow globe, filled with toxic liquid and glitter, manufactured by child labour in a third world factory. If you happen to be Christian, I suppose you still have the consolation of midnight mass to hang onto. If you're a pagan, you can see reflections of the Great Goddess in the falling snow. If, like so many of us, however, you're a neo-existentialist rational humanist, or whatever, it becomes an altogether trickier proposition.

Perhaps I should speak for myself, but I think most children are incorrigible materialists. When I was a child I loved pirate stories and fairytales and picture book versions of 1001 Arabian Nights. My favourite bits were the descriptions of the purloined treasure hidden in wooden chests, the opulent wedding gifts showered on royalty. I would linger over lists of jewelled daggers, pieces-of-eight, piles of rubies, emeralds and diamonds taken at sword-point from wayward Spanish galleons. I would relish descriptions of magical lanterns, clockwork songbirds, banquet tables groaning under the weight of roasted boars and flagons of wine.

I think this is one of the reasons that capitalism is such a potent virus. Despite all our better inclinations, so many of us are stirred by childhood visions of the good life. The bitter joke, of course, is that wild-game feasts have been replaced by Chicken McNuggets and Vanilla Coke; somebody switched our treasure maps for Ikea catalogues; our frankincense and myrrh has turned into Winners gift certificates and fake reindeer stools.

It's impossible to defend loving Christmas. It's an absurdly guilty pleasure - something along the lines of watching Scooby-Doo at three o'clock in the morning with a box of Turtles and a case of beer. Sometimes I think that all of life in the western world has become a guilty pleasure, a selfish joke. Our rulers are mad men; our planet is on the edge of environmental collapse; our culture is morally bankrupt. And yet we go on living, for now. And, incredibly, for most of us there are moments of unadulterated magic. We turn a street corner and hear a woman playing a cello in an open window. We see the aurora borealis on a moonless night. We hold our lover's hand in the falling snow.

To me, Christmas is like one of Uncle Frank's magic shows. You know he's three sheets to the wind, because he's just knocked over the Christmas tree and spilled his Guinness all over the new couch that you meant to get Scotch guarded. You know that in a couple of hours he and Aunt Ethel will be resurrecting bitter grudges, and an hour after that, just before he passes out in the laundry room, he'll be arguing with you about where you hid his car keys. Miraculously, though, even though he can't walk straight, and you've seen this schtick a million times, every once in awhile he somehow guesses that little Suzie picked the three of clubs, and you're unaccountably delighted. The gold coin emerges from Ashley's ear, the snow white bird emerges from the black top hat and perches on Jacob's finger. The children's mouths hang open in wonder, and your immense cynicism is held, momentarily, in check.

## FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

# Life at the top - AUSU Council president

*By Debbie Jabbour*



I'm not someone who plays the game of politics very well - and this may seem strange, considering I've been president of the student union for the past two and half years. In reality, however, "playing politics" can be very destructive to an organization, political or otherwise.

Student union elections tend to attract many different types of people. Some simply want to expand their university experience and serve other students. They want to make a difference, and may be very idealistic in their goals. Others see it as an important learning experience, a chance to learn about politics and government, a way to further develop leadership skills. These students bring positive and productive elements to a council group. While they are seeking personal growth through their involvement, they have a balanced viewpoint and place student interests first. They understand that "there is no 'I' in TEAM," and do not take personal credit for accomplishments.

Unfortunately, there are other types of people also attracted to student council. These students see council as an opportunity to exert power and to play political games; a way to become important and influential outside of their very narrow real-life world. They seek personal aggrandizement and/or advancement of personal agendas, and they do not see the need to work within a team framework. Rather than providing a supportive environment for the group, they tear the group down.

During my term as president, I've worked with council members that fit virtually every description, and it has often been extremely challenging. In researching the history of AUSU Council earlier this year, I discovered that this is not something new. In the past, AUSU Council has often had difficulty maintaining a cohesive and productive group, and on several occasions has come very close to completely falling apart. I've come to the conclusion that there are two key factors in preventing this from happening. One is the combination of personalities of individual councillors and their reasons for being on Council. The other is quality of leadership.

No one can lead in isolation, and the support of one's executive and board is an essential component for success. As I observed last week, when Dr. Abrioux accepted his honorary degree from the Open University of UK, he stated that this honour really belonged to the AU university community as a whole, and he particularly thanked his executive for their support. AUSU Council is no different. I am proud of what we have accomplished as a group, and honoured to have been leader of that group.

There are many positives to "life at the top" as AUSU president. But there are also many negatives. If I were to describe the experience of being AUSU president in one word, that word would be, "lonely." At any of the points where I have felt ready to resign, it was almost always because I was feeling completely alone and unappreciated.

To remain successful as president, support from one's executive is required, as is respect from the rest of Council. Without this, the president feels even more alone, and this can hamper the ability to get the job done. As president, I've had to make many unpopular decisions, take responsibility when things go wrong, and bear the brunt of criticism. I try to lead by example, and this means that I'm under scrutiny all the time. If I do something wrong, I take responsibility - but if Council as a whole does something wrong - I also take responsibility. This can mean taking blame for something I am not responsible for and may not even be in agreement with - since I must present the opinion of the majority of Council in our actions, not just my own. As

the "voice of Council" I have to be very careful what I say, and often am prevented from stating my own opinion. But I'll expand more on the disadvantages of being president later.

The benefits of being president cannot be understated. I cannot think of a better way to develop leadership qualities, and as a learning experience it rates highly. I've learned how to write and interpret bylaws and policy, and I've learned board and university operations. Through networking, I've developed valuable and enduring contacts that will serve me well throughout my career. There is also a prestige factor. I'm not one to be pretentious or name-drop, and I rarely even use the title of president, unless on official business. But at certain times the recognition is enjoyable. I appreciated being invited to the alumni dinners last year and being introduced as a special guest who had worked hard on behalf of students. I also had the honour of being seated next to Lt. Gov Lois Hole at the AUGC December reception, in acknowledgement of my hard work as student advocate.

A Student Union president normally has a more public role with the politicians, but due to our smaller Council structure on AUSU I've not been able to spend the time I would have liked to in government lobbying. Much of my time has been taken up with administrative functioning, something which AUSU Council hopes to remedy now with the hiring of an executive director. Fortunately I've been able to rely on my hard-working VP External, Shirley Barg - who ensures that the politicians hear our voice. Even though I haven't been able to spend time in the public eye like Shirley has, I've been able to take advantage of developing many government connections, and this is another benefit of my role as president.

I've had the opportunity to sit on many committees, such as Governing Council and Academic Council, learning the inside story on how the university operates. There have been past AUSU presidents who felt that sitting on AU committees was a waste of time and didn't bother to attend - and I'm absolutely appalled at that attitude. I take great pride in my committee representation and have always done my very best. There are many AU committees, and it is not always easy to find Council members or students willing and able to sit on them. When a rep cannot be found, the job falls to me. So I have sat on committees such as SUP, AUGC, AUAC, Employment review, MSCHE, and more. I do my very best to properly represent students at each and every one of these committees. I've tried to ensure that I never miss a meeting, no matter how tired or overwhelmed I feel. Sitting on committees is hard work, and I've often come out of a 3 hour AUGC Finance Committee or an 8 hour Strategic University Planning Committee feeling completely drained - yet still having to write a report to Council about the meeting!

My efforts have paid off, and the university has come to respect the voice AUSU brings through me to these committees. This was brought to my attention recently, in an incident that made me realize that my hard work is noticed by the university. As I was going out the door to make it to the Edmonton Learning Centre to teleconference to the last Academic Council (AUAC) meeting at 9:30 A.M., my pager went off for my "real" job. I called the AUSU office and had our Admin Assistant let AUAC know that I might not be able to make the meeting after all. I finally did manage to arrive an hour later, and as I entered the ELC, one of the new committee members said, "oh, you are Debbie? They were talking about you up in Athabasca during the first part of the meeting!" I asked what was said, and she said it was related to Bill 43 and tuition increases, and that someone had made the comment that "if Debbie were here at the meeting, she would say that tuition increases are not the solution!" It felt really good to have my voice at Academic Council acknowledged this way, and to know that even if I can't be there, they know what I will say and hear the student voice I've brought to the committee in my absence!

At times I've made extraordinary efforts to attend the meetings. One such occasion was in March of this year. The week began on Tuesday, March 18, with the alumni dinner in Edmonton; and ended with an AUSU Council retreat on Sunday, March 23, in Canmore. This week was an important one at AU, since AUGC would make the yearly budget decision, including proposed tuition increases. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances, our AUSU yearly retreat was scheduled the same weekend. Within AUSU Council we had some challenges that week as well. Our secretary-treasurer was facing a motion of removal at the March 20



Council meeting for failure to fulfill duties, and VP Shirley Barg was in Saskatchewan, having just lost her father. Only a few months earlier we had been forced to remove another Councillor due to policy violation and disruption of Council activities - a matter so serious that we decided it merited laying a charge of non-academic misconduct against this individual.

Shirley had been away for some time due to her father's illness, and I was already exhausted from managing so much of the executive work by myself. A motion to remove someone from Council is a difficult and serious one, and as president, I was feeling the burden of the responsibility for this decision. I was also feeling increasingly alone.

In addition to the alumni dinner on Tuesday, I attended a cross-cultural committee meeting that afternoon at AU. Early Wednesday morning I made the three-hour drive to Calgary and spent the rest of the day at the CLC cleaning out old AUSU files and meeting with AU staff to negotiate some kind of AUSU presence in the Calgary office. That evening I attended the Calgary Alumni dinner, followed by an informal meeting with AU president and members of the AU executive. Thursday morning I drove to Canmore to meet with the rest of Council for our retreat. We had a Council meeting that evening. Two important agenda items were decided. One - we accepted the resignation of the Secretary-Treasurer and elected a replacement. Two - I presented to AUSU Council a budget proposal the university was hoping students would support. AU had received a sum of money from the Alberta government; and they wanted to use this money, in conjunction with a re-allocation of budget money that was intended to support multiple-course-takers; to reduce the out-of-province differential fee. Dr. Abrioux had approached me with this proposal at the Tuesday alumni dinner, and asked if we would consider this re-allocation of funds, taking into account the benefit that some 60% of our members living outside of Alberta would experience through a reduction in out-of-province fees.

I did not personally agree with the decision the majority of AUSU Council finally made on this matter, but when they asked me, as president and AUGC representative, to go to AUGC and present the majority opinion, I did as requested. What did this involve? I could not vote at AUGC unless I attended the meeting in person (the university paid my expenses to do so). So after the Council meeting ended at 10 P.M. Thursday, I slept for a few hours, then left Canmore at 3 A.M. Friday, driving back to Calgary to catch a flight to Edmonton. I arrived in Edmonton at 8:30 A.M., met with Dr. Abrioux, then attended the AUGC meeting itself until noon. I presented AUSU Council's position on the budget and voted against it, as AUSU Council had directed me. After the meeting I drove back to the airport, flew back to Calgary, and drove back to Canmore - to rejoin the rest of Council by 6 P.M. that evening. One of the purposes of the yearly retreat is that Council members have an opportunity to rest and regroup while making plans for the upcoming year. Everyone else at the retreat had spent a relaxing day and were ready to get to work - so even though I wanted nothing more than sleep - I spent the rest of the evening and the next day working on AUSU projects before finally returning home on Sunday.

In retrospect, I realize that what I did went far above and beyond the "call of duty." But at the time it just seemed that I was fulfilling my responsibilities as president.

I did the same a little more than a month later, in May, when I drove all night from Regina, Saskatchewan, to be at a CAUS meeting in Nordegg (near Red Deer, AB). This was an important meeting, since AUSU VP Shirley Barg was running for CAUS chair. My attendance was required, so that I could vote on behalf of AUSU, and so that I could reassure the other schools that as AUSU president, I would support Shirley in the role if she were elected CAUS chair. I had been trying to finish my coursework before the May 5 graduation application deadline, but the same weekend, my daughter was presenting her original research at a chemistry conference in Regina. I was torn. I very much wanted to attend the conference, but had also committed to be at the CAUS changeover meeting that weekend, and I knew how important it was that Shirley be elected chair of CAUS. At the last minute, I decided to take advantage of the AUSU personal development conference funding so that I could attend the chemistry conference, and drove to Regina on Thursday with my daughter, planning to return in time to also meet my commitment to AUSU and Shirley at the CAUS meeting.

Although I wanted very much to take a break and stay the night in Regina with my daughter; at the conclusion of the Regina conference, Saturday night, we packed up and I began the all night drive to make it to the CAUS meeting in time. My daughter was not feeling well on the return trip, and the situation was compounded by us hitting a freak snowstorm just after crossing the Alberta border. For hours I clung, white-knuckled, to the steering wheel, as we crawled through white-out conditions, finally reaching Calgary at noon Sunday. Shirley by now was calling my cell phone in a panic, since the vote for CAUS chair would be held that afternoon, and if I didn't make it in time she would have to withdraw her nomination. I frantically tried to get through to her to let her know I was on my way through the snowstorm - but the cell phone connection kept getting interrupted.

Finally we reached Nordegg. Chilled, shaking with cold and exhaustion, I made the CAUS meeting with less than an hour to spare, and Shirley was successfully elected CAUS chair. It wasn't until midnight that evening that I finally managed to recoup a few hours of sleep after that horrendous drive, and it was weeks before I recovered from my overall exhaustion. Looking back now, I realize that, as stressful as that drive was through the snowstorm, and as much as I wanted to give up and go home - I did the right thing by seeing my responsibility through. Shirley has proved to be the very best possible representative CAUS could have had during a difficult transitional year and I am so thankful that I made the meeting to vote her in as chair. Its hard to imagine Bill 43 without Shirley as the main advocate, and as I mentioned last week - even the Alberta government officials recognize the valuable role Shirley has played.

In spite of the personal cost, I didn't mind expending the extra time and energy. I care about AU students and AUSU Council, and I take my job as president seriously. Unfortunately, my effort in attending that meeting was not appreciated, and in recent months, some members on Council have not shown respect for my voice on AU committees in general. This has created a situation of extreme discouragement for me. I've had my ability to properly represent students on AU Committees called into question by two councillors, one of whom came to AUSU Council and demanded that I be removed from AU Committee representation, claiming that I could not possibly represent AU students on these committees if I did not agree with every AUSU Council decision. Thankfully, AUSU Council refused to accept this allegation. The majority of AUSU council concurred that even if I was not in full agreement with a decision, they were confident that I was able to put my own opinion aside when necessary and was properly representing AU students at all times.

But I was deeply hurt nonetheless, and since that time I've lost heart. Where I used to be passionate about my representation on these committees and would come home from a committee meeting to eagerly write a detailed report to Council about everything that had occurred, I'm now coming home feeling like it doesn't matter. I will never again do a Canmore-Calgary-Edmonton-Calgary-Canmore day trip like I did in March, and I will never again drive all night from Regina to meet an AUSU commitment like I did in May. I learned the hard way that my extraordinary efforts were not appreciated, and in fact were denigrated. This is a dangerous way to feel, since it could seriously hamper my ability to represent students.

I've been trying hard to focus on the positive - to put the advantages ahead of the disadvantages. Most importantly, I've continued to try and always place student interests at the forefront. I've tried not to let discouragement at the hands of individuals stop me from doing my best as AUSU president. But such things wear you down. When you are a dedicated, hard worker who always puts AUSU first - to have individuals belittle your work is extremely discouraging. When these individuals are members of your executive - individuals who you have always worked hard to support in return - well, there are no words to describe how that makes you feel.

**Next week: Conclusion.**

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*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.*

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# The Net Nerd's Profiles



Your cuticles are bleeding, donuts fear you, and your dog has been spending the better part of the week whimpering under the couch. You need *Stress Inc.* <http://stress.jrn.columbia.edu/site/index.html>.

It's that time of year again. Presents, food, nasty relatives, crowded malls and final exams. In other words, stress. *Stress Inc.* is the be all end all of stress related information. *Stress Inc.* is presented a little different from other websites, though. It takes the perspective of how stress affects the market place and the culture of stress. The information presented is not necessarily how to cope with stress.

The *Stress Inc.* website was developed by Columbia University's journalism department. Each section is an article devoted to a cultural aspect of stress. As well, there are different writers for each section. I'll give an overview of each one.

"Publishing"- Talks about the way the publishing world has impacted knowledge about stress. For example the self help book market generates an estimated \$1 billion in sales annually. This section discusses different publishers that corner the self-help market and the history of the self help book. Hit the "links" button at the end of the article to see the sites of various publishers.

"Consulting"- Talks about different companies that offer stress consulting to harried executives. Again there are more links - this time to three consulting groups including Steve Wilson, "Joyologist." Somebody call Oprah, stat!

"Pharmaceuticals"- Drugs, drugs, drugs and the legal kind! Links to pharmaceutical companies and other web based information.

"Ergonomics"- Put up your hand if you don't know what this word means. Ok looks like I'm the only one. Talks about stress on the body, more specifically Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI). Again, the bottom dollar here is that RSI costs about \$12 million in medical costs and lost wages in North America. Learn about symptoms and preventive measures. At the end are more links about ergonomics.

"Fitness"- Take a deep breath, now "Ommmm." Yoga, yoga and more yoga. If you want more info on our favorite Eastern-based exercise I suggest [www.yogasite.com](http://www.yogasite.com).

"Fringe"- Some of the wonderful and weird measures people take to de-stress their lives. All about alternative medicines and therapies. My favorite link in this section: <http://www.quackwatch.org>. It does just what it says.

"Toys"- The funny things people buy to de-stress. Neat gadgets but give me bubble wrap anytime.

"Timeline"- A decade by decade account of the evolution of stress culture and industry. Interesting but I still haven't figured out why the release date of "Annie Hall" is on there.

**Neat Stuff:** "Tension Breakers" include little activities such as "Stress out Bob." Bob is a little computer guy you can do bad stuff to (hee hee).

**Not so Neat Stuff:** Lots of information on here, but reeks of CLASS PROJECT. Albeit a class project done in a very professional, well thought-out manner. I wish I would've had this idea first!

**Rating: \*\*\*\*/5** I first went to this website expecting hints and tips on how to cope with stress. Fortunately, I didn't see the little words at the top of the home page "The Commerce of Coping" or else I wouldn't have gone to this site. Well laid out, interesting information, and pleasing to the eye. Gives us a perspective on how far society will go and how much dough we will spend on trying to find a quick fix.

**You read the last review expecting some help with your stressed out life and information on how to stop scaring animals and small children. Now you can go to *Mind Tools [TM]*: <http://www.psychwww.com/mtsite/index.html>**

If you want practical advice on how to deal with the stress and goings on in your life you must go to *Mind Tools*. Here you will find everything you need to get your life in order. No, it's not the queen of anal retention, Martha Stewart, but real things to apply to your everyday life. Even the categories made me happier just reading them. "Techniques to help you think excellently", "Skills for high performance living", and "Practical Psychology".

"Techniques..." has several subcategories such as "Improving your memory" and "Information skills". Each of these categories has several tools listed under them. These tools are practical applications to use when solving problems. I can't tell you if they will "help you think excellently" since I haven't been thinking much lately, but try them out and let me know.

"Skills..." has several subcategories as well. "Mastering Stress", "Planning Skills", and "Communication Skills" are all useful and orderly ways to handle life's little road bumps. Again, tons of advice under each subcategory. "High performance living," I love my life being compared to vehicles.

"Practical Psychology" has but two subcategories "Sports Psychology" and "Psychometric tests". Take the IQ test and be humbled or happy and prepare to pay a couple bucks.

**Neat Stuff:** Download such programs such as "Life Plan v1.22" or download the entire site. "Links" has a psychology tutorial and "mind man", a mind map generator software.

**Not so Neat Stuff:** Some of the links are thinly veiled ads. I got the hint when credit card information was required.

**Rating: \*\*\*.5/5** A five for the information and the organization. But I had to take points off for some of the links (basically the "for only \$9.95" type of ads). *Mind Tools* has some really wonderful tools and information that anyone can use. This site has great stuff to use in any aspect of your life, especially if you are headed toward the professional procrastinator route!

## **AU COMPUTER CONFERENCE - END DATE EXTENDED!**

AU wants to talk to you. From November 28 to **December 12**, the university is be running an asynchronous computer conference which will take the form of an open meeting between the AU executive and AU students.

For the 10 days that the conference is open, students and AU execs will post messages back and forth on an electronic forum, in the form of an extended conversation, and all AU students are invited to participate.

**To join the conference, go here:**

**<http://chinstrap.cs.athabascau.ca/cgi-bin/b7/main.pl?rid=120>**





Dear Sandra,

**How does one become an AUSU councillor? I think it would be great to be able to help my fellow students, and I'd like to become a councillor.**

**AU Student in Edmonton.**

Dear AU Student,

The only requirement to becoming an AUSU councillor is being an AU student. It does not matter where you live, how old you are, what your previous experience is, or what type of program or course you are enrolled in. All you need is a dedication to making the lives of your fellow AU students just a little bit better.

AUSU Council is comprised of nine elected student officials. Over the ten year history of AUSU, councillors have ranged in age from their early twenties to their late seventies and have come from various cities and towns around the world.

In the spring of 2004 elections will be held and every AU student will be given the opportunity to run for the election. All students may also vote for the candidates they feel will do the best job of keeping their interests first and foremost toward university and government decisions regarding AU student issues, such as tuition increases or the recent Bill 43 issue in Alberta legislature. Interested candidates prepare electoral platforms; a brief bio of yourself and what you feel you could do to improve student life. This platform will be posted on the AUSU website and be included with all voting packages sent to AU students.

Councillors do most of their work via email and teleconferencing. As a distance learning environment that houses students from all around the globe, there are no restrictions as to the residency of an AUSU councillor. Councillors are expected to put in approximately 10 hours a month and are provided with a monthly honorarium. Each new council member is provided with a comprehensive introduction package to be used throughout their two year term.

Council members also come from all program areas; women's studies, business administration, psychology, sociology, and professional arts. Check out the AUSU site at [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org). Read our by-laws and operating policies and cruise the site to see what AUSU has accomplished in the past ten years.

I encourage all students to take an active part in their student government and run for AUSU Council in the upcoming year. It is a great learning experience and an excellent way to connect with your fellow students. Keep checking the site early in the New Year when the call for elections is announced.

If you have any other questions or comments about being an AUSU Councilor contact the AUSU Council at [council@ausu.org](mailto:council@ausu.org)

*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](mailto:smoore@ausu.org)*

# Primetime Update

Week of December 3, 2003

Amanda Lyn Baldwin

Missed your favourite shows? No problem. Primetime update gives you the rundown.

## Friends

No new episode this week. Maybe we'll see one after the holiday season.

*Friends airs on Thursdays at 8:00pm Alberta Time, on Global (channel 7 in Calgary)*

## Survivor: Pearl Islands

Last week the chick failed to prevail and let Jon (who lied about his grandmother's death) and Burton control the vote, which was for Tijuana. This week, everyone spends time questioning their alliances, and their loyalties.

The first exciting event is the reward challenge which consisted of the following: The six remaining castaways become two teams of three, Sandra, Christa, Burton, and Darrah, Lill, Jon. Starting from a platform in the water, the first team members (Sandra and Darrah) traverse a balance beam, and then dive into the water to retrieve paddles tied to floating boxes. The second team mates (Christa and Lill) join them to untie three barrels from an underwater cable and proceed to a ladder, where the last paddle is tied. With their final team mate (Burton and Jon) they jump into the water and proceed to the beach to retrieve a boat. The team then races the boat to the water and paddles back to the first floating platform. The first team to touch the platform wins. The reward was a night at a spa in which the winning team members would get to enjoy a refreshing shower and massages, followed by a full dinner and a comfortable night's sleep in a real bed. As Sandra, who is a weak swimmer, goes first and ends up doing the most swimming for her team, Darrah, Lill and Jon reach the platform first and take reward.

At the spa, after enjoying many luxuries, Jon and Darrah start to talk about strategy, and make a pact to secretly stick it out until the end. Lill fusses over the way Jon treats her like exactly who she is -- a stupid naïve old woman who's only back in the game by chance.

It's not so cushy back at camp, where Christa and Sandra nag Burton about their alliance. Burton used Jon as a scapegoat to get out of the conversation and ended up blurting out that "No matter how strong your best friend is out here, at the end of the day, it's not as strong as a million dollars."

Burton and Jon, since we all know that being male means being in control, make the decision that Christa will be the next to go. Burton later talks to Lill about the final two, informing her that he can't take her with him. Stupid Lill doesn't even retaliate, she just accepts it and votes with Burton. Dummy.

In the reward challenge each individual shoots old muskets at targets laced with kerosene. The first player to set three of their own targets ablaze wins immunity. Christa took an early lead by hitting her first two targets. Darrah tied Christa quickly by hitting her first two targets in a row. With two targets hit each, it came down to two women and no men competing for immunity: Darrah versus Christa. Christa lined up her shot, took aim and just missed the target. Darrah then stood in, took aim and coldly set the third target on fire. For the second time in a row, Darrah won immunity.

As the tribe returned to camp, secret strategy sessions were occurring all over the place. Christa was told the alliance was voting Lill out; Lill was told the alliance was voting Christa out. At tribal council Christa put it best: "Lying is the way to go out here. Everybody has done it, and everybody has done it well." In the end, Jon and Burton broke their recent alliance with Christa and Sandra by directing the vote so that Christa was voted out of the tribe in a four-to-two decision.

Next week on Survivor: Pear Islands look for one castaway to sabotage the tribe's survival efforts in order to seek revenge, two overconfident castaways (Burton and Jon), a game of He Said, She Said and many more lies. Then, the unexpected happens.

*Survivor airs on Thursdays at 9:00pm Alberta time on Global (channel 7 in Calgary)*

## The Bachelor

This week we watched the wedding shower and bachelor and bachelorette parties. Friends and family have spent time with the couple, and have become less skeptical about their feelings for each other. On my part, however, I am skeptical about the usefulness of this show. Since it has no bearing on the wedding, or anything related to it, I found it was a waste of my time. Next time though, Trista and Ryan pledge their love and commitment in a two-hour wedding of a lifetime, on Wednesday, December 10, 10pm.

**If there are any other shows you want updates on, or any comments you wish to make, please email me at [abaldwin@shaw.ca](mailto:abaldwin@shaw.ca)!**



**This column focuses on a wide range of issues affecting post-secondary students. Students are encouraged to submit suggestions and educational topics they are concerned about, or personal experiences with courses or university situations they feel other students should know about.**

**Debbie Jabbour**

Have you ever attended a university that opened up the doors of the executive offices and invited students to come inside and talk? Where each of the university's executive officers, including the university president, keep those doors open for several weeks, ready to answer any questions students may have, ready to engage in a dialogue about the future of the university? If you are an Athabasca University student, then you have that very unique opportunity!

Since the beginning of December, AU's president Dominique Abrioux, VP Academic Judith Hughes, VP Finance Pat Eagar, and Executive director Stephen Murgatroyd, have opened up their office doors and are eagerly waiting for students to come inside and talk with them. So far only a few students have responded to that invitation, but the discussion has been interesting and productive. Even though the website dialogue is scheduled to end soon, AU executive have extended the invitation to students to continue to feel welcome to email or phone them with any questions or comments.

In a post-secondary university environment where university presidents and vice presidents tend to remain distant from the students, AU once again shows that it is unique. Although AU administration has always been open to communicating with students, this is the first time students have been given the opportunity to directly speak with AU executive in an ongoing website dialogue. How we utilize this opportunity may have a bearing on whether the door remains open. Our university executive is really interested in what students have to say, so if you have not yet participated in the discussion, I would encourage you to do so. **To join the discussion, go here: <http://chinstrap.cs.athabascau.ca/cgi-bin/b7/main.pl?rid=120>**

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# CANADIAN FED WATCH!

## NEWS ACROSS THE NATION...

*By Karl Low*



### Manitoba More Open for Business

The Manitoba Universities have signed an agreement with Advanced Education and Training Minister, Diane McGifford, that would allow international students taking their post-secondary education in Manitoba to work outside the university campus. In the post 9-11 world, where the American government found that some of the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Centre actually came in using expired student visas, this move by the Manitoba government shows a lot of faith and support for their post-secondary institutions. It also shows an uncommon amount of good sense, as the best way to deal with intolerance is to open borders, not increase isolation. Free trade can work for immigration too.

However it seems strange that such restrictions existed in the first place, in my mind. After all, if you're an international student, part of the reason you spend the extra money to attend university in another country is to experience the culture of your destination. If you are unable to work outside of the confines of the university campus, however, you're missing a large portion of what makes a culture – the way the people support themselves. To have a restriction in place that prohibits this seems to defeat one of the main reasons people look outside their own countries for an education rather than within.

What this does raise, however, is the interesting point of how more universities are increasingly looking to compete over international students. AU has the unique advantage of being able to gain those students even if they are unable or unwilling to leave their home country, but still want an education from a North American university. Of course, as I pointed out, often part of the reason students want an out of country education is also to experience another culture.

One thing that AU can advertise is that there are no restrictions on where a person can work when you study with AU.

### Post-Secondary Investigation Under Review

The Alberta Government has made a great to-do about how it has accepted most of the suggestions from the Learning Commission. Out of the 95 recommendations the Learning Commission report made, the government has decided to accept 84 of them, and reject two of them completely.

The two rejected recommendations include giving the school-boards the authority to implement a tax on their own, and that school infrastructure be moved to the Department of Learning rather than the department of Infrastructure. Surprisingly, I agree with both of these decisions.

When a tax is imposed, it should be imposed directly by the politicians, and not by some political proxies. I am actually surprised the government didn't let this one go through, as then they could easily under-fund the education system and put that off on the school boards to raise their own taxes.

The second change, that of moving learning infrastructure into the Department of Learning also seems like one that is better off not implemented. The Department of Learning should be concentrating on learning, not buildings.



Of course, this leaves nine recommendations that the Learning Commission made that weren't accepted but were not outright rejected either. The government explains this by saying that "nine of the recommendations have significant implications for the system and will be explored further before a final decision is made." Funnily enough, if you look in the background as to what the recommendations were and the government's response, you'll see that one of the recommendations that would have "significant implications for the system" is recommendation number 12: "Undertake a comprehensive, independent review of Alberta's post-secondary education system."

I wonder if Minister Oberg could tell me exactly what significant implications an independent review of the post-secondary system might have? What is he afraid such a review might find?

After all, Alberta has been committed to life-long learning for several years now, hasn't it?



## ABOUT SCHMIDT (2003)

Film Review

By Laura Seymour

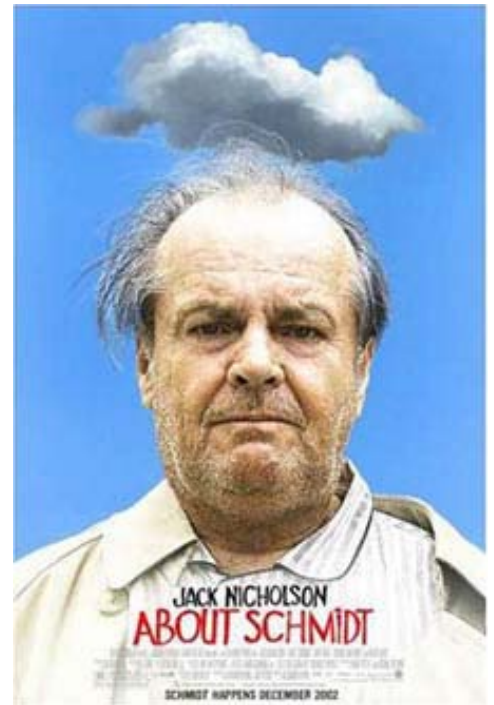
This is a really recent film for many students but is so well-done I really had to review it! Plus it's on local cable now.

*About Schmidt* is the oddly funny tale of Warren Schmidt (Jack Nicholson). The film opens with Warren sitting in his Omaha-based insurance office. He is staring at the clock. The office is cleaner and more sterile than most hospitals. It is Warren's last day. This executive is given the usual trite dinner and thank you speeches and is now faced with retirement and his upcoming daughter Jeannie's (Hope Davis) marriage to her rather odd boyfriend (played well by Dermot Mulroney).

Warren is bored with watching TV one night and decides to sign up for an outreach program to sponsor a starving Tanzanian boy, Ndugu. The struggling 6-year-old gets an earful about poor Warren's life. We, however, get the hilarious results. Warren begins by writing Ndugu with a general story about his life on a yellow legal pad of paper, and we "hear" the usual stiff composition so many of us use in letters. Then his face tightens and the anger begins to seethe out of him. He reveals fury over many points of his life, then catches himself and scratches out a portion of it.

This is the creative mind of screenwriter Alexander Payne.

Warren lists all the things he hates about his wife, Helen (June Squibb). Shortly after, he comes home and finds her dead. Warren suddenly overlooks the many things his wife did to annoy him, and he mourns her death. It becomes a theme throughout the film.





Now with no job, no wife, and no family, Warren is desperate to find something meaningful in his thoroughly unimpressive life. He knocks around his filthy home. Later, his car breaks down. Suddenly Warren wakes up in the middle of the night and sets out on a journey of self-discovery, exploring his roots across Nebraska in his 35-foot motor home. He had planned to drive around the country with his late wife but now it becomes his home. His grocery-shopping trip is hilarious to anyone who knows what it's like to get down to the bare necessities.

Warren's destination is Denver, where he hopes to bridge the gulf between himself and his estranged daughter, Jeannie. Phoning from a gas station to say he's arriving early to help with her wedding preparations, he learns that Jeannie isn't interested.

Warren also hates the groom-to-be, Randall (Dermot Mulroney), a mediocre, underachieving waterbed salesman. Worse, Warren is appalled by the free-spirited nature and extreme candor of his soon-to-be in-laws (Kathy Bates and an almost unrecognizable Howard Hesseman).

Roberta, Randall's loving mom, is a glorified, gutsy scene-stealer. She adores her son and painstakingly reveals personal details about her life to Warren without a moment's concern. She decides that Warren needs a great place to be and gives him Randall's old room...complete with waterbed! Warren has obviously not been on a waterbed before and his stiff old self wakes up the next morning with a stiff old neck! Since this is the day before the wedding his daughter is angry and accusatory. Roberta decides that some old painkillers will help him. They're left over from her hysterectomy! Stoned and completely pain free, Warren is all but useless the rest of the day. He decides he has found glory with these pills and Roberta fires up the hot tub as soon as she gets him back to her place. Then she decides to join him -- naked! God bless Kathy's guts! I wouldn't appear on camera looking like her!

Warren is horrified. He sleeps with his pajamas buttoned up to his neck! This is all too much for him.

The pacing of the film seemed "slow" to my husband. Thankfully, it's not a stall kind of slow. It is the filmmaker's way to illustrate the tired old life of Warren.

Also no one is completely normal -- or is that average-- in this film. If Warren were surrounded by completely normal people he would seem crazy! He has to be different than others but they have to be just as goofy as he is!

Am I going to tell you what happens the next day -- the day of the wedding? HAH! I've told you too much already!

*About Schmidt* is playing in Alberta on Movie Central now...maybe over Christmas you'd like a laugh, to get over the tensions the holidays bring! One warning—this film is rated R.

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*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).*

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Missing out on all the deals?

[www.ausu.org/services](http://www.ausu.org/services)

Get an AU ID card, today!



## AUSU THIS MONTH



A Special General Meeting was held on October 15, 2003, to pass several changes to the proposed new AUSU bylaws, which had been requested by Alberta Corporate Registries. The bylaws were passed contingent on acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries. Unfortunately, Corporate Registries has returned the bylaws with several more requested adjustments that they did not identify the first time around. We therefore need to hold another SGM to approve these additional amendments, which are listed below. All students are encouraged to attend. For further information or to book a teleconference line for the meeting, please contact the AUSU office at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org), or by telephone 1-800-788-9041, ext 3413.

**Debbie Jabbour, President  
AUSU**

### **NOTICE, Special General Meeting, December 19, 2003, 1800 MST:**

A Special General Meeting will be held on December 19, 1800 MST, to vote on the following two special resolutions:

1. BIRT, by special resolution, the current objectives of AUSU are replaced by the attached objectives, to take effect upon acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries.
2. BIRT, by special resolution, the current bylaws of AUSU are replaced by the attached bylaws, to take effect upon acceptance by Alberta Corporate Registries.

For more information and supporting documents, see: <http://www.ausu.org/agm/sgm.php>

### **AUSU IN PERSON DISCUSSION GROUPS**

Getting together physically with fellow AU students adds to your university experience. Other students will be able to understand and relate to the joys and frustrations of distance learning. It's also a way to stay abreast of information relating to AU and the Athabasca University Students' Union.

See the Coffee Groups web page on the AUSU site, at <http://www.ausu.org/coffee> for a list of groups.

Anyone interested in starting up a group in your area (anywhere in Canada, from small towns to major centres) please contact SANDRA at [smoore@ausu.org](mailto:smoore@ausu.org).

### **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](mailto:smoore@ausu.org)

### **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](http://www.ausu.org). You will need an AUSU web site account.] **Times are MST**

Mondays at

8:00 PM

Councillor Karl Low

# NEWS FROM AU

Contributed by *The Insider*



## WINDOW A TRIBUTE TO DAYS OF LITH

A new bit of spontaneous art has erupted on the window of Billy Cheung's office at AU Central. Using old colour keys and negatives salvaged from a cleaning up effort going on in Educational Media Development (EMD), the Instructional Media Analyst has created a visual tribute to the "old days" of course materials; a time before digital ruled, when lithography and printing presses were the industry standard.

From the hallway, the display looks like the sum of its parts; a mash of silver-stained gelatinous sheets. The view from inside is different; a highly reflective white wall opposite Cheung's window breathes life into the montage. "So much effort, so much crafting went into (this

work)," Cheung notes, wistfully touching registration markings. "I think we should remember it."

Soon, Cheung's window may be the only reminder of AU's days of analog photography and lithographic prints. Faced with a physical restructuring of their office space, EMD has charged Visual Designer Margaret Anderson with the task of sorting through the archives. "We're having to go through all the press pieces and print-based stuff and literally throw everything out or recycle it because there's no room to keep these things," Anderson says. "And because we're going digital, there's really no need to keep those things."

This is the second time Anderson has done this. EMD went through a similar process in 1999-2000, when Course Materials Production moved into the Tim Byrne Centre. "It was a really difficult exercise because everyone was feeling really uncertain," Anderson said. "Most of it got stored into a big plan chest and we're sorting it out again because we have a much better idea of what's been digitized."

Anderson adds that although she needs to be pragmatic about the exercise, she really appreciates Cheung's aesthetic approach to commemorating the work. "While I was in clean up mode and thinking linearly, while I was able to reflect on history, he was able to make the display and post it. If you know enough about the courses, you can recognize bits and pieces in his window.

"I think it's a really interesting moment in the history of the university, in that we really are becoming a digital institution, rather than being so reliant on papers and plates and negs," Anderson continues. "But it's also hard because it's so different. It's cause for reflection because you're doing it physically and throwing things away. You have time to think about the work done in the past and remember the people involved in production."

## Briefly ...



About ten years ago, Associate Professor of Anthropology Sheila Greaves picked up her French Horn again, after a 25-year hiatus. On Tuesday, Dec. 9, Greaves will join fellow members of the Calgary Concert Band to present "Christmas on Broadway," directed by Dr. Jeremy Brown and featuring vocalist, Michael Hope. Considered Calgary's premier concert band, the Calgary Concert Band has been invited to tour Austria and Switzerland next summer. A second band Greaves plays with, the Rocky Mountain Concert Band, mostly plays at nursing homes and free community events. "I enjoy the challenge of playing new pieces all the time," Greaves says. "I like playing with other musicians, and it's a great way to relax - you really have to focus on the music."

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*Did you forget your lunch and your cash? No problem - just take a walk down to the shiny new ATM, located in the A Cafe.*



Claude Dupuis has been on the move recently, spreading the word about AU's School of Business. On Nov. 25, during a University Information Night sponsored by Mount Royal College, Dupuis competed with representatives from Universities of Lethbridge, Calgary and Alberta, to talk to students about Athabasca University and the various programs available in the School of Business. Nearly 80 students attended each of his two sessions and, Dupuis reports, "Afterward, quite a few also expressed their interest in wanting to attend seminar based AU courses in Calgary. "Such events are especially important to us," Dupuis continues, "because it serves to put a "human face" on AU and the School of Business in the city of Calgary. It's my hope that someday there will be as strong an AU academic presence in Calgary as there is in Edmonton, which could contribute to a significant increase in enrolment, and that's something I'd like to be part of."

## SUP forums well received

Members of Athabasca University's Executive Group are registering satisfaction with response to a series of open sessions they are holding with Athabasca University stakeholders on the Strategic University Plan (SUP).

On Wednesday, Nov. 26, the group met with staff at AU Central, and were greeted with an energetic question and answer session that tested the issues of how the SUP is affecting day to day activities, and how day to day activities are affecting the SUP. Currently, Executive are meeting with students and will be meeting with AU tutors soon.

"It's too early to talk of impact," notes Executive Director, External Relations Stephen Murgatroyd, "but the sessions were warmly received everywhere - especially by staff who wanted their voice heard. Staff throughout the University - especially support and professional staff - welcomed the opportunity to discuss ideas and concerns with the Executive team. And we, in return, welcomed the opportunity to have new issues presented to us." According to Pat Eagar, Vice-President, Finance and Administration, holding such sessions is not only good for the morale of the University, but also serve as a "cross-location communication strategy."

"Another thing I heard from staff at different locations was how important it was to hear about what the "University" was doing," she said. "It didn't seem to matter where we went, one site learned about initiatives that other areas of the University are working on and that they can benefit from." For those who are unable to attend the sessions, Executive's PowerPoint presentation is available for viewing at <http://www.athabascau.ca/intra/presoffice/presentations/index.html>

"We remain very interested in your feedback," says AU President Dominique Abrioux. "If so inclined, please forward (your) comments to any executive officer. If received by Dec. 5, they will help inform our own debriefing."



## Lord of the Benzene Rings captures imagination of young and old

To cries of "cool," and "awesome," and gales of laughter, the cast and crew of *Lord of the Benzene Rings* opened this year's Chemistry Magic Show, Tuesday, Dec. 2, to a full house of bright young minds from Athabasca-area schools.

"Gandalf the Grey" (then "Gandalf the Pink") replaced "Gandalf the Great", chemistry "dorks" replaced "orks," and "Block riders" of the Periodic Table of Elements replaced the "Black Riders" in this adaptation of the popular *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that incorporated elements of local geography and popular culture to demonstrate how much fun science can be.

And it was fun! Loud bangs, bright explosions and liquids that continually changed colour were combined with self-deprecating humour to create 80 minutes of knee-slapping adventure.

Sponsored by Athabasca University and Science Outreach-Athabasca, the production brought together a wide range of "acting" and scientific talent from the gamut of community organizations, even drawing upon the help of a couple of young "vic- er! - volunteers" from the audience.



# SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

For scholarships available through the Athabasca University Students' Union, see the AUSU website at [www.ausu.org](http://www.ausu.org)



## HALF PRICE COMPUTER BOOKS ESSAY SCHOLARSHIP

**Value: \$500**

**Deadline: December 22, 2003**

**Administrator: Half Price Computer Books**

**Notes:** Awarded to a Canadian Student. The essay should be between 500 and 750 words, on ONE of the three predetermined topics posted at our Web site. For full details, visit our scholarship page.

### Contact Information:

Half Price Computer Books  
125A Glacier Street  
Coquitlam, British Columbia V3K 5Z1

Fax: (604) 945-7229

Toll Free: 888-663-0063

Web Site: <http://www.halfpricecomputerbooks.ca>

E-mail: <mailto:scholarship@halfpricecomputerbooks.ca>

Application Address: <http://www.halfpricecomputerbooks.ca/scholarship.php>

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## NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT BURSARY

**Value: \$3000**

**Deadline: May 15, 2004**

**Administrator: Alberta Scholarship Programs**

**Notes:** Applicants must have been residents of Alberta for a minimum of three years prior to applying. Must be within two years of graduation from their post-secondary program. Recipients are required to work for one year within the Northern Alberta Development Council boundary upon graduation. Please see Web site for more information.

### 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: <mailto:heritage@gov.ab.ca>

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





## **CUTC 2004 (Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference)** **January 22 - 24, 2004 - Delta Toronto East Hotel**

The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference (CUTC) is about technology, innovative ideas, and the people who turn these ideas into reality. The Canadian Undergraduate Technology Conference was started in 2000 by a few visionary students from the University of Waterloo, and is now in its fifth year and continues to be organized exclusively by university students from across Canada.

The last four conferences sold out, each bringing together approximately 500 students from 20 universities across Canada from every aspect of technology. The three-day conference features hands-on workshops and seminars featuring leading speakers from industry and academia. Filled with events such as ThinkTank, TechExpo, CareerExpo, TechPanel, TechShops and TechTours, all of this is made possible by the generous support of our past sponsors, including Bell Canada, Redknee, Microsoft Canada and IBM Canada Ltd.

We are excited to announce that Glenn Edens, Vice President of Research and Director of Sun Labs, will be a keynote speaker for CUTC 2004. Other speakers include David Kirk, Chief Scientist and VP of Architecture at NVIDIA, who will give a glimpse of future graphics technologies and explore the factors that make inventors out of engineers, and Ray Mowling, past president of Monsanto and currently the Executive Director for the Council for Biotechnology Information, who will be speaking about genetically modified foods.

For more information, visit our website at <http://www.cutc.ca> or contact [info@cutc.ca](mailto:info@cutc.ca).

### **Contributed By AU's *The Insider***

- **ISIMD 2004** - Jan. 5 - 7, 2004 - Istanbul, Turkey - "2nd International Symposium of Interactive Media Design." Details: <http://isimd2004.yeditepe.edu.tr/>
- **LEARNTEC 2004** - Feb. 10 - 13 - Karlsruhe, Germany - 12th European Conference and Specialist Trade Fair for Educational and Informational Technology. Details: <http://www.learntec.de>
- **ICDE 2004** - Feb. 18 - 21 - Hong Kong - 21st ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education. Details: <http://www.ouhk.edu.hk/hk2004/>

### **OTHER CONFERENCES**

- **WITHINSIGHT 2004** - January 21-24, 2004 - Ottawa, Ontario. Details: "A four day forum for the discussion and exploration of prominent Canadian issues based on an interactive format of communication with current Canadian leaders. Open to post-secondary students from all across Canada and from all disciplines. Applications are due by November 3rd." [http://www.withinsight.ca/en\\_site/index.html](http://www.withinsight.ca/en_site/index.html)

**Know of a conference that is not on this list? Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.**

# classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org) for more information.

**TEACH ENGLISH Overseas:** Jobs \$\$ Guaranteed-Great Pay. TESOL Certified 5 days in-class, on-line or by correspondence. **FREE** Information Seminar. **FREE** Infopack: **1-888-270-2941** or **globaltesol.com**

## LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

AUSU Legislative Committee needs volunteers with a good sense of right and wrong who are able to understand policy documents, extrapolate to predict outcome of policy decisions, and are willing to have their ideas heard and debated, but most importantly, are willing to get involved.

Volunteers should be VERY comfortable with email, have reliable email access that can handle attachments, and Word 97 or something compatible. Contact [klow@ausu.org](mailto:klow@ausu.org) for more info.

## RED DEER COFFEE GROUPS

Red Deer Athabasca University students meet at the Chapter's Starbucks on the last Thursday of every month. From 8 pm to 9 pm, the goal is to share ideas that will help us all be successful AU students and collectively resolve our specific issues. The next meeting will be on January 29th, 2004 due to Christmas holidays. Contact Ryan, [lowrystcol@hotmail.com](mailto:lowrystcol@hotmail.com).

## THE VOICE

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**Editor In Chief** Tamra Ross Low

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**THE VOICE ONLINE: [WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE](http://WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE)**

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