

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 18 Iss 46 2010-11-19

Stealing the Grade

Customized plagiarism

Audio Secrecy

What do you wanna hear?

Book Sale

'Tis the season

*Plus: In Conversation With,
From Where I Sit, Cruiscin Lan,
and much more . . .*



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We love to hear from you! Send your questions and
comments to voice@voicemagazine.org, and please
indicate if we may publish your letter.



EDITORIAL

Christina M. Frey

The Paper Chase



Last weekend, an article in an independent newspaper made waves in the academic world. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published a personal account written by “Dante,” a writer who makes a living composing custom university term papers. The catch: all those essays are paid for, and submitted to professors by, other students.

The article and its implications have raised a certain level of controversy in academic circles. Cheating in any form is a blight on academic integrity, and customized

cheating is a pretty clear case of black and white.

Most of the commentators seem keen to point the finger; in fact, ghostwriter “Dante” explicitly names university profs as those who are at fault. But there’s plenty of guilt to go around. The ghostwriters themselves, the cheating students, the achievement-driven grading system, the lack of funding at universities, the parents who didn’t raise their kids to be honest: all earn a share of the blame, and possibly rightly so.

But in this situation, as always, blaming isn’t going to solve much. Students are still going to be desperate to pass, they’re still going to want to shell out cash to make the grade, and people like “Dante” are still going to obligingly meet that need.

Another (former) term paper writer explained his theories in *The Smart Set* a couple of years ago. He believes that many students are ill-prepared for university writing; that some students get a stroke of bad luck on occasion (for example, illness or divorce); and that other students, highly educated in foreign countries, are struggling to earn a piece of paper that will recognize to some extent their prior educational achievements.

Of course, putting it that way makes the solution seem easy. You just prepare students better, make provisions for emergencies (like extensions), and work with foreign institutions to recognize degrees earned overseas.

But although these solutions might help temporarily, in the longer term they won’t do much more than slap a band-aid on the symptoms of the problem. I think the real issue is something far bigger. There have been dramatic shifts in society’s attitudes toward higher education, and now it’s time to start making sense of the muddle. What’s happened to universities and the so-called love of learning?

It’s telling to watch how public perception of education has changed over the centuries. Four hundred years ago, universities were truly seen as hallowed halls of learning. Students attended to satisfy their thirst for



knowledge of the world, the universe, and the human condition. With the prevailing Renaissance-driven attitude that the pursuit and attainment of knowledge and understanding were one of the ultimate goals of life, universities became like a beacon of light: knowledge was truth and power.

Of course, things weren't perfect then, either; many students in the Renaissance era and the several hundred years following that had some background of wealth or privilege that enabled them to study exclusively or concurrently with some other occupation. But the general attitude toward higher education was different. No one went to university to "get a job," something that's now become synonymous with higher education and that piece of paper.

In fact, many of history's most famous scientists, inventors, and philosophers pursued their quest for knowledge independently of their day jobs, so to speak. One of the prime examples is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Known primarily for his poetry and plays, Goethe was also a scientist (it's believed that he was responsible for discovering one of the bones in the human jaw) and a civil servant (including a position as chief adviser to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach).

Education for education's sake has become meaningless in an achievement-oriented society, but education for career's sake is also becoming less clear.

Fast-forward to, say, the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries. At that point, attitudes toward education had begun to change: higher learning became a way to get ahead in the world. The wider availability of scholarships and grants meant that a university education wasn't just for the privileged upper classes, but was increasingly open to students of more diverse backgrounds. Graduates were assured of better jobs. So although the focus shifted away from the wonder of discovery and more toward the security of the future, universities still shone a beacon of light: for many, they represented the opportunity to better their lot, a chance to break free from the cycle of poverty.

Over the past couple decades, though, higher education has been wobbling—and those beacons are dimming fast. It's like institutions of higher learning aren't sure what they want, and neither are the students. In order to get a reasonably-paying job someday, high school grads are told they have to further their education—and even so, they aren't guaranteed to find work. In fact, many Bachelor's graduates have found that their degrees don't get them where they want to be, and, disillusioned, look to graduate studies or technical schools for the answer. They're without direction and are treading water, trying to make sense of it all.



Students are torn between interests and future security, between obligation and the desire to pursue their goals. Many aren't even sure what their goals are. Most are confused about the role of higher education in their lives and in society in general.

I was one of those floaters. I went to university because, I suppose, it was the next step to adulthood, particularly if I wanted a job in a few years. I didn't begin my studies for the sole purpose of embracing learning (though I did enjoy the learning I encountered along the way); in fact, I concentrated in

an area in which I had little to no interest, because that was the only way, I was told, I'd get a job. My areas of interest—English and writing—simply wouldn't pay the bills.

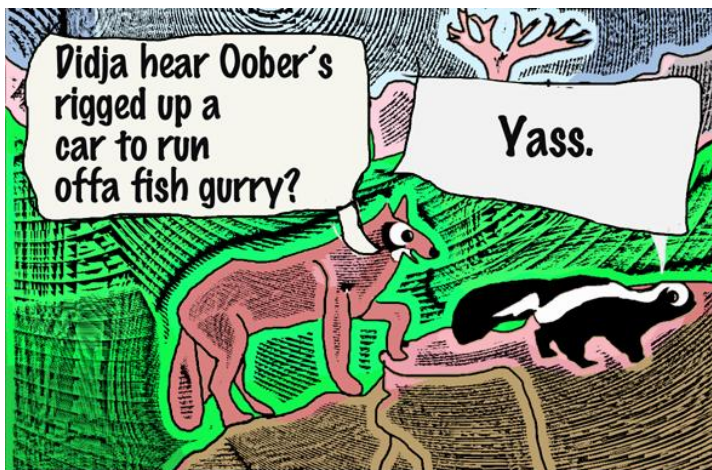
Ironic, seeing that writing and English *are* paying the bills. But that aside, it's illustrative of the dilemma of the modern student. Education for education's sake has become meaningless in an achievement-oriented society, but education for career's sake is also becoming less clear.

So perhaps it's not just a higher education problem. Maybe it's an education problem in general. Maybe students need to be set out on the path of learning from day one. Maybe education needs to be rediscovered as a delight, not a chore. Maybe we need a second Renaissance, a rebirth of society's attitudes toward learning. Maybe the educational system needs a serious overhaul.

Regardless of the reason, and regardless of who's at fault, we need a solution. Because as long as countless students are choosing to hire the "Dante"s of the world to write their term papers, education is getting a failing grade.

CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



IN REVIEW

Karl Low

**Stone Sour: *Audio Secrecy***

Roadrunner Records (2010)

Formed initially in 1992, metal quintet Stone Sour performed primarily across the bar scene of Des Moines, Iowa, for five years before temporarily breaking up as two of its members went on to a little band known as Slipknot. After reforming back in 2002, Stone Sour released two studio albums: the self-titled *Stone Sour* received two Grammy Award nominations for Best Metal Performance, and the band's second studio album, *Come What(ever) May*, received another. These were followed up in 2007 by a live album from Moscow while on tour, and on September 7, 2010, Stone Sour's third studio album, *Audio Secrecy*, hit the shelves.

Corey Taylor, lead singer of the band (you may know him better as Slipknot's lead singer), describes their newest album as "everything I've ever wanted to do on one album. It's heavy, it's melodic, it's dark, it's slow, it's light and it's beautiful. You'll hear something different with each listen."

Of course, another way of saying this is that the album is a bit uneven.

It gets off to a good start, though. "Audio Secrecy" is a haunting piano intro that is exactly the dark, slow, melodic, and beautiful that Taylor speaks of; then the album slams directly into the adrenaline-driven "Mission Statement," setting you up for a kick-ass rock-metal album. The next couple of tracks follow along the same lines, but then things seem to lose their footing.

The turning point is the song "Dying"; there, the weight of producer Nick Raskulinecz starts to be felt, with the group getting 1,000-voice choruses that hearken back to Def Leppard and glam rock bands of the 80s. A couple of tracks later we get "Hesitate," which, if you happen to be a fan of R.E.O. Speedwagon, is probably a great song. I'm willing to bet most metal fans aren't.

This heavy production continues through much of the album, which strikes me as a bit odd considering that the group encourages bands to figure out their sound by playing on the bar and club scene. There's simply no way that these songs could be played at bars and clubs while sounding anything like the studio tracks.

Yet even the production can't disguise that this is an album that really doesn't know where it's going or how it's going to get there. Jumping from "Hesitate" to a Voivod-esque "Nylon 6/6," followed by the arena ballad "Miracles," and then to straight-up rock with "Pieces", then moving to the techno-influenced metal of "The Bitter End," it's a bit of a whirlwind. The next song, "Imperfect," is a standard alternative ballad which, amusingly enough, begins the chorus with the line, "Oh, what do you wanna hear?" At that point, it seems like the band certainly has no idea and is throwing in a little bit of everything in the hopes that they nail it.

This isn't saying that any of it is bad. All of the songs are at least decent, and there are a couple of real stand-outs—such as "Mission Statement" and "The Bitter End"—here and there if you're into solid metal. Certainly the tracks are all individually very radio-friendly. But very little of it stands up and demands that

you pay attention. If the album had a consistent feel to the music, this would actually make it great for studying, but the constant changes tend to work against that as it breaks you from your flow.

The bottom line is that if you're happy with what your local "hard rock" radio station plays, you may want to give Stone Sour's *Audio Secrecy* a listen. But be sure you sample all the tracks before you buy it; otherwise, you could find yourself getting less than you expected.

CLICK OF THE WRIST: Highway to Heaven

Northward ho! This Sunday marks the anniversary of the official opening of the Alaska Highway (also known as the Al-Can Highway). Completed in 1942, the Alaska Highway connects Dawson Creek, B.C. with Delta Junction, Alaska, by way of the Yukon. Although originally it was built as a supply road during World War II, the Alaska Highway is now home to travelers exploring the North. But with its endless offerings of adventure and wild beauty, the Highway is a bit of a travel destination in its own right.

All About Location

If the geography has you slightly confused, check out these maps: one outlines the general route of the Alaska Highway, while several others offer a more close-up view.

If You Build It

Many know that it was fear of Japanese invasion of Alaska that spurred the Alaska Highway project toward completion. But how exactly does one build a permanent road in the unstable northern conditions—with the technology of the 1940s? The PBS film *Building the Alaska Highway* investigates the question in great depth, but its companion resource site, available online, also provides a wealth of features, photos, maps, and videos—as well as a program transcript—on the same topic.

A Thousand Words

What better way to discover the history of the building of the Alaska Highway than through pictures of the process? This photo collection was created from photos and negatives brought back by the poster's grandfather, who worked on the Highway during the 1940s. Although very few of the photos are annotated, in many cases the shots speak for themselves. Regardless, it makes a fascinating historical record.

Call of the Wild

Photos of the highway aren't just for the pages of history—they're also a call to the future. It's hard to remain unmoved by this collection of photos from one individual's Alaska Highway road trip. Relevant photos can be found in the main "Road Trip" set and in those labelled Days 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. As one who's driven the Alaska Highway twice, I can assure you: if the photos create a bit of wanderlust, give in. The drive is long, but well worth it.



IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

Wanda Waterman St. Louis



Ashram

Ashram composes hauntingly beautiful musical pieces suggestive of early 20th-century classical music, and performs them with consummate grace and skill. The trio came together in June 1997 with a collaboration between singer Sergio Panarella and pianist Luigi Rubino. The duo later asked violinist Alfredo Notarloberti (Edo) to join them. Recently, Sergio, Luigi, and Edo took the time to answer some questions from Wanda Waterman St. Louis. (Except where stated, all three responded to each question.)

Musicality

Ashram is an entity of three people with different musical backgrounds who met at a mature age. Edo and Luigi had a classical music education, while Sergio developed his vocal skills in a non-academic way. Musicality has always played a fundamental part of the lives of all the three of us.

Conditions of Creativity

Being creative requires living a moment of deep contact with ourselves and with something greater. The reason why this may happen is quite unimportant.

Landmarks

Ashram's music has always been very instinctive, a result of many factors, not directly coming from pre-existing elements but just from what we have inside, which comes out in the music. There was a clear inspiration for "Elisewin" from the book *Oceano Mare* by the Italian writer Alessandro Baricco.

This Week's Listening

Luigi: Sonate e Partite (Bach)

Edo: Revolver (The Beatles)

Sergio: What's Going On (Marvin Gaye)

Rehearsals

When we want to rehearse, we fix an appointment that's usually put off three or four times. When we're finally able to meet,



and it's generally at Edo's place, we play music for a while. We don't rehearse, actually, we simply play some instant tune and if we like it we will remember it, magically and perfectly. Then we have a meal and Edo (a great cook) offers us some good wine. After dinner we play around until late and we get tired, so we go back home. That's why we don't make records.

Social Intent

We were raised in a definite time and place, part of a family context, and we live in a world where we get information every day, which unconsciously has some influence on us—a sort of automatic process, we guess. But at a conscious level, we have never had any social intent; our music aims at the untouchable that is inside us and above us.

On Beliefs

The name Ashram comes from a friend of ours. At the time the band started, he believed in Hinduism. We have no links with religions; we just liked the sound of the word and the meaning of it.

Sergio: Politics is rubbish, anywhere. I don't believe in any social or religious system, but I do believe in individual spirituality. All our daily worries are nothing but the surface of an ocean, and really don't matter to me. I believe in something wider, some immense spirit and its mercy. I believe in Jesus. I believe that all religions, despite their cultural background, when profoundly felt and practiced with a positive individual attitude, aim at the same kind of entity.



DID YOU KNOW? Holiday Exam Procedures

If your course contract ends on December 31, 2010 you'll want to note Athabasca University's special holiday procedures for requesting and writing final exams.

Because the University will be closed for the holidays at 4:30 pm MST on Thursday, December 23, 2010 (it will reopen 8:30 am MST on Tuesday, January 4, 2011), it has created specific provisions to ensure adequate time

for exams to arrive and be completed. Students may be eligible for additional time in which to write their exams.

If you are not writing your exam at the Athabasca, Edmonton, or Calgary campuses and you request it by December 12, 2010, you will be "allowed additional time for exam completion without being charged the Late Examination Request fee." Exams must be written by January 15, 2011.

If you request your exam after December 12, 2010, but before the course contract end date of December 31, 2010, you must pay a Late Exam Request Fee (\$100). The fee must accompany the request. These exams must be written by January 31, 2011.

For further information, including special provisions for those writing at AU's Athabasca, Calgary, or Edmonton campuses, see the full [regulations](#) or call the Information Centre at 1.800.788.9041.



From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Give Me Space

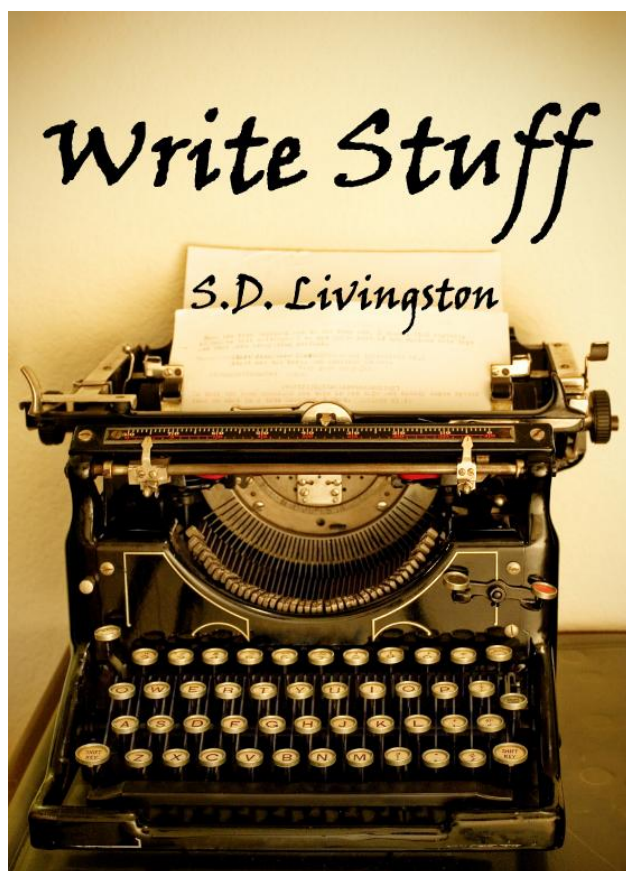
Our house is small by most standards. It is 1100 square feet and was built in the early 1960s. At the time, it was a two-bedroom, one-bath farm bungalow replacing Roy's parents' original two-room log house, and as such, I suppose, it felt quite grand. When Roy, Greg, and I moved here in 1984, after the death of Roy's parents, it seemed grand to us as well. We were leaving an even smaller fixer-upper first home in Andrew. In fact, with the expanded square footage, we did what we had resisted in the tiny house. We got pregnant and added our precious Hilary to the family.

Fast-forward 26 years. In the dying months of 2010, this house no longer feels grand. Despite renovations and upgrades, it's an old house. It's as solid as can be, but it's still old. We've replaced shingles (with red tin), siding, both exterior doors, all the windows, the furnace, and the hot water tank. Our kitchen renovations from about 23 years ago are looking tired. The lack of electrical outlets, phone jacks, and TV connections throughout the house has led to extra breakers, strung cables, extension cords, and those six-outlet thingamajigs that turn an ordinary outlet into a spidery tangle of cords. There are no pot lights to flood the place with light. The bathroom is miniscule. The flooring has had many incarnations. Some of the interior doors have been sanded, primed, and painted. Most are still that almost orangey-looking stain from the '60s. Some baseboards are missing altogether.

Now don't get me wrong. I thank God for a safe, paid-for roof over our heads. It has sheltered us from the elements and provided a backdrop for a happy family life. But that doesn't stop me from dreaming—or buying dream home lottery tickets. The odds of building a brand new house are dwindling with each passing year. It sounds shallow, but I want a new house built to my needs.

I especially want more space and good design. Never has that been more important than in the last few weeks. Our overstuffed house has become a storage warehouse for party decorations and supplies. We're helping Hilary's company decorate for a large corporate Christmas party in early December. Because it's a Mardi Gras theme, we've got seven cases of feather masks that need sticks added to them. We have 14 cases of beads in purple, green, and gold. We have eight bolts of fabric and a couple hundred yards of tulle. There are a hundred small vases to be used for the centerpieces, and a dozen more floor-sized ones. Don't forget the rolls of cellophane, foil streamers, ribbons, garlands, feather boas, and coins. Still to come are the velvet robes for the king and queen, and two jester costumes. When decorating a convention hall, you need large-scale decorations and dramatic lighting. Part of the design includes an 18-foot-wide by 12-foot -high fabric panel that will be painted like a streetscape, and 100 pieces of 10-foot electrical conduit to create a large-scale focal point.

So with the walls closing in around me, I can't even fathom hosting Christmas. It's a damn shame, from where I sit.



The Gift of Words

The holiday shopping season is heating up, and it looks like books and all things literary are suddenly cool again. Readers are clamouring for a copy of *The Sentimentalists*, *The New York Times* is expanding its bestseller lists to include e-books, and NaNoWriMo writers have collectively scribbled over 1.4 billion words so far. But in all the glossy excitement of gift-wrapping that e-reader or surprising someone with a copy of the Giller Prize winner, there's another item you might want to add to your to-do list: buying a book for an adult or child still learning to read.

If it's been decades since you first struggled over Dr. Seuss or *The Snowy Day*, it might be hard to remember just how difficult it was to make sense of the letters on the page. And it might be even harder to comprehend how many adults are still working to master that skill, but the numbers are worth repeating. According to [ABC Life Literacy Canada](#), "four out of 10 adult Canadians" fall below the equivalent of high school completion in their ability to read and comprehend prose and documents. And

in 2003, some 3.1 million adult Canadians were reading at "proficiency Level 1 on the prose literacy scale (below middle school skills)."

That's where publishers like [Grass Roots Press](#) come in. Their field is adult basic education, and they publish and distribute hundreds of titles "to over 4,500 customers in Canada, the United States, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia." Their chapter books are "short novels written for adults with low literacy skills" and are "packed with crime, romance, adventure, and mystery."

Grass Roots is only one example, though, and there's clearly an enormous need for these kinds of books. So why not approach your local literacy centre and offer to add to their collection? They may already buy from a specific store or publisher and might welcome a donation to their book-buying fund. Or maybe they can point you to some resources so you can choose the books yourself.

And if you're wondering how it's possible that some kids can make it all the way through public school and barely know how to read, you'll find some of the answers at sites like [First Book](#) and [First Book Canada](#). The issue is complex, but a big part of it comes down to money. As one study [reveals](#), "in middle income neighborhoods the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1" while "in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children."

First Book and programs like it let you supply books to kids through a donation, and your dollars can go further than if you bought the books on your own. For instance, on the US First Book site, a \$20 donation will put 10 new books in young readers' hands—kids who may never own a book otherwise.

So as the holiday buying rush begins, take a moment to think about the millions of adults and kids who'd be thrilled to receive a new book—or even to be able to read one. It's a small gift that could make a big difference.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Making Crime Pay

Every year, millions of dollars' worth of ill-gotten property is seized by the Alberta government. Ranging from small electronics to cars to even real-estate, the property's then forfeited to the province through its Civil Forfeiture Office. This year, the funds gained from the sale of the forfeited property are being allocated to a particularly relevant cause: the aid of crime victims.

As the CBC [reports](#), Alberta has established a fund "created from the forfeiture and sale of criminal property." Announced this week, the fund's first payment will be distributed to rural women's shelters, including providing "transportation for victims."

It's an area where it's sorely needed. As Carolyn Goard, of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, told reporters, "Women in rural settings need to get to shelter and often don't have access to a vehicle." The vehicles, she added, would also help victims "to get to all of the

necessary medical, court and counselling appointments that aid in their healing and help build safer futures."

In the coming months, the fund will continue to make payments to other "victims' groups and crime prevention programs."

Around the World: Medical History Strikes Again

Modern medicine has done much to relegate certain diseases to the pages of history—or at least, to a footnote in the present. Recently, however, an illness that was prevalent over 400 years ago has been reappearing in Europe, and physicians are concerned.

As *The Daily Telegraph* [reports](#), "children in the south of England are suffering from . . . rickets," a disease that was common in the 17th century.

Rickets, which results in bone weakening and deformities, is caused by low levels of vitamin D. Vitamin D is "generated in the body from sunshine and certain foods"; hundreds of years ago, the disease was generally found among the poorer families who didn't have access to a healthy diet.

Now, however, cases of children with rickets have arisen in both northern and southern areas of England—and this time, it's affecting middle-class children as well.

Ironically, it's our modern lifestyle that's to blame for the recurrence of the old-fashioned illness. Doctors point to "extensive use of sunscreen, children playing more time on computer games and TV rather than playing outside and a poor diet" as the culprits.

AUSU UPDATE



Convocation 2010

AUSU wishes to congratulate this year's graduates, whether attending Convocation in person or by distance. We wish you the best of luck in your future pursuits. You are an inspiration to all AU students!

AUSU Executive Election

AUSU has recently held its internal election for the Executive. We wish to congratulate Barbara Rielly (President), Bethany Tynes (Vice President External and Student Affairs) and Sarah Kertcher (Vice President Finance and Administration) on their election and thank those that ran for their willingness to serve.

Internal elections are being held to determine committee membership and we expect that all will be in place shortly. Our new Council is taking its bearings and has already begun to set the direction for this term.

Student Issues

AUSU recently completed a compilation of reported student issues covering a two year period; all issues were recorded in such a way as to ensure that student information remains protected and private. This effort confirmed what we long suspected; that tutor problems were the single biggest issue faced by our students (56 of 120 complaints).

Outdated course materials and errors in texts continue to be reported as well as were exam issues, slowness of the transfer process, and the scantiness of information in School of Business FAQs. Over that two year period there was a decrease in the number of complaints about student financing, exam request problems, difficulty registering in more than six courses, and materials shortages for courses. Kudos to AU for improving in those areas. Now if we could only get the Tutors' Union to the table . . .

New 2010 AUSU Handbook/Planners – Arrived!

Finally! People have already started receiving the new planners in the mail, and we're currently shipping them out as fast as the orders come in. Full of useful information about AUSU, writing styles, course grading, great finds online for your studies that you may not have known about, as well as having places to write down your phone numbers, keep track of your assignments, and, oh yeah, a year's worth of calendar to plan out your schedule too. We'll give one free to each AUSU member just for the asking.

Remember, though, we only print a limited number of these each year, so when they're gone, they're gone.

Let 'em Know who Represents for You!

AUSU logo mugs, hoodies, USB keys, and much more are all available for sale from our office. Also, used locks can be purchased at half price! Check out our merchandise catalog on our front page. You should

check out our hoodies in particular—made in Canada and 100% bamboo, we're offering them for just barely over our cost, and they're both durable and comfortable.

And if you have new little ones in your family, or know somebody who does, check out our baby onesies. Made by American Apparel, these onesies are high quality and let folks know your kids are growing up to great things as a "Future Graduate of Athabasca U"

AUSU Scheduling Meeting with Tutors' Union – Not really an Update

Some things resist change. We're still waiting for a response from the Tutor's Union as to when we might be able to meet with them to discuss ways that AUSU and the Tutor's Union can work together to ensure that students are getting the contact they need. Unfortunately, they haven't yet replied, so we're stepping up our campaign to get in touch with them. If you want to help, the next time you're talking to your tutor, ask them if they know when the Tutor's Union will meet with AUSU so that the groups can work together on common issues.

Our statistics we've been collecting from the forums and your calls show that issues with tutors - specifically the amount of time taken for marking assignments and exams are your number one concern. Help us help you.

SmartDraw Program Renewal

Some of you who took advantage of our program to provide SmartDraw software to members have been getting notifications that your software license will soon be expiring. Fortunately, AUSU will be continuing this program, so if you haven't already, go to the AUSU home page to download the newest version.

SmartDraw allows you to create a wide range of graphics for your assignments and submit them electronically in a Word file. You can also place your graphics in Excel or PowerPoint files, or export them as TIF, GIF, or JPEG files to make a web graphic or even a logo. Just a few of the graphics you can make include Venn diagrams, genetics charts, graphs, organizational and flow charts, and Gantt charts.



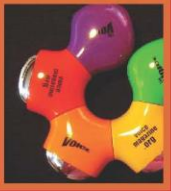



For any course that requires charts that cannot be easily created in Word or Excel, this should be a real time saver and make it easier to submit all portions of an assignment by email.

Remember, though, that you should always check with your tutor to find out if there is a specific format he or she prefers. Your tutor does not have to have SmartDraw to view these graphics, however. Installations under this program are good for one year. The package includes both the Standard and Health Care editions of SmartDraw.

AUSU
Representing AU
Undergrads

Student Gear

2009 merchandise

Clothing
Technology
Fun Items
Home Decor

Fostering the Student Community

AUSU and Voice gear is intended to support your studies and help you feel like part of the AU student community. Suggestions for new items are welcome. Contact our office with any questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@voicemagazine.org for more information.

THE VOICE

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