

# THE VOICE

## MAGAZINE

Vol 19 Iss 20 2011-05-27

### Book Club

Writers and readers

### Final Grade

Backward, forward

### Tale of a Teen

What dreams are made of

*Plus:  
Gregor's Bed  
From Where I Sit  
and much more!*



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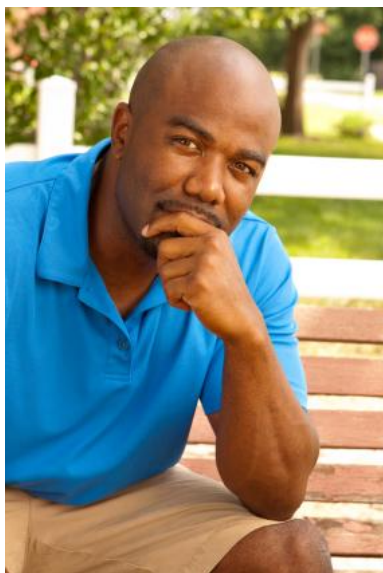
# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



## STUDY SPACE

Maxie van Roye

**It's the End of the World As We Know It**

Sure, the Rapture may have come and gone—or not—but for many students, June really is the end of the world, or at least the end of a significant segment of their lives. And while this is most obviously true for graduates, even students just finishing their first semesters can look back on the past year and realize that they've just passed a milestone.

Looking back, looking ahead. Most graduation speeches focus on the future, but at the end of the school year it's equally important to shine some light on the past. Perhaps it's even more important, because how we learn from our past successes and failures can affect our present—and shape our future.

Many self-help gurus recommend a similar exercise at the end of the calendar year: a sort of pre-New Year's review, if you will. But for students, beginnings and endings tend to cluster around the summer, when we wind

down the old school year and gear up for the coming new semester.

Whether we're finally graduating with that long-sought degree or moving on to the next stepping-stone class in our educational program, June is a good time for reflection on the year—or semester—or 10-year marathon—that's finally come to a close. It's an opportunity for a broad personal overview, an attempt to discover *what worked? What didn't?* Keeping in mind the coming semester, year, or phase of life, these are a few points to reflect upon:

What affected my motivation? Was the class delivery method one that didn't appeal to me? Were there too many readings, compared with other classes? Was it too theoretical—or too applied? We can use this new understanding to help schedule classes for a more satisfying and productive semester.

Or was there a tutor conflict? Or an outside event, illness, or personal circumstance that affected my progress? Because as much as we like to plan, we simply can't control all the factors in our educational experience. However, a good plan takes contingencies into account, and recognizing our triumphs and failures in dealing with any past problems is the key to future success. How will I handle it if I fall ill, or if I'm unhappy personally? How will I cope with a bitter disappointment, a death in the family, a difficult relationship? How will I keep focused? Most importantly, what will I *not* do?

*"June is a good time for reflection on the year . . . that's finally come to a close. It's an opportunity for a broad personal overview, an attempt to discover what worked? What didn't?"*

What about inner conflict? We shouldn't discount the effect that negative self-esteem can have on our productivity. Like that poor grade earned despite all my hard work on that assignment. Did that colour my perception of the semester in general, or cause me to lose interest in the rest of my classes? Did I obsess over that one letter grade—to the point that I was no longer able to give my best in the rest of my studies (and thus setting myself up for future failure)?

Did I take on too much? Or not enough? While it's easy to see how too many commitments can cause burnout, sometimes insufficient challenges can equally affect motivation. Was the interplay of work, school, family, and community activities in my life imbalanced? Finding the right proportions is important when we're juggling many obligations, and the best way to do so is to evaluate the successes and failures of each year-long "experiment."

A caution: this year-end review is not a time for regrets, for *woulda-coulda-shoulda* self-judgment. Rather, it's a look back with a view to the future. Self-productivity blogger Celestine Chua, who recommends yearly reviews in late December, says that the practice will "help you to start the next year on a high note." After all, it's only by understanding the lows of the past that we can hope to soar to the heights of the future.



### Raleigh: New Times in Black and White (2011)

A More Thoughtful, Elegant Indie

*"If somebody wants a sheep, that is a proof that one exists."*

Antoine de Saint Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

This last Tuesday, the trio Raleigh released its debut album, a wondrous opus with original musical motifs in droves. Clea Anaïs, Brock Geiger, and Matt Doherty blend cello, guitar, and drums to create little gems of aural and literary pulchritude.

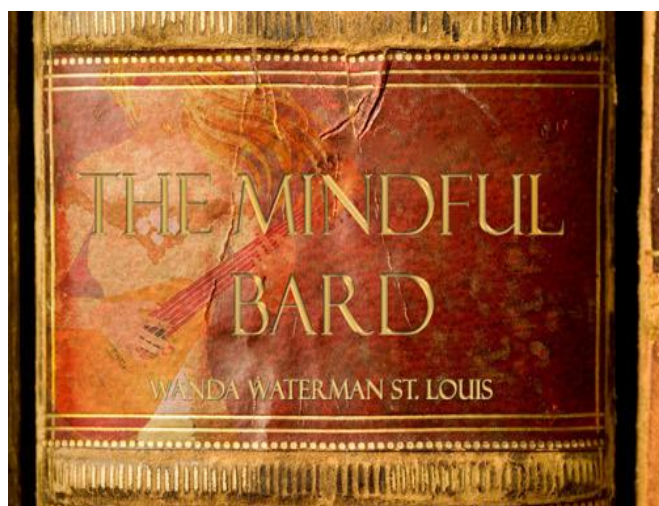
To see their photos you'd assume that they're merely playful artists, but their music reveals a rigorous artistic discipline.

There is a pattern: glowing seams of music are overlaid by other glowing seams of music until the song reaches a crescendo. The cello adds a poignant, tender serenity informed by heartache. Clea and Brock both have lovely voices and an intuitive singing relationship; these two were born to harmonize together.

Many of these tunes sound like they were written for electronic instruments, and it's a delight to hear such music interpreted by cello. The cello is a bit of an anomaly in the alternative music world, which is a good thing: although a few bands have used it, its use is not frequent enough to make it cliché or to distract from the soulful quality of the instrument.

There is a wealth of melodic ideas here, many of which are reminiscent of '60s prog rock and yet sound sparkingly new. And the lyrics are insightful explorations of inner landscapes.

Raleigh is currently touring Canada from east to west; check [here](#) for upcoming dates and venues.



## Books, Music, and Film to Wake Up Your Muse and Help You Change the World

DVD: *Daydream Nation* (Anchor Bay, May 2011).

Director: Michael Goldbach.

Cast: Kat Dennings, Reece Thompson, Andie MacDowell, Rachel Blanchard, and Josh Lucas.

*“Plato: I used to lie in my crib at night and I’d listen to them fight.”*

*Jim: Can you remember back that far? I can’t remember what happened yesterday. [laughs] I can’t.*

*How do you do it?*

*Plato: Oh, I had to go to a headshrinker. Boy, he made me remember.*

*Jim: Did he?*

*Plato: Then my mother said it cost too much, so she went to Hawaii instead.”*

*Rebel Without a Cause*

### How to Get Yourself Lost in the Woods

Young Caroline Wexler isn’t a likeable person. She’s annoyingly cocky. She’s emotionally shallow, manipulative, predatory, selfish, and fearless; at first she even looks like a psychopath. She sardonically observes the absurd demonstrations of self-destructive behaviour around her while selling off her own personal resources to satisfy the whims of her ego. Smart, beautiful, and a bit snooty, she has an overweening sense of entitlement that attracts the contempt of females and the desire of males. Her hero is Monica Lewinsky, whose only flaw (according to Caroline) was indiscretion.

Caroline’s school, Hargrove High, is the social purgatory of your adolescent nightmares, a place where everyone is so filled with hopelessness and self-loathing that they’re poorly equipped to give or receive love even though the need to do both is at times overwhelming.

As we listen to Caroline justify seducing her teacher, it’s clear that she’s simply trying to assure herself that the licentiousness of her society is in fact good and desirable; this way she doesn’t need to face any inner conflict. And that’s the whole point: to run from conflict to the point of exhaustion, and then to die.

*Daydream Nation* is aptly named. The characters abandon themselves to daydreams, delusions, drugs, alcohol, sex, or even a fantasy bedroom decorated—quite hideously—with a unicorn theme. At first the characters make attempts to convince themselves that their various forms of self-abandonment are actually liberty and autonomy, but that wears thin pretty quickly as we see the absurd measures the characters take to avoid having to deal with reality.

Dope-smoking slacker Thurston has a moment of clarity when he realizes that switching from being a hero to being a victim is actually a huge relief. The tragedy is that he thinks he has only these two choices—hero or victim. He’s desperate for anything but to seek the fulfillment of the self that’s a stranger to him.

As is fitting in a film about teenagers, sex and death are twined together in a way that contaminates them both. We see the full spectrum of depravity in this string of characters, ranging from an innocent little girl to a serial killer.

It's not mentioned explicitly, but it's clear that most of the action unfolds at Halloween (in many shots you see children and teenagers dressed in costumes). It's a telling symbol of the need for masks and disguises as ego defenses, aids to help you make your way in a world in which control has been abdicated by all those responsible for maintaining it.

The great performances coaxed out of these actors just enhance the high level of conflict in the plot. And the soundtrack is magical—delightfully childlike, and inspiring of wonder.

Like Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, Caroline must come to terms with the fact that although she and her cohorts believe they live according to their own laws, they're still nestled inside a network of moral directives that are bigger than they are.

This film is much like one of David's Psalms; it starts out bemoaning the wickedness and misery of this world but somehow ends up affirming that God's in his heaven, that we are loved, and that our redemption is nigh.

*Daydream Nation* manifests five of The Mindful Bard's criteria about for films well worth seeing: 1) it poses and admirably responds to questions having a direct bearing on my view of existence; 2) it is about attainment of the true self; 3) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 4) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; and 5) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.



Kat Dennings and Josh Lucas in *Daydream Nation*.  
Photo courtesy of Anchor Bay.

## DID YOU KNOW?



### Watch Convocation Online

Mark your calendars for June 9-11: Athabasca University's Convocation ceremonies are just around the corner. If you're unable to travel to Athabasca to participate in the festivities, if your special friends and relatives can't make the trip to support you in person, or if you'd just like a preview of your own future graduation, there's good news: AU's website will be webcasting live footage of the Convocation ceremonies.

Coverage starts at 11:45 am MST on each day. For more information, or to watch live, visit AU's [Convocation web page](#). You can also view footage from last year's ceremonies, as well as browse photo albums of previous AU grads.



## From Where I Sit

Hazel Anaka

### Why Is It?

*“Rhetorical (adj): 3. (of a question) asked for effect or to make a statement rather than to obtain an answer.”*

*Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*

Too much solo driving lately has led to some unfettered thinking, which in turn prompts me to offer the following rhetorical questions for your consideration. Feel free to talk among yourselves. No answers required (or expected)!

Why is it that we plunk down \$20 or more for a music CD because we love a single track? Perhaps we can buy the 2009 self-titled Doc Walker CD with hit after hit, including my favourite, “If I Fall.”

How is it that skin that begins as smooth, soft, and flawless as baby Grady’s can, over a lifetime, wizen beyond recognition? Is it genetics or poor lifestyle choices (smoking, tanning, boozing)? Or was it a series of tough breaks that so deeply etched the face of a friend? She has become a woman of indeterminate but advanced years. The shock of white hair, rheumy eyes, and emaciated body added to this startling image of age and frailty.

How is it that creatures as tiny as mosquitoes can ruin a day, alter plans, and force us to take cover? We didn’t eat a birthday meal on the patio this weekend because of the hordes. I spent the entire drive to Sherwood Park squishing the tiny suckers with tissue after tissue. Last Saturday, I performed an outdoor marriage at which the toxic smell of fogging, citronella torches, mosquito coils, and repellent made me wonder whether I would croak before the bugs?

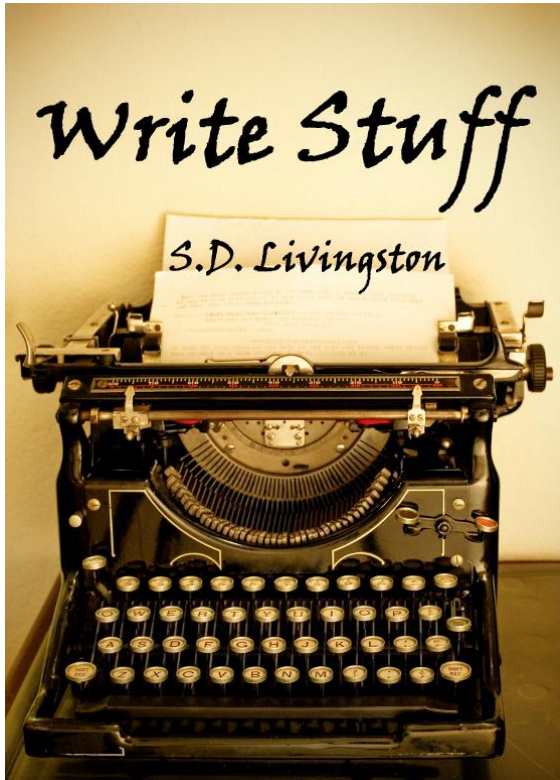
Sometimes it seems as though mad swatting has become an aerobic activity.

Why is it that farmers who have dedicated their lives to working the land don’t get to enjoy the seasons like our urban cousins do? In spring, we’re tearing around trying to plant the crop instead of chilling at the lake or taking the Honda Goldwing for the first spin of the season. During the summer, we’re making hay instead of fishing. In autumn, rather than attending a harvest festival or crunching fall leaves, we’re hell-bent on getting the crop into the grain bins. Calendars and long weekends are meaningless to a farmer.

How is it that second-hand smoke can linger on my hair and clothes 10 times longer than Aveda hair products or Givenchy’s Hot Couture? Not to mention work its way into my bronchioles and cause me to cough incessantly while trying to purge the toxins.

Why is it that Nana has so much more patience with her grandson than she did with her own kids? I can spend days at a time playing with, teaching, and observing that little kid without wondering what else I could be accomplishing.

I think it was Jodie Foster who called herself a “compulsive ruminator.” While I have no idea what she ponders endlessly, I know I’m not alone in wondering *Why is it? How is it?* In the end, it doesn’t really matter if answers exist; I know there is value in the asking, from where I sit.



## Indie World of Publishing, Part III: The Buzz

So far in this series we've done a lot of talking about indie books and self-publishing: how to find review sites and what to consider if you want to become an indie author yourself. Now it's your turn to do the talking—with the broader indie community, that is. For readers and writers alike there's nothing like coming together and debating Mr. Darcy's merits or whether James Patterson has irrevocably lost the plot. And with indie books creating so much buzz, the literary conversation's really heating up. In this final part of the series, join the tour as we drop in on the chat.

If you're looking for the most popular party on the block, you'll want to check out [Goodreads](#). It's a thriving community of book lovers, and there's plenty of talk about indies. You can get book recommendations from people you know, form a book club, answer book trivia, collect quotations from your favourite reads, track your reading, and more. Authors join the conversation as well, and the site boasts "more than 5,000,000 members and 150,000,000 books added to member profiles."

It sounds wonderful, and millions of fans love the site, but there's one caution: all that complexity can be confusing. Take your time exploring—and don't feel like you have to fill out every detail at once.

If you'd rather keep things simple (spending more time chatting than managing virtual bookshelves), it shouldn't take long to find a book community that suits your style.

One such site is [MobileRead](#). The focus is on digital reading, and the clean, simple design and good organization make it easy to get started. Type "indie" in the search box and you'll find plenty of links to discussions about favourite self-published authors, free indie reads, and more. And if you need advice on e-books, formats, reading devices, audiobooks, conversion software or . . . well, just about anything related to e-reading, click the Wiki link at the top of the homepage.

If you love indies but have avoided the [Kindle](#) boards because you don't own a sleek new DX, you might be surprised to find a lot of crossover. Not only do members share their latest KDP finds, but there's plenty of discussion about indie titles in general, including those in other formats. Again, just type "indie" in the search bar and find a conversation that looks intriguing.

Another active forum is [The Indie Spot](#), billed as "a place for readers to connect with authors." Along with a book club thread you'll find a Lending Forum, a Deal Spot, general book intros, and a forum for chatting with authors. I haven't delved into the forums yet, but from the FAQ post it looks like the moderators take things like spammers and privacy seriously—something to look for if you're new to online discussions.

Last but definitely not least, I recently stumbled across [Between the Lines](#), "a book club where exceptional authors and voracious



readers meet.” As the site explains, all books selected are “written by exceptional independent and small press authors.” The best thing? Members meet to discuss the book of the month at a scheduled online audio/web conference—and at the end of the meeting, the author joins in to answer readers’ questions!

With warm weather and lazy days at the cottage arriving soon, beach bags and e-readers will be stuffed with summer reading. So join the indie conversation, share some of your favourite new authors, and discover what other readers have to say. Just make sure you leave lots of time for reading itself!

## CLICK OF THE WRIST

## Zombie Apocalypse

With all the drama surrounding the failed Rapture predictions last weekend, many grew a little apocalypse-wary. At the same time, the US Center for Disease Control published a tongue-in-cheek [blog post](#) advising readers on how to survive a zombie apocalypse (and any other “*real* emergencies” that might occur). Continuing in that vein—after all, May is National Zombie Awareness Month—this week’s links examine the past, present, and future of the living dead.

### Science Says

Think that the walking dead are far outside the realm of reality? This Cracked.com article outlines some real-life scientific discoveries and developments that suggest otherwise. Sometimes, facts can be stranger—or creepier—than fiction.

### Good Night

Check out the 1968 masterpiece that started it all: George A. Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead*. Because of its influence on popular culture and film, this zombie classic is worth watching even for those who aren’t normally fans of the genre. Although it can be found on DVD, its copyright has expired and it is freely available online.

### Game Time

Could *you* survive a zombie apocalypse? Preparedness may involve more than just laying in stores of ammo; you also need to learn to deal with the undead themselves. This blog posts reviews what some believe to be the top 20 zombie games available on the web. If you’re feeling really adventurous, several of the games let you play the role of the zombie—you know, just in case you wind up on the wrong side after the first attack.

### Ask the Professor

Zombie interest isn’t reserved for a few geeky types. Higher education is recognizing the cultural fascination with zombies as a reflection of where we are as a society—and how we deal with our fears. This interview with Arnold Blumberg, a professor at the University of Maryland, sheds some light on why he considers his college course on zombies and popular culture to be a serious endeavour.



## NOTICE: VOICE HOLIDAY



It's that time of year: school is winding down to its close, and the summer holidays are on the horizon. For many students, though, June marks not an ending but a beginning. This year's graduates can look ahead with excitement to what the future will bring.

For *The Voice*, the summer will be an equally exciting time. We're working with an increasing group of talented writers, and hope to bring even more diversity to the mix—something that can only add to the quality you've come to expect from *The Voice*. We're also looking to make gradual changes to the magazine's layout and delivery to keep up with the latest developments in technology and news sharing.

In preparation for a busy summer, we will be on holiday next week, May 30-June 5. We'll be re-focusing, re-energizing, and getting ready for another great year.

But don't go too far, because we'll be back on Friday, June 10 with more of your favourite columns and topics. Meanwhile, keep sending in your comments, letters, and submissions. We always love hearing from our readers!

### CHRONICLES OF CRUISCIN LAN

Wanda Waterman St. Louis

**Looks like a buncha crankpots. Whose funeral is it?**

**No wonder! The Rapture done come an' gone an' didn't take a one of us!**

**Not to worry, my hirsute friends!**

**Ye've gut five months to repent!**

**An' as a repentance aid let me offer you this symbiotic blend of nineteen and a half herbs carefully selected to spark yer plugs an' clean yer coppers in one fell swoosh!**

**Oober's Right Excellent Herbal Health Bitters, guaranteed to cure squamishness, piles, women's complaint, ammonia, old-timer's, the yellow jaunders, an' the doomsday jitters!**

Chronicles of  
**CRUISCIN LAN**

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



### At Home: What a Pill

You're sick, so your doctor hands you a sheaf of prescriptions. You get them filled and, not surprisingly, you start feeling better. Is it magic of the meds? Perhaps not.

As *The Globe and Mail* [reports](#), a recent survey suggests that 20 per cent of Canadian physicians “occasionally [prescribe] their patients placebos, or [use] medications well below the active dose.”

While the so-called placebo effect—where improvement is seen because patients “believe they have been given a real therapy”—is a documented phenomenon, it’s usually only used in clinical drug trials and similar experiments. In fact, however, “dummy pills . . . can influence patients’ perceptions and sometimes their physical condition.”

But even if all’s well that ends well, the lack of transparency is a contested issue. For example, switching real drugs for placebos without the consent of patients is naturally “highly controversial,” but not all physicians agree. Dr. Amir Raz, who’s also a professor of psychiatry at McGill University, believes that placebos “could be used ethically, provided the right guidelines are in place”—like those currently used in Germany.

After all, as Dr. Raz told reporters, with experience physicians can recognize when “just the act of providing attention . . . and simply listening to the patient can actually have a profound effect on some clinical symptoms.”

However, currently the “Canadian Medical Association . . . has no . . . formal policy” on placebo use.

### Around the World: Gold Sticker

Remember those gold stickers you could earn for doing your homework and getting good grades? Perhaps you could cash them in for a prize—or earn extra privileges. But for one high school in north Texas, the stakes were especially high.

As *MSNBC* [reports](#), a high school near Fort Worth, Texas, instituted a program that “[motivated] students to stay in school” by sponsoring “an annual car giveaway.” The car’s winner was chosen by random drawing, but students could earn tickets and increase their chances of winning by stepping up their “academic performance” and making sure they attended classes.

The motivational program was created due to increasing concern over high school students’ inclination to skip class and lower their academic standards. As the school principal told reporters, “This is a motivational tool for them to work on their grades.”

One student won a 2011 Chevy Camaro, and 24 runners-up were each awarded a touch screen tablet.

## 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

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

## THE VOICE

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