

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 08 2013-03-08

Media School

Telling us a story

Stuffed

Spring cleaning

Woman's Pen

Her written word

Plus:

*The Mindful Bard
Click of the Wrist
and much more!*



CONTENTS

The Voice's interactive Table of Contents allows you to click a story title to jump to an article. Clicking the bottom right corner of any page returns you here. Some ads and graphics are also links.

Features

Editorial: Post-Secondary Blues	3
The Current State of the Woman's Pen	6
Comic: Chazz Bravado in "Woman Pope"	8

Columns

From Where I Sit: It Won't Be Easy	9
The Mindful Bard: <i>5 Broken Cameras</i>	11
AUSU Update	15

News and Events

Click of the Wrist	10
Did You Know?	13
International News Desk	14

From Our Readers

Letters to the Editor	2
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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

Tamra Ross



Post-Secondary Blues

Unless you've been living under a rock, the media's pecking party against AU is probably making you question your choice of alma mater right now. There seems to be no end to the negative press about our university.

Yet most students should be familiar enough with the machinations of the press to know that it doesn't just report what is "new" and "newsworthy": the media loves themes. If a story

catches public interest, then the plan is simple: get more on the topic—find something, anything. It doesn't much matter how old it is, or if it's relevant. Just keep the momentum going until interest dries up.

I remember a decade ago there seemed to be a massive increase in the number of attacks on children by rottweilers and pit bulls. It was as though someone had spiked the kibble: one year, we heard nothing about these events; then suddenly, there was a new report every day. But were people really so naïve as to believe that dogs across the country had suddenly gone mad? Statistics certainly showed that the actual number of dog attacks hadn't changed much, and that other dogs continued to be the most prolific biters (cocker spaniels seem to always top the list). Something *had* changed, though: attacks by rotties and pitts had become newsworthy, and the newsrooms began monitoring sources for any and all similar stories and urging the public to report their tales as well.

I find it interesting that people are so media savvy these days—to the extent that many of us are blogging and tweeting our own personalized newsfeeds—yet people still get caught up in the frenzy, unwilling to step back and critically assess what they are fed. I suppose in a world where people are shocked to learn that reality shows are often contrived, this should not be a surprise.

AU is falling victim to this effect right now. That's not to say that there aren't things going on that are of concern (I work for the SU, so I'm not going to use this article space to discuss the implications of those stories: suffice it to say that our work hours have increased radically in the last few weeks and we are meeting with university and government officials to make sure student concerns are heard). What I'm discussing here is the additional strain created by the media and conflicting demands/perceptions of the public and students.

Take yesterday: it was reported that five years ago, AU hired lobbying experts to approach the government for additional funding. Wildrose education critic Bruce McAllister's seemingly sage response: why would a university feel the need to hire lobbyists when there are so few post-secondary schools in the province? Yet yesterday's announcement of the Alberta budget demonstrates that McAllister is badly out of touch. Despite assurances from the Premier that Alberta would not cut costs on the backs of

students, universities will have to absorb a nearly seven per cent cut (closer to eleven per cent when adjusted for inflation) next year, while being limited to tuition increases of just over two per cent. You don't need a math degree to figure out that such a crushing shortfall must come from somewhere. Redford kept her promise that tuition will not soar, but she is certainly not unaware of the reality that "fees" are not regulated and can increase by any amount.

How long will the government be able to take advantage of the public misperception that "tuition" encompasses the entire amount students pay to schools? Redford certainly seems confident in this semantic subterfuge. At AU, only \$472 of the \$652 course fee is tuition. U of A course tuition is \$2634 per semester, but the total payable by the student is \$3408. There is no limit to the fees a university can add: last year both U of A and U of C discussed adding an across the board "academic" fee that could amount to more than an additional \$1000 a year. Who wants to lay odds that this fee will become reality in 2013? Educational cost will soar, but "tuition" won't. Touché, Madame Redford.

Perhaps this helps explain why a university would need to lobby for funding. But why was this a story in the first place? The information is five years old. Also, each of the other universities in the province do the same thing, but the media didn't feel that was important. After all, they are reporting on pit bulls this month, not cocker spaniels. Other universities in the province have multiple full-time staff just devoted to lobbying the government. No one reports on the sum of their annual wages and budgets: AU was called out because the staff were outside contractors, though the total amount spent was miniscule compared to the cost of funding a full-time internal department (today AU does have a staff member devoted to lobbying; just one). By tucking those costs into the overall salaries and administration budget, no one really knows how much is spent on lobbying at most schools.

There are good reasons lobbying is necessary (McAllister is naïve here too: getting access to the minister is not an issue. Getting the province to allocate funds in the budget, is). AU has over 40,000 students as of this year; a third more than U of C. Universities in Alberta receive government funding based on the number of FLE's (full-time equivalent students), but this formula applies differently to AU. Only 35 per cent of AU's students reside in Alberta, and the Government of Alberta provides funding for only this portion. The 65 per cent of out-of-province students are completely non-funded. The other Alberta universities have plenty of out-of-province students too, but because they reside in Alberta during their period of study, the Alberta government funds them as equivalent to Albertans. People in this province seem opposed to our tax money funding AU students who reside outside the province, yet Albertans are happy to pay even more to fund out-of-province students who live in Alberta and use services here while completing their studies. Is it any wonder that AU must work extra hard to convince the government to review this structure?

And therein lies the rub. If AU fails to obtain funding for the unfunded majority of its students, students say it has failed to provide for its students. If it lobbies the government for money, it is taking inappropriate measures. Out-of-province students cry foul if the differential fee is increased, though it's currently vastly below cost recovery, yet oppose any monies going to the province when the main purpose of those funds is to lobby for funding for those same students. Albertans oppose money going to people outside of the province. Yet everyone wants Canadians to have affordable access to education,

right? Thirty-six per cent of AU students are in Ontario, but that province won't even discuss providing funding for its own citizens' education, unless they are going to Ontario schools (who are you supporting: your citizens, or your businesses?), and they actively block any attempt for AU to set up testing centres that would exist solely to benefit Ontario students.

I'm not saying that our school should never be scrutinized: it is a publicly funded institution and people have the right to know what is going on. What worries me is that readers seem primed to react strongly to every new story, without considering that some, at least, lack validity. University students surely have the tools to read critically and ask questions like "Is this normal for a university?" or "Are others schools doing this too?" This is no more than we're asked to do when submitting papers for our courses. There may be reason to ask hard questions of your school, but there are also opportunities here to say, "Wait a minute! That's not fair." Ultimately, the lack of funding hurts students more than anyone else. Why is it not our job, as students, to also talk to the government and ask for our needs to be considered?

If nothing else, consider that the barrage of pointless, outdated stories detracts from issues that students are clearly very concerned about.

If there is anything good coming of all of this, it's that the media is starting to look closely at post-secondary education. At this time, the *Edmonton Journal* doesn't have a reporter dedicated to education issues; perhaps that will change. I'm probably naïve to hope that the papers will begin reporting on broader issues, such as disparities in funding methodology and the long-term impact of underfunded education. Does anyone remember how much money Alberta spent a few years ago to recruit educated people from outside the province during our skilled labour shortage? Get ready for more of the same down the line after these budget cuts, and to see bright young Albertans losing out on jobs to imported labour, because they could not afford to go to school.

You never really save money when you fail to pay for education. You see, education is truly an investment, and that's not just semantics. The province needs skilled people to flourish. Study after study has shown that people with university degrees create more jobs, pay more in taxes (far offsetting the cost of their tuition), cost less to the health care system, and are much less likely to engage in crime. Yet there are those who still see post-secondary education as a privilege for the student, at a time when some countries are offering free university education for their people because they know that the return on investment will always be higher. Look to the Nordic countries for examples.

If there is one message we can most certainly take from all of this, it's that we should be looking very closely at our universities. Public boards are in place to ensure our publicly-funded institutions are accountable to stakeholders (though there is no rule that board members must be from Alberta, and I find that curious), but this is not enough. We need to be informed about the pressures faced by our institutions. We should understand terminology that governments toss around to obscure the facts. And as students, we need to ask what role we can play in supporting the system to ensure a better education for ourselves.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WOMAN'S PEN

Wanda Waterman

Reading Differently

In 1664 Margaret Cavendish wrote *Sociable Letters*, a fictionalized group of personalized missives that intentionally or not shed a great deal of light on the peculiar reading and writing practices of women. Her remarks on Plutarch's *Lives* were critical of the conventional humanist way of reading texts, and she was equally skeptical about the classical concept of “virtuous” political action. Her “letters” also questioned assumptions about the universal appeal of the classical literary heritage that privileged men had chosen for the rest of us.

Token Inclusion

The digital age hasn't done a whole lot to change the male-dominated status of mainstream models of literary engagement, either on paper or online.



Women's names are notably missing from top-rated blogs (Harp & Tremayne, 2006). According to Sharon Marcus in *Feminist Criticism: A Tale of Two Bodies*¹, “feminist writings often receive the slight of not being cited even when they're quoted and when they've clearly influenced other (more well-known, male-penned) works.

In reviews of modern literature, great writers like Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein are often given only token mentions if they're mentioned at all.

Before You Sigh . . .

On the hopeful side, women are nowadays producing more written work than men, especially in the blogosphere. Women are more likely than men to create blogs and to stick with them after they've started them (Jones, Johnson-Yale, Willermeier & Pérez, 2009).

Women also report a lot of psychological satisfaction from blog writing, and there's solid evidence that the sense of community and efficacy that blogs grant enhance a woman's belief in her personal power to influence society, thus giving her the power to change her own circumstances and environments.

Feminist Criticism

The digital age and the increasing “intersectionality” (recognizing that gender can't be separated from class, ability, nationality, religion, etc.) of feminist criticism have kept feminist theory from lapsing into the dinosaur status that had been threatening it.

¹ Marcus, Sharon (Oct, 2006). *Feminist Criticism: A Tale of Two Bodies*. PMLA 121, PMLA 121, v pp. 1722-1728.

This has strangely allowed women's writing to become more relevant by removing it from the European paradigm dominating western literature from its beginnings.

Colonial women writers like Katherine Mansfield, Jean Rhys, Una Marson, Christina Stead, Olive Schreiner, Cornelia Sorabji, and Santha Rama Rau are less likely to be excluded from lists of significant new writing because the white-male-in-a-suit model is strangely out of place in the new global village in which everyone's voice matters.

Also conspicuously awkward is "universal feminism": the outdated notion that the western middle class feminist is somehow entitled to impose her personal view of liberation on the rest of the world.

Other Ways of Seeing

Margaret Cavendish was ahead of her time when she suggested that there were other ways of viewing life besides the classical humanist model imposed by a patriarchal culture. Valuable as this view was, it was just another lens, no more worthy than the rather sharp lens of Cavendish herself.

This is postmodernism in embryo. The task of today's women writers is to achieve a more equitable degree of social significance by continuing to be empowered by their own best voices—i.e. the voices that emerge from their own deepest personal convictions—and to encourage their sisters to do the same.

Wanda also penned the poems for the artist book They Tell My Tale to Children Now to Help Them to be Good, a collection of meditations on fairy tales, illustrated by artist Susan Malmstrom.

WRITE FOR US!

What topics and issues do you want to see covered in *The Voice*? What type of features do you like best? *The Voice* wants to hear from you! Email us at voice@voicemagazine.org with your ideas, letters, and suggestions.

And if you've got something to say about university life, or life in general, consider writing for *The Voice Magazine*. We're always seeking new voices and fresh perspectives—and submissions from our readers are welcome! To find out more about becoming a *Voice* writer, email the editors at voice@voicemagazine.org.

All accepted submissions are purchased as freelance pieces and cannot have been published elsewhere (including online in any way) or written as academic papers.

CHAZZ BRAVADO IN "WOMAN POPE"

Wanda Waterman

**CHAZZ BRAVADO IN:
WOMAN POPE**

That's right, I think the next pope should be a popESS.



This would, like, SO empower Jane Q. public and give her the sense that yes, she too can have it all!



Besides, there's nothing sexier than a powerful woman in white! And with red shoes!!!



And when I share this opinion in the right circles, boy am I gonna score!

WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN WITH CREATIVE INPUT FROM BEN WATERMAN



It Won't Be Easy

A little while ago I did something you probably take for granted. I sat on our sofa. Not long enough to make a butt imprint, mind you, but long enough to remember what it was like to live in a non-renovation state of being.

That comfy piece of furniture has been covered with canvas painter's drop cloths since about August. The brown leather ottoman has been face down on it for just as long, while a box of books covered the remainder of the seat. The drop sheets were my best effort to keep the drywall dust, paint, and general construction debris off it. For the most part, it appears I succeeded.

What I have noticed on virtually all the furniture are small nicks and scratches. Tiny wounds on the wooden legs are no doubt a result of the tight quarters and constant moving they were subjected to. Luckily, I don't mind the character of patina and real life.

I wish I would've documented the whole process with photos and/or a diary. Instead I lived it and hope it's like the pain of childbirth: forgotten when the precious bundle appears.

We have come so far and are so grateful for every speck of progress we've made with the help of carpenters, painters, and installers. Tackling the project, not in its entirety, but in more manageable bite-sized hourly or daily tasks made it bearable and lulled us into a false sense of how much was left to do and how long it might take.

As we handled/moved/stacked every single object we own several times it became painfully clear how damn much stuff we have. I'm guilty as charged when it comes to books. As I attempt to restock the eight bookcases, I try to purge.

And I have. But not nearly enough.

In tandem with this activity at home, we are clearing out the Edmonton apartment of Roy's 95-year-old aunt, who is now in long term care. Surely there is a lesson here for all of us. We cannot take it with us. She's down to living with a nightstand, a couple of stacking stools for visitors and some of her clothing. Yes, she's had the use and enjoyment of all her possessions for a very long time. And I hope we do too. But the truth is, we can all live with less.

Yesterday Hilary helped us at the apartment for a couple of hours and even sentimental, sensitive Hilary knew that much of the really old stuff was garbage and not wanted by anyone. She wanted some things and took them, but we all said no to so much more.

Once we're done going through every single possession we'll be calling Goodwill or Salvation Army or a women's shelter (a cause near and dear to our aunt) to pick up the best of what remains.

In the meantime I need to reevaluate what deserves space in our almost new home. It won't be easy, from where I sit.

Hazel Anaka's first novel is Lucky Dog. Visit her [website](#) for more information or follow her on Twitter @anakawrites.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Time for a Break

It's almost mid-March, and spring break is around the corner. Regretting not making plans to get away? It's not too late, as last-minute deals abound. To get you started, check out these travel planning resources:

Know Before You Go

Great deal on a decent room, or overpriced, flea-infested dive? Fortunately, booking hotels in advance is no longer a hit-or-miss game, thanks to TripAdvisor. The site contains member reviews written by ordinary travellers whose experiences can help guide you to the right choice for you and your travelling companions. TripAdvisor also contains member reviews of tours, restaurants, and other attractions, so you'll be able to plan your days *and* your nights.

Before You Die

1000 Places to See Before You Die and its companion book, *1000 Places to See in the U.S.A. and Canada Before You Die* are sure to get you bitten by the travel bug. It's entertaining reading for armchair travellers, and a go-to resource for your next trip.

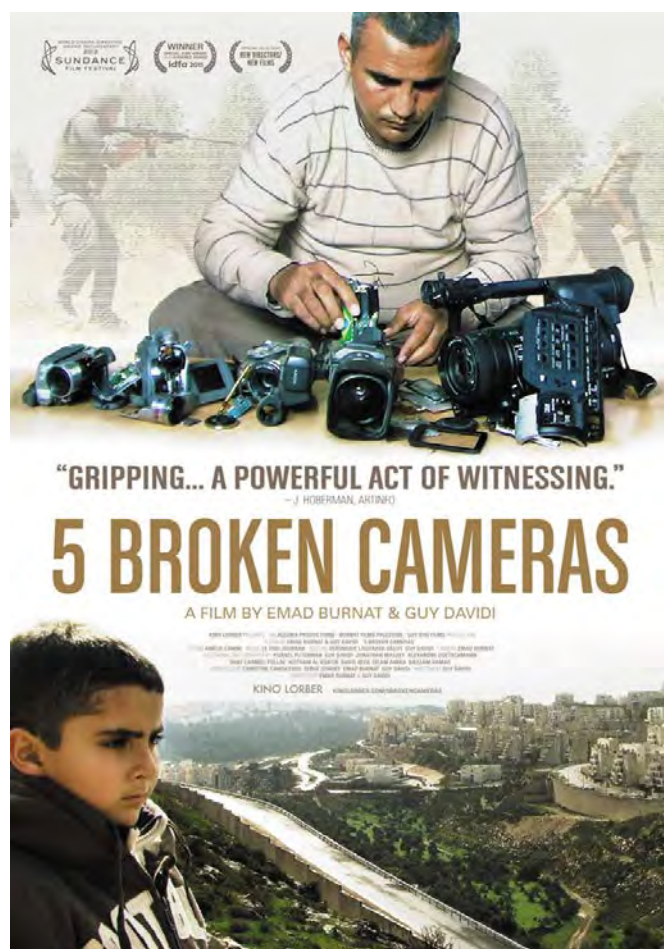
Learn to Fly

ITA Software, whose booking software is used by airlines such as Air Canada and American Airlines, also has a public airfare search matrix. Users can input a date range and see a month-at-a-glance matrix of airfares for their chosen departure and arrival locations. Although there's no option to book flights, it's easy to take the information over to an airfare booking site or an airline's website.



THE MINDFUL BARD

Wanda Waterman



Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

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

Film: **5 Broken Cameras**

Directors: Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi

Screenplay: Guy Davidi

Genre: Documentary

"There's a little bit of heaven in that muddy road to freedom."

from "Follow the Drinking Gourd" (American Negro spiritual)

Battle at the Centre of the Earth

We're standing at a steel gate at the West Bank barrier that keeps Palestinians from approaching the Israeli settlements. A Palestinian man and a little boy are preparing to go through. The boy, Gibreel, hands an olive branch to the Israeli soldier, who gently accepts it.

Gibreel is the youngest of the five sons of Emad Burnat, a Palestinian from Bil'in, a village in the occupied West Bank in Palestine. It's with the intention of documenting Gibreel's development that Emad buys his first video camera. This film tells the story of how this and four other of his cameras meet their demise.

Gibreel's birth coincides with the beginning of the resistance in Bil'in. Emad is soon asked to record village events: feasts, performances, and weekly political demonstrations.

After one turbulent demonstration in which one of his uncles is arrested, Gibreel returns home to his lovely, serene mom. She's washing dishes; he's earnestly munching potato chips as he describes the day's events to her and tells her he wasn't afraid. She smiles and tells him he's a hero. He refutes her, admitting that in fact he had been a *little* afraid.

Like most villagers in Bil'in, Emad lives off his olive trees. The encroaching high-rise apartment buildings are eating up more and more of the land of these pastoral folk who can remain self-sufficient only as long as they can continue to harvest olives and graze sheep and goats on a sufficient acreage.

The visual symbolism is dramatic: the Palestinians are confronted daily by a view of Israeli urban sprawl as they herd their goats and sheep and pick olives. The buildings keep springing up, drawing nearer and

nearer to the barrier, oblivious to the warnings of progressive economists who suggest that a return to small agrarian economies might stave off global warming and economic disaster. In this sense it's the Palestinians who are at the vanguard of progress.

The buildings keep springing up, drawing nearer and nearer to the barrier, oblivious to the warnings of progressive economists who suggest that a return to small agrarian economies might stave off global warming and economic disaster. In this sense it's the Palestinians who are at the vanguard of progress.

"We walk at our own pace," says Emad, "taking baby steps, as buildings pop out of the land."

No doubt in response to mounting international scrutiny, Israelis make gestures of legality: the "settlers" (a misleading term—these aren't pioneer homesteaders but rather construction companies building apartment buildings to house the growing urban population) follow the rules to the letter.

The "rules" dictate that anyone is permitted to place a trailer on a piece of land. Once they stick concrete posts in the ground, they become legal occupants.

Palestinian activists stand under the trailers as Israelis try to lower them onto the Palestinian side of the barrier. Eventually the trailers are lowered anyway, so the Palestinians try something else: they lower a trailer onto the Israeli side. They're ordered to remove their trailer. They peacefully comply, but the next day they lower another trailer and a bunch of Palestinians lock themselves inside after having painted "Welcome to Bil'in" on the outside. The soldiers break into this second trailer, remove the inmates, and tell them to get rid of it.

At night the activists return and set up their own small concrete structures and commence to occupy them. The next night, their olive trees are set on fire.

People from all over the world join Bil'in's weekly protests. Palestinians return from the worldwide diaspora, and so do countless Israelis and scattered Jews who support them, doggedly digging through the miles of mud and rocks to get to Freedom Land.

Israeli soldiers enter the village of Bil'in more and more often in an attempt to scare the villagers intending the weekly demonstrations. Emad's brother Khaled is arrested. Emad keeps filming as his father and



Emad's mother pleads with an Israeli soldier to release her son Khaled after he was arrested. Credit: Kino Lorber, Inc.

mother make agonizing efforts to stop the jeep. In the end his elderly father manages to climb on top of the jeep and cling to the grating on the back of the window, refusing to disembark unless his son is released.

Wait, it gets worse. Just when you think that at least this regime bears no resemblance to Assad's Syria, the Israeli soldiers start showing up in Bil'in at night, arresting children and taking them away.

Wait, it gets worse . . .

5 Broken Cameras manifests seven of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing: 1) it is authentic, original, and delightful; 2) it poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence; 3) it harmoniously unites art with social action, saving me from both seclusion in an ivory tower and slavery to someone else's political agenda; 4) it inspires an awareness of the sanctity of creation; 5) it displays an engagement with and compassionate response to suffering; 6) it renews my enthusiasm for positive social action; and 7) it makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomenon, making living a unique opportunity.

DID YOU KNOW?

A Visit with TED



Bored? Stuck in a rut? Maybe you just need an influx of something fresh and new. Look no further than TED, a "global community" created by non-profit organization TED, whose singular mission is to propagate "Ideas Worth Spreading."

The organization sponsors conferences and prizes, but its website is accessible to all. It hosts nearly 1,000 (and counting!) interesting, entertaining, inspiring, and/or informative talks by experts and thinkers in all fields and from all corners of the globe. Some talks were given at TED conferences, while others were created expressly for the organization. All the talks are published under a Creative Commons license, which means that they may be downloaded and shared freely (with certain limitations as to use).

The site can be searched by category, but viewers can also browse the most popular talks, as well as those rated by other viewers as high-ranking in certain descriptive categories (most inspiring, most ingenious, etc.).

A sampling of what's awaiting you: a talk profiling someone who treats cancer through dance, an education and creativity expert's thoughts on why traditional education stifles creativity, and a Harvard political philosophy professor's discussion of the "lost art of democratic debate." From AIDS research to artificial intelligence to Google to sustainability, you're sure to find something to intrigue or inspire you.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: Government decisions explained

Does it seem sometimes that government decisions are entirely random? It could be because sometimes, that's exactly the way it is.

The National Post reports that Citizenship and Immigration Canada made a decision as to who would receive a one-year contract worth almost \$200,000 by the flip of a coin. Or to be precise, by a best two-out-of-three flip of the coin. Both companies agreed to the unusual means of deciding the bid which came almost three months after the bidding process closed, agreeing that a fourth bid review would not give any additional information.

While this is the only instance of a coin-toss being used to make decisions known to Public Works Canada, they are aware of this method being used at the municipal level in various cities in Ontario.

Around the World: Passwords from the Grave

From Dunlap, California, the Tampa Bay Times reports that an escaped lion from a private zoo known as Cat Haven killed a volunteer working there on Thursday, March 7.

The 24 year old intern, Diana Hanson, was described by her father as a "fearless" lover of big cats, and was killed while cleaning the cage enclosure. The lion had been placed in a smaller cage while she was doing this, but apparently managed to open it and snap Diana's neck with a swipe of its paw.

Her father reports that her goal was to work with big cats, and she had expressed frustrations to him that she was not allowed direct contact with the lion and tiger held at the zoo.

For good reason, it seems.

The owner of Cat Haven has pointed out that they've been incident free since 1998, and that safety protocols are in place. The investigation into what exactly happened in this case has not yet concluded.

AUSU UPDATE



Dear Members,

You may have recently seen information on the internet speculating about the future of Athabasca University. These reports suggest that the Alberta government may broker a merger between AU and University of Alberta, and that this may result in drastic changes to the services and programs offered to students AU students.

We want you to know that AUSU is aware of these rumours and is actively investigating the source – we will keep you informed as we know more.

We can tell you that AU is governed via a bicameral structure with two main governing bodies: the General Faculties Council (formerly Academic Council) and the Board of Governors (formerly Governing Council). AUSU has representatives on both of these governing bodies and we can confirm that there has been no formal discussion of a university merger among these groups. The AU president, Frits Pannekoek, has also assured the press that there is no truth to the rumour. On behalf of our members, we are seeking more information from the Board of Governors, the minister, and AU executives.

At this time we simply have no evidence that a merger is being seriously considered by AU, the U of A, or the Alberta government, and we note that among the many committees and working groups of AU, planning and development for the future continues as usual.

We know that our members are worried and want more information. We will update you as soon as we know more. At this time we do not feel there is any reason for students to worry or make changes to their study plans.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you wish to talk about this or any other issue affecting AU students.

AUSU.

This column is provided by AUSU to facilitate communication with its members. *The Voice* does not write or edit this section; all content has been exclusively and directly provided by AUSU, and any questions or comments about the material should be directed to ausu@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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