

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 21 Issue 39 2013-10-18

Maghreb Voices

Tunisian days II

Warming Up

Meet the new guy

Burning Desire

Hot tech

*Plus:
Mindful Bard
From Where I Sit
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

Maghreb Voices: <i>Tunisian Days II</i>	6
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Columns

Editorial: <i>Warming Up</i>	3
From Where I Sit: <i>Tough Call</i>	5
Primal Numbers: <i>Burning Desire</i>	9
The Mindful Bard: <i>Computer Chess</i>	11
AUSU Update	15

Comics

Chazz Bravado: <i>Feminism's Best Friend</i>	14
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News and Events

Did You Know?	4
Click of the Wrist.....	10
International News Desk.....	13

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

Karl Low



Warming Up

It's the time of year where that chill in the air becomes undeniable. Summer has definitely left us, and as we put the finishing touches on our costumes (or scurry around frantically trying to come up with one) we start to seek comfort in warmer things. This issue has a selection of those, starting with Hazel Anaka's heart-warming look at her grandson and S.D. Livingston's exploration of how our high tech lives

don't mix well with high heat. Our feature article is Wanda Waterman's report from Tunisia, focusing on the exotic foods and spices that she finds there. *Il pique* indeed. There is also Chazz Bravado displaying his usual warmth in the latest comic, a movie review that asks a burning question or two, and some other bits and pieces that we hope will keep you distracted from the cold outside.

You may be wondering why there are no Halloween-themed articles this week, so close to Halloween. The truth is simply that we didn't receive any. Our regular writers are a small, some might say elite, group, but even they can only do so much. *The Voice* needs more: more writers, more content, more readers, more exposure, and most important, more information about what AUSU members like you want to see in their student magazine. So in the coming weeks, I hope to set up two surveys. The first one will be for you, the regular readers, to tell me what you think *The Voice* is doing right and where we're going wrong. It won't be publicized. It'll just be our little secret. I want to get the impressions of you who already read *The Voice*.

The second, larger one will be well publicized. In it I hope to find out from as many AU students as I can the kinds of things they enjoy or don't, the types of articles they want to see in their student magazine, their ideas on how we can get them reading and participating, and their thoughts on where we should go in the future. Oh, and there will be prizes. Did I mention the prizes? I can't say what they are just yet (because I don't know myself), but I'm hopeful they'll make filling out the surveys worth your while.

Finally, I should introduce myself as the new managing editor. I'm Karl, and I'm very pleased to have you here with us. For those who don't know, I've been a writer with the Voice myself, off and on, for the last decade or so (wow, it really has been that long, hasn't it?) and my goal is nothing less than to make *The Voice* the most widely read student-focused magazine across the globe.

I know it's a goal that will take time, work, and a lot of talent—more talent than I have on my own, that's certain. But I've a great head start in having an extremely solid core of regular writers working with me and AUSU members around the world like you to aid and guide me. I know first-hand how carefully and thoroughly edited Voice articles are and the level of quality that you, the readers, have come to expect from The Voice. I think you'll find this week's issue lives up to that expectation. But if you don't, then please let me know and accept my apologies ahead of time. Things should only get better from here.

After all—I'm just warming up.

DID YOU KNOW?

IMPACT! Conference



You could attend an all-expenses paid conference in Guelph, Ontario from May 23-26, 2014 to discuss sustainability and meet with astronaut Chris Hadfield. The 2014 IMPACT! Youth Conference for Sustainability Leadership has extended the application deadline for interested attendees to October 28, 2013.

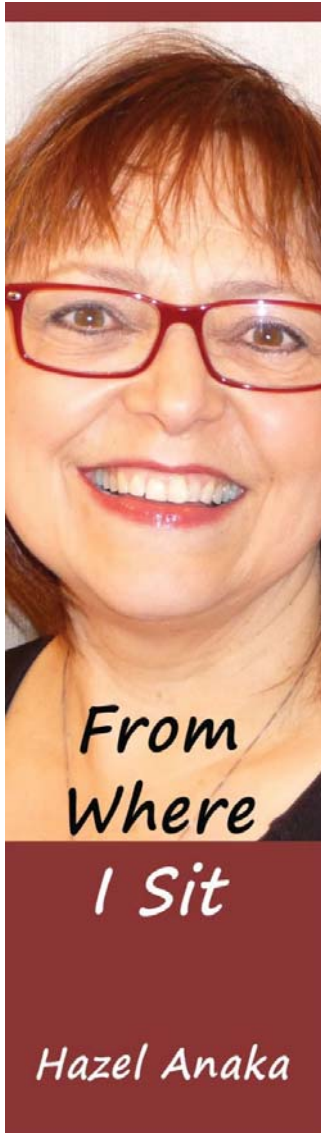
An initiative of The Co-operators, University of Guelph, The Natural Step, David Suzuki Foundation, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Saskatchewan's Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, Lambton College, Conseil de la co-operation de

l'Ontario, and AIESEC, *IMPACT!* brings together 175 student sustainability leaders and 40 leaders in sustainability from various sectors across Canada to collaborate on new ideas, participate in workshops, assess the impact of sustainability actions, and attend a special keynote presentation designed to bring these leaders together and "enable them to make sustainable changes in their communities."

To apply, you must be between 19 and 25 years of age and attending a Canadian university. The application process consists of providing four essay responses (of 200 words or less) to the following:

- Please tell us what sustainability means to you and/or some of the ways you have demonstrated a commitment to sustainability in your life and community
- Consider this application a job or internship opportunity application. Write the cover letter you would submit to earn the 'job' of conference attendee
- We value diversity of all sorts. How will you bring a diverse perspective to this conference?
- How will you use what you gain from the conference to bring change?

To gain more information and apply for this all-expenses paid conference, you need to go this link: <http://www.impactyouthsustainability.ca/2014/application>



Tough Call

Having our grandson Grady come to the farm for sleepovers is always a treat. At age four he is increasingly independent so I am able to get a few things done besides staring lovingly at him. He's also a funny, inquisitive, articulate little kid. Not to put too fine a point on it, but let's just say I've had deeper, more meaningful conversations with him than with some adults.

Grady loves to play in the sandbox, explore the gravel pit, and play with the farm toys and other assorted stuff I've acquired for him. Much of the play is active, outdoors, and unlike anything he can do at home on the acreage near Sherwood Park.

So I'm not worried about his increased interest in watching movies. It's a hoot if we can stay in pyjamas, eat popcorn, and make a night (or morning) out of it. His attention span is now long enough: especially if I watch with him to offer editorial comments and explain the subtleties. If I ratchet up my reactions—to suspense, humour, or the air of the ridiculous—and over-act he gets more out of the experience. Because he's a sensitive kid, sad or scary parts need special handling.

In the past, when we knew he was coming for an overnight or longer visit, I'd head into town to borrow a *Cars* movie-themed bed and an armload of kids' movies from my sister. Now Grady is content sleeping in his "nest" on the living room floor. It's surprising how a sports-themed quilt, a Batman pillowcase, and a coverlet can make a kid happy.

But there are only so many times can we watch my sister's *Toy Story* 1, 2, and 3, so one day I bit the bullet and invested in a boatload of kids' movies of our own. This was a big decision in a household that had just barely gotten rid of the old VHS tapes our twenty-something daughter watched years ago.

Luckily, I capitalized on Walmart's anniversary sale when many of the movies were only five or ten dollars each. I did, however, spring the full-price for *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*.

Slowly, we're watching our way through twenty-one titles. Just this morning we watched *Robots*. Even though I know a lot of technology is involved I can't help but feel that animators are geniuses. The detail, sophistication, and speed are mind-blowing. I also love that screenwriters haven't forgotten the adults. There is humour, innuendo, and a genuine message embedded in most of these movies. For example, through an excellent storyline and the vocal talents (and smooth moves) of stars like Robin Williams and Halle Berry we learn that "everyone can shine no matter what they're made of." On our next viewing I'll be sure to embed that line, that truth, into the sponge-like mind of a certain four year old.

In the meantime, I have a dilemma. Do I start secretly watching these movies on my own with the door locked and the curtains drawn? Or do I invite Grady over more often? Tough call, from where I sit.

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

MAGHREB VOICES

Wanda Waterman

Tunisian Days II: Food, Glorious Food

"A flavor . . . what do you think, old madman, what do you think? That if you find a lost flavor you will eradicate decades of misunderstanding and find yourself confronted with a truth that might redeem the aridity of your heart of stone?" ~ Muriel Barbery



Tunisian cuisine shares the same epicurean sophistication of Barbery's native Morocco. The key difference between Tunisian cooking and that of the rest of the Maghreb is the extremely hot spices that flavour much of the food (for which Tunisians have won the moniker *les gens du piquant*).

The mouth-searing dishes aren't ubiquitous, however, and if a Westerner sits down to a laden table (which in most cases will be a low table surrounded by

diners on floor cushions) he or she will be warned of certain items: *C'est pas pour vous— il pique*. (This isn't for you. It's hot.)

The care that goes into cooking in Tunisia is entirely dependent on the specialized style of living. Here in Tunisia, where children remain with their parents until they marry or until work obliges them to relocate, many hands make light work in the kitchen, and so a high standard is sustainable. It's hard to imagine transposing this daily parade of culinary splendour into Western culture, where meals, if produced at all, are often no more than a quick transit from supermarket to freezer to microwave.

Since the revolution, inflation has created a far more spartan fare, but fava beans, lemons, pomegranates, and savoury herbs can be easily grown within the enclosed courtyard at home, while fruit and vegetable sellers are always close, proffering a wide variety of fresh, local produce.

Although traditional Arabic recipes highlight meals, the French influence is evident. There's little conversation at the table—people eat quickly and pack up after efforts to pressure the guests to eat

more eventually become fruitless. The eating schedule isn't carved in stone, but family are expected to come to the table when called.

Fresh baguettes are purchased each morning and accompany every meal as a desirable dipper for the unctuous sauces. The local bakeries vary in quality, so when you find one with a nice, crusty loaf and fragrant, cloud-soft innards you tend to stick with it.

In the early 1980s, in the wake of political instability and economic distress, the IMF imposed austerity measures on Tunisia that included raising the price of bread and semolina. This led to the bread riots



Local produce - unpeeled berber figs

across the country. Those who remember this time remember it as one of apprehension but admit that, in retrospect, it really wasn't bad; they could still make the traditional Arab flatbread (almost identical to American Indian frybread), and the price of bread soon returned to normal.

Most Tunisian's drink bottled water. Alternatives are fruit juice, soda, *café Arab* (made by placing very finely ground coffee in a small metal pitcher and bringing it to a boil twice), green tea brewed and then garnished with fresh mint, and red tea (what we know as rooibos).

A not-so-common treasure is *bsisa*, a drink made from roasted and ground wheat, chick peas, spices, and sometimes other grains. Sugar, olive oil, and sometimes milk are added to make a delicious concoction. (I slept like a baby after only half a cup.)

Tunisian kitchens also stock bottles of blossom-scented waters—the most common being mock orange that is used to flavor the *mekroute* (a small, diamond-shaped cookie), and also for medicinal purposes. There are also many traditional Arabic herbal teas used to treat a variety of complaints. In many instances, these are said to work much better than allopathic medications.

Most sauces include at least a little tomato, fresh or canned. Care is taken to add ingredients in the right order, and to add water slowly to smooth out the acidity, but from there you launch into a broad spectrum of sauces for pasta, couscous, or simply bread-dipping. There's also an exquisitely silken lamb gravy.

Main dishes include *tajine* (a quiche-like casserole made with eggs, fresh parsley, diced potatoes, and spices), *bric* (a pastry containing eggs or a mix of eggs, tuna, or chicken), *aija* (a tomato and egg sauce for dipping), braised fresh fish, couscous, and pasta. Fresh lemons are always at hand, and plain olive oil is also used as a dipper.

* * * *

We attend the Grand Eid, the Muslim feast commemorating God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his firstborn son. It begins with harvesting the meat of rams. The meat is cut into portions while small hibachis are set up in the courtyard to cook it. The children have their own small toy hibachis fashioned from tin cans that are hammered flat.

When served, I find it's the sweetest, most tender mutton I've ever tasted. And, somehow, the experience of witnessing its harvesting from beginning to end is sobering. After experiencing such a thing it's hard to take food for granted or to ignore its spiritual context.

The following day I help make *ausban*, a dish very much like haggis (coincidentally, Tunisians also have a bagpipe: the *mezwed*) but with minced lamb, a lot of parsley and spices, and rice or cracked wheat, all cooked in a steamer.



Making ausban

Eating it is the best part. In the evening of the second day of Eid we happily dip our bread in sautéed sheep's brain, which is ever-so-much yummier than it sounds.

The meal begins with *bismillah* (in the name of Allah) and ends with *Alhamdulillah* (all thanks and praise to Allah).

To each other we simply say *sahha* (bon appetite).

It's all good.

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.

PRIMAL NUMBERS

S.D. Livingston



Burning Desire

Have you ever noticed that even though we think of desirable stuff as being cool, the image that marketers use to sell everything from jeans to smart phones is heat? The latest fashions are hot. Internet speeds are blazingly fast. That shiny new car will burn up the road. Turns out there might be a lot of truth in those ads: all those goodies are making modern homes burn eight times faster than before.

That alarming news comes from the [CBC](#), which talked to veteran firefighters, including Kingsville Fire Chief Bob Kissner. He's been a firefighter for 33 years and "now teaches courses on fighting fires in the modern home." And boy, have there been some drastic changes in the way we live over the past few decades.

For starters, there's the furniture we eat, sleep, and sit on. Fifty years ago our couches were likely made of natural materials. Today, technology has brought us an endless array of synthetic materials. They last longer and are easy to clean, but they also contain a lot of oil. Good news when it comes to wiping up spills. Not so good if your house is on fire.

Paul Acton is the chief training officer for Windsor Fire and Rescue, and he explained the danger to the CBC. "Typically," Acton said, "50 years ago, if a wool or cotton sofa was on fire you didn't see the wool or cotton sofa drip." With today's synthetic materials, it's an entirely different scenario. "It's the oils," Acton explained, "that's what all of the studies are finding leads to rapid fire spread and rapid pyrolysis and rapid combustion."

And it's not just the flames we should be worried about. The products in our homes are made from such a cocktail of chemicals now that they create "200 times the amount of smoke that a fire would have 50 years ago." Even if you manage to fight your way through the smoke and flames, all those plastic gadgets and synthetic surfaces have another trick up their sleeve: in a fire, they release poisonous cyanide.

Does this mean that you should pitch your iPhone and go back to a metal typewriter? No, but you should be aware that you have far less time than you might think to escape your home in the event of a fire. How long? Probably less than two minutes.

According to testing done by Underwriter Laboratories, an "average-sized room furnished with modern products is fully engulfed in flames in three minutes." Researchers tested the same room

again with items that were 50 years old. The difference was staggering: filled with the older furnishings, the room took 30 minutes to reach “full involvement,” meaning that it was fully consumed by flames.

Even 30 years ago, the average home offered a better chance of escape in a fire. Chris Williams, Ontario’s Assistant Deputy Fire Marshall, told the CBC that a person back then had a ballpark of eight minutes to escape. Today’s odds are less than two minutes. As Williams says, “there’s not a fire department in the world that can respond to your home and rescue you in that time.”

So next time you’re updating your apps and syncing your phone, spare a minute to think about updating your escape plan in the event of a fire. After all, your shiny gadgets are replaceable, but you’re not.

S.D. Livingston is the author and creator of the Madeline M. Mystery Series for kids, as well as several books for older readers. Visit her [website](#) for information on her writing.

CLICK OF THE WRIST

Even More Halloween Finds

With the day almost upon us, here are some more Halloween themed distractions and tidbits to keep you amused while waiting for trick-or-treaters to show up at your door:

Online Interactive Pumpkin Carving

If you're trying to come up with the perfect design for your pumpkin, this site can give you the opportunity to test out all kinds of designs without having to get slimy with pumpkin guts. Then when you're finished, you can adjust the background and send it to a friend as an animated e-card.

The History of Halloween

Did you ever stop to wonder where this holiday came from? Or why a holiday supposedly devoted to the spooky and supernatural happens to condone begging for sweets? The History Channel takes a look at the origins of the holiday, and it goes back probably further than you think

Ghostly Science

The Unmuseum has an interesting article explaining the science behind our perceptions of ghosts and hauntings. However, if phrases like "make the eyeballs vibrate" disturb you, this article probably won't make you feel any better.

Ghoulish Games

Still need a way to pass a little bit of extra time? Here are some Halloween themed games you can play online between trick-or-treaters.

Got a few links you want to share? Send them to us!



THE MINDFUL BARD



Wanda Waterman

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

Film: *Computer Chess*

Director: Andrew Bujalski

Genre: Mockumentary/Art House

An Eerie Order Behind the Chaos

It turns out that an eerie type of chaos can lurk just behind a facade of order—and yet, deep inside the chaos lurks an even eerier type of

order. ~Douglas R. Hofstadter

Just take something mediocre and turbocharge it. ~from *Computer Chess*

What if computers can beat humans at one of their own games? Even more important, what does it mean if they can? *The Matrix* and other films of that type that tried to answer the second question have suggested that even if machines could get mad at us, overpower us, and use our bodies for DieHard batteries, we could still overcome them in the end.

But when you see the people queuing up to either beat computers or help computers beat people, you have to wonder how these particular ones could make it happen. It's like a Mensa meeting; if you didn't know it was a Mensa meeting you might think they were all slightly challenged. In person, very high intelligence doesn't look like Keanu Reeves—it looks more like Mr. Bean.

Here we witness a competition between a bunch of humans (okay, a bunch of guys with one very timid and highly conspicuous female player consistently and patronizingly referred to as “a lady”) facing off in chess games where the software they've developed tells them how to make their next move. The competition is really between chess-playing software programs.

I was a full ten minutes into this before I had that “wait-a-minute” moment and checked the website for details. The editing is remarkable. The camera has managed to focus on and accentuate the subtlest of headshakes, eye-rollings, and meaningful shrugs, capturing the incredible arrogance and hubris of men at the top of the technological heap (I was about to call them intellectuals, but no). It's not a documentary, but don't tell your friends.

And it's a brilliant premise: use computer chess as a touchstone for exploring (and spoofing) Silicon Valley, the sixties, the pathetically misguided belief in drugs and alcohol as brain enhancers, and, most important, our culture's belief in the personhood of computers.

A beautiful touch is the inclusion of a conspiracy theorist who's convinced that the chess tournament is secretly part of a weapons development program initiated by the military-industrial complex. He sells drugs to support his investigations and says he's just there to witness "the start of World War III."

Of course, what sixties-based mockumentary would be complete without a Gestalt encounter group? The computer geeks share a hotel with couples at a weekend seminar who examine each other together with mirrors and stuff their hands into fresh loaves of bread while tittering obscenely. When occasionally, and quite accidentally, the computer nerds connect with the encounter group, the results are hilarious.

The problem that the movie addresses is that so many of us, especially young programmers, think of the computer as a partner, a co-conspirator, or a rival brain. A computer is none of these. Rather it's a phenomenally powerful ever-advancing tool created and used by the human brain. At best, it's an extension of the brain. It can't logically be called "artificial intelligence" because it isn't intelligence *per se* but rather intelligence's carefully manipulated robot arms.

Having said that, a significant portion of what is generated by computers depends on chance and how it's put to use, especially the things that Carl Jung would have called "meaningful coincidences." And what, if anything, is behind chance? That's the real question.

Computer Chess manifests five of the Mindful Bard's criteria for films well worth seeing.

1. It's authentic, original, and delightful;
2. It poses and admirably responds to questions that have a direct bearing on my view of existence;
3. It stimulates my mind;
4. It provides respite from a sick and cruel world, a respite enabling me to renew myself for a return to mindful artistic endeavor; and
5. It makes me appreciate that life is a complex and rare phenomena, making living a unique opportunity.

I was a full ten minutes into this before I had that "wait-a-minute" moment and checked the website for details. . . . It's not a documentary, but don't tell your friends.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK



At Home: New Education Legislation for First Nations

Bernard Valcourt, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development came under fire from First Nations when he released the proposal for new legislation governing their education systems. While the new legislation grants band councils the ability to purchase services from the private sector or regional and provincial school boards, they are angry that the legislation makes the federal government responsible for setting and enforcing standards for the schools on reserves, and that the Minister would have the power to take over a school or band appointed school authority if an inspector found problems.

Another issue with the legislation is that although it specifies that band schools must live up to federally set standards, no funding details were included and the proposal stated that those would be placed in regulation that has not yet been written and may be altered at the discretion of the Minister.

Around the World: Zombie U May Soon be a Reality

At the University of California, in Irvine, Academics are developing online courses in "Apocalypse Studies" as part of a partnership with AMC, producers of *The Walking Dead*. The academics involved say that the courses will be "academically rigorous and tackle serious scientific issues related to events in the show," with a physicist looking at the "science behind decay", or math lecturers "showing how post-calculus maths can be used to model population and epidemic dynamics" for example.

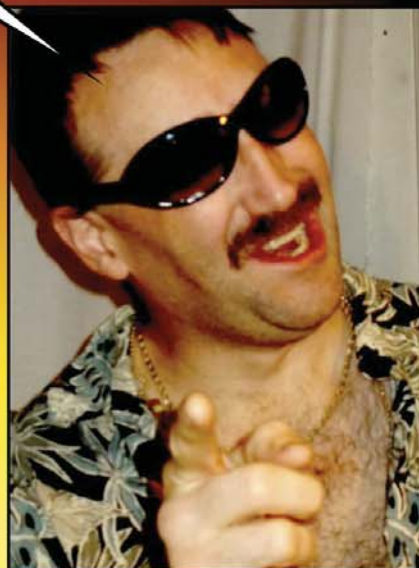
The course will be one of the first massive open online courses (MOOC) to be developed in conjunction with an entertainment group, and will be free to anybody with an internet connection. The eight modules in the course will include online tests and discussion groups, but no formal qualifications or credits will be granted for completing it. The University of California is using the course not only as a marketing tool, but also to allow them to refine how they can put courses online and to see if connecting course work with a hit product in popular culture can fix one of the biggest problems encountered with MOOCs so far: the extremely high dropout rate.

CHAZZ BRAVADO: Feminism's Friend

I've been actively appreciating Feminisim for years.

When you dolls started burning your bras, I was beside myself!

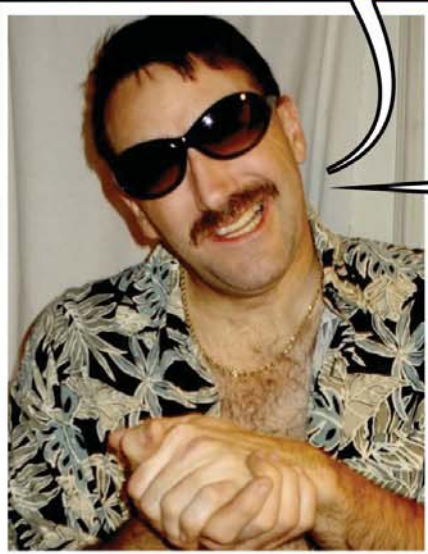
When you started exploring your sexuality, I was ecstatic!



When you lift your shirts at K.D. Lang concerts, I'm— oh, never mind.

I like to think of myself as feminism's best friend.

I just keep hoping that some day we can be MORE than friends.



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN
WITH INPUT FROM BEN AND
STEPHANIE WATERMAN

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.

THE VOICE

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