

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

Vol 24 Issue 29 2016-07-29

Minds We Meet

Say Hi to Skye!

Behind the Numbers

The Meaning of the AU Budget

Summer Brain

How to Deal with
Summer's Distractions

Plus:

*Summer: Half Full or Half Empty?
Goal-Setting to Goal-Getting
and much more!*



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Magazine***www.voicemagazine.org

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The Voice is published
every Friday in HTML and
PDF format.

For weekly email
reminders as each issue is
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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.

Hey! Did you know the Voice Magazine has a [Facebook page](#)?

No kidding! We also do the [twitter](#) thing once in a while if you're into that.

EDITORIAL**Summer Concerned****Karl Low**

It's a double feature issue this week. Our first feature is an interview with fellow student, Skye Van Zetten. It's always interesting to hear the path to AU that students have taken, and Skye's path is no exception.

Our second feature this week is connected to AU's recent budget that was leaked to the media. To be honest, I'd expected more of a response from my article about this budget last week, but then again, it's summer. A lot of people are on vacation, and the drum-beat of Athabasca University's possible pending financial disaster has been repeated so many times that, for many, it may be just part of the background noise that surrounds AU.

That said, I did hear that some people were worried about what effect this might have on their degree. Personally, I don't think there's any real reason to worry about that. Looking through the AU financial reports and annual statements show that although AU may well be budgeting for a deficit situation, the university is not without assets and investments. As of the last annual report, for instance, the university posted (on page B13 or page 60 if you're using page search) that it had just over 39 million in investment portfolio assets, and the total deficit projection for the three years in the budget is less than half that, at 18.9 million. So if my article last week worried you about the prospects of finishing your degree at AU? Again, please don't be.

However, this once again raises concerns about what on earth the Board of Governors of AU is thinking with these types of pronouncements. To find out more, Carla Knipe went digging, and it's her article, "Beyond the Numbers" that we're happy to have as our second feature this week.

Of course, it's not all about the budget. The onset of August has Voice writers thinking about summer and what it means for AU students. Whether you're wondering how to handle the summer distractions, or wishing that there was more time for them, you're not alone.

Plus, we have the second half of our parenthetical discussion in "The Writer's Toolbox", a conversation with a band that wants you to "dance off those pants," how to change make your goal-setting lead to goal-getting, and of course a selection of reviews, advice, and humour to give you every excuse you need to procrastinate over this long weekend.

Enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl", with a stylized, flowing script.

MINDS WE MEET



Skye Van Zetten is an Ontario AU student with a strong interest in people's relationships with food and communicating. She was kind enough to take some time away from her kids and busy studies to talk to The Voice Magazine.

First of all, whereabouts do you live? And have you always lived there?

At the moment, I live in Brampton, Ontario. I have always lived in or around Toronto.

Which AU program are you in?

I'm in the Bachelor of Professional Arts – Communications. I took technical illustration in college, which served me well when those digital media skills were current. I decided to go back to school for a degree in Communications to open up some horizons for my future career goals.

Aside from AU, what do you work at?

I volunteer my time supporting families who struggle with food in an online peer-to-peer support group. Until very recently, I ran a home daycare which I enjoyed very much, but I'm also enjoying the break because it gives me more time to dedicate to my own kids. I'm also a licensed hairdresser.

Describe the path that led you to AU.

Oh, wow, that's a long story. My son had a couple of traumatic episodes with food as a young tot which developed into to a phobia of eating. I love food—I can't imagine being afraid of it, but he had experienced a full airway blockage on more than one occasion—thank the fates I knew what to do! So from his point of view, eating was a pretty scary activity. Being the parent of a kid who only feels safe ingesting a very limited number of foods comes with a hearty side of judgement. Everyone has an opinion on what went wrong and how to fix it – none of which was helpful, by the way. There was no physical reason why he couldn't eat, which made it was pretty much impossible for me to find help for him. I'm stubborn and tenacious by nature, and being mom put me on a quest for a way to help my son overcome his fear of food. I stumbled upon PubMed and started searching for studies on food phobia, eating behaviour, eating disorders... I started a blog about our experience as a family and wrote about the stuff I had read about. To my surprise, people started following my blog! Apparently, what we were going through wasn't all that uncommon, but what really struck me was how socially isolating it is to parent a child (or be an adult) who struggles with eating. Through blogging, I've been introduced to some truly excellent and internationally respected feeding professionals who continue to be my mentors and

inspiration. I came to AU to build on what I've learned so I can continue to support families who struggle with mealtimes like we once did, and help others improve their relationship with food.

What do you like to do when you're not studying?

I feel like I'm always studying or, at least, learning something. Whether it's school or keeping up on what's new or developing in the pediatric feeding world. I love being with my kids and my husband. My husband listens ever so patiently to me explaining something I've just read, and my kids are incessantly inquisitive. I love that they ask questions, and question what they read and hear. I also enjoy walking, listening to music, listening to my kids practice their instruments. And sleeping.

Who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

I would have to say my son. His struggles with food are what started me on this journey of learning, and his continued progress inspires me to continue to help families find the support they need.

Describe your experience with online learning. What do you like? Dislike?

I appreciate the regular feedback from the course tutors, and being able to progress through the courses at my own pace. I really like being able to fit school in around my schedule. When I compare my college experience with online learning, I really love being able to go to school in my jammies, and refill my coffee in the middle of a lesson, and being able to stop and snuggle with my kids. I miss being able to connect with other students and discuss different perspectives, but at the same time, my family is always interested in what I'm learning and it helps me to know I can explain what I've just learned to them, and answering their questions helps me gauge how well I've absorbed the material.

What was your most memorable AU course?

I've only taken three so far, and two of those I'm working through right now. I think I'll always remember CMNS301 fondly because it was my first AU course and gave me the confidence to believe in my abilities to succeed as an AU student.

What's the single best thing AU could do to improve your student experience?

I was super apprehensive about AU when I first considered finishing my degree. I met another AU student who was very pleased with the courses and spoke very positively about the university. Since my first contact with an AU advisor, I have not been disappointed with the support and resources available to students. I would like to connect with more students in my program, I feel a little bit isolated in that respect.

What is your most prized possession?

My passport.

Please tell us something that few people know about you.

I am ambidextrous. My handwriting is more legible with my right hand, but my drawing skills are better with my left. When I spend a lot of time drawing, I have quite lovely handwriting, but you need a mirror to read it.

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life?

That every experience is an opportunity to learn and grow. Little, insignificant things can have a huge and meaningful impact on the people we interact with. Be gentle.

What do you think about e-texts?

I have a love/hate relationship with e-texts, mostly because I'm still learning how to make the most effective use of them. I like the ability to quickly search for and find specific information in an e-text. I find them particularly difficult to study from.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

My first tutor seemed to take a long time to return feedback on assignments. Being my first AU course, I had no reference for what was typical and it was kind of frustrating to not know if I had done well or poorly on the assignments for what seemed like a long time. My current tutors have feedback for me within a day or two, which I find really helpful and encouraging.

Where has life taken you so far? (travels for pleasure, work, etc.)

In my early twenties, I had an opportunity to travel on a round-the-world ticket for six months. I had never been outside of Ontario before that. I visited Vancouver and San Francisco on the west coast, New Zealand, Fiji, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Egypt and most of the countries in Europe. The trip was full of adventure and learning experiences, such as finding ways to communicate with another human being who doesn't speak the same language I do. Charades, thankfully, is international, and it's amazing how far a few words like "thank you" and "hello" will take you. I also got to practice my French, which is never without an embarrassingly humorous tale. I am still teased about the time I was trying to find my way back to the train station in Bordeaux and mispronounced "gare" with English phonetic rules as "guerre." The group of elderly men I asked got a good laugh out of my error, and I understood one of them say to another in French, "Should we tell her she's about 40 years too late?" *(Ed. Note: This joke gets funnier when you learn that "gare" is French for "train station" and "guerre" is French for war.)*

Earlier this year, my husband and I were finally able to fulfill a dream of 17 years and visit New Zealand with our 10-year-old twins. I'm looking forward to our next big adventure, wherever it may take us.

Women Of Interest

Ellen Neel, was born November 14, 1916, in Alert Bay, British Columbia, and died in 1966 at the age of 49. Neel became the first woman who was known to have been a professional totem pole carver. She learned the Northwest Art of carving from her grandfather, Charlie James, who was a renowned totem pole carver. Neel began selling her work at twelve years of age. She inspired other First Nations women to take up carving. After Neel's husband became seriously ill and was unable to support the family, Ellen went into full time carving. A financial breakthrough occurred when she completed the Totemland Pole for the Totemland Society of Vancouver. She went on to establish the Totem Art Studios in Stanley Park Vancouver. Subsequently, Neel was approached in 1955 by Woodward's Department Store and commissioned to create five totem poles for an Edmonton shopping mall. Ellen's grandson has carried on the family tradition and today is an active carver in British Columbia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_Neel

http://thecanadasite.com/art/art43_neel.html

http://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID_artist=4315

compiled by Barb Godin

The AU Budget: Beyond the Numbers

by Carla Knipe



The recent AU budget and the news that AU may be headed toward financial insolvency in the next two years was met with great concern by observers and supporters of the university. But predictions of the demise of AU are not new, and this new revelation was just one in a list of news stories during the past few years that have contained doom and gloom for the university. As a result, reaction from students on social media reacting to the news was lackluster.

But as The Voice's editor, Karl Low, pointed out in last week's editorial, this latest news was different, because it went beyond simply

highlighting that AU was in trouble. The use of the term "insolvency" in the budget document had connotations of bankruptcy and crisis. But it is difficult to ascertain whether this indeed the case. The question also remains as to what exactly the budget means for those who are the heart of AU—the staff and students.

When contacted by The Voice for a statement regarding the budget, Athabasca University's Board of Governors would not comment and instead referred all queries to the university's Office of Communications. As of press time, the Voice has not yet received a response to its request for further clarification of the budget from either the Office of Communications and AU's Vice President of Advancement but will provide that information when it is received.

The Voice also contacted the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education. The office of Minister Marlin Schmidt issued a statement which reiterated the provincial government's commitment to ensuring the future of Athabasca University. (*see sidebar below*)

But while the reassurance from the government is one part of the picture in trying to discern what meaning can be gleaned from the budget, there remains a degree of confusion about whether the numbers presented in it are indeed a tactic designed to shock both AU's governing bodies and the provincial government into providing increased support and a changed model of funding for the university, or whether it can be received with more of a relaxed perspective.

But this points to another troubling issue regarding how information is communicated. The question remains as to how external media outlets are obtaining information from AU, while staff and students feel that they do not hear about these issues first-hand from the university and are instead, like the general public, left to learn of them from external sources. Former AU tutor, Dr. Karla Panchuk, who recently left her teaching duties at AU, highlighted that even staff "are often left finding things out at the last minute, and lack critical information."

She points to how the communication issue is perhaps indicative of a larger issue that all post-secondary institutions currently face in terms of how they operate. Operating under increasingly tight financial conditions, Panchuk says that higher education is being run more like any other business rather than a haven for educational ideas and ideals. AU's recent financial situation highlights the fact that governments are under pressure to fund post-secondary education, but often face their own financial pressures. On the other side, there is a belief by some that schools should be self-sustaining and should reach that goal at any cost.

In the middle of this are those that have a very personal stake in post-secondary education—the faculty, staff, and students. The cynical view is that they are simply a "product" that contribute to the financial security of the university. As Panchuk points out in her personal blog, this creates a vicious circle where staff, including teaching staff, are viewed as a cost best kept to a minimum. The end result of this business model is not education so much as course delivery. Rather than supporting learning, Panchuk notes that "some might argue that if a student completes a course successfully then that's all that matters. But if students are expecting to have a meaningful and transformative educational experience, then they are expecting something above what is viewed as strictly necessary to keep the business running."

Certainly the AU budget numbers tell one part of the story, but they cannot predict the human impact that those numbers will ultimately have. A crisis budget will affect the stress and morale of the teaching staff who are on the front-lines and trying to offer a quality educational experience for students under difficult conditions, and that stress will be transferred to students who are trying to pursue their educational goals and have the best educational experience possible. After all, university students pay to be at university, and certainly there should be some acknowledgement that they have a say. The danger is that instructors who are operating under high

Statement from the Office of the Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education regarding Athabasca University.

It's no secret there have been financial challenges at Athabasca University. This is a complex situation - one that was shaped over decades and won't be fixed overnight. Our government is committed to working with AU to find a sustainable solution, and we are taking the time to ensure our government and the AU Board of Governors have enough information to make a thoughtful decision that best serves students and the Athabasca community.

That's why we've tasked a third party with helping examine future options for AU, including how to modernize the institution's work to ensure AU thrives in Athabasca for years to come.

It's also critical that the Board engages with students, faculty, staff, and the community at every step of the way. The right solutions will come from a strong working relationship with all parties involved.

We want Athabasca University students to know this government has their back. It's why we've kept our promise to freeze tuition and roll back policies from the previous government that only made it more difficult and more expensive to get a quality education. It remains our focus to ensure AU students get the skills and education they need to succeed in a modern, diversified economy.

Minister Schmidt has made it clear that our government is committed to Athabasca University. AU has an incredible reputation as a worldwide leader in distance education - a track record that AU students and all Albertans should be incredibly proud of.

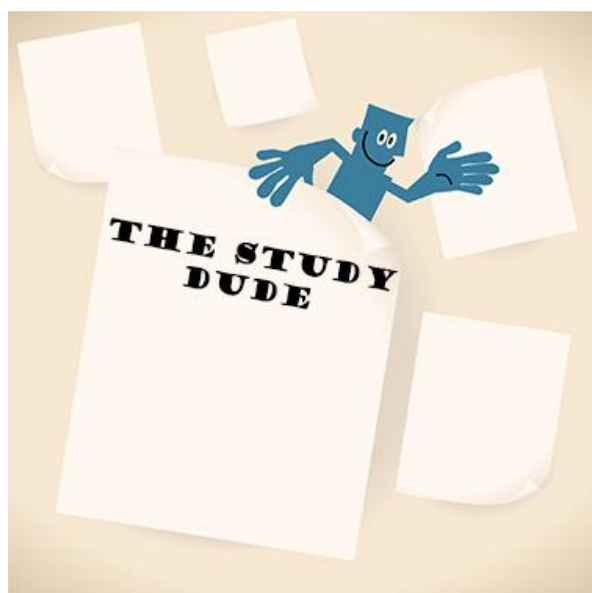
stress and low morale will become disillusioned and burnt out. The danger for AU is that it will also follow other schools where most of the teaching is done by low-paid casual faculty, such as graduate students. If this is the case, then the stress on both staff and students will be self-perpetuating.

What the current economic reality and shifting employment patterns means for the long-term viability of universities in general, and AU in particular, remains unknown. Ultimately, if students are still completing coursework and obtaining degrees, then perhaps it doesn't matter whether the institution itself is facing internal issues such as how it is being run and whether it is drowning in a sea of red ink. And maybe this is even where a portion of student apathy arises from, because for them the university system remains "business as usual."

But if stakeholders in universities begin to question the current model and demand improvements to the way institutions such as AU deliver their services to students, then change will have to be asked for in specific, concrete terms. Dr. Panchuk says that communication is key. "A lot could be accomplished by having students talk with instructors about what their education could look like, and the challenges faced by instructors in delivering that experience. For the moment, as much as students might have a sense that they're not being served well, I don't think they fully realize how much they are being shortchanged." Communication is also an important part on how honest and open the administration and board of governors is with faculty and staff.

The Voice will continue to seek out more information regarding the latest budget and report that information to AU students when it receives it. But it may be that the significance for AU is not what the numbers on the page say. It may be that the real story, behind those numbers, is that there a lot of crucial information that is just not yet being presented. What is clear, however, is that the story regarding the financial viability of AU is not over.

(Editor's note: Previously, this article mistakenly ascribed several comments to the Marketing and Social Media Manager, Erin Stevenson. Those comments, regarding changes in AU enrolment, were not properly sourced. The Voice Magazine apologizes for this error and is looking into the matter.)



Study Tips from a Semi-Anonymous Friend

Best Kept as Close Friends: Your Subject and Verb

There is nothing more that The Study Dude wants for you than to say all the right verbs.

Well, in these articles, as The Study Dude, I'll try to give you the study tips you need to help make your learning easier. I'll also give you straight and honest opinions and personal anecdotes—even the embarrassing ones that you wouldn't ever dare read about from any other study tip guru.

This week's Study Dude further explores *Mastering the Craft of Writing: How to Write With Clarity, Emphasis, & Style* by Stephen

Wilbers. He'll delete 50% of your words and transform just as many nouns into verbs.

Be Wary of Wordiness

Wilbers prepared the perfect strategy to prevent wordiness: imagine paying \$5 per word. With that strategy, the last sentence cost me \$130. And did I really need the words "with that strategy"? Maybe.

I believe the fixation with tight sentences comes from Western media. Due to space constraints, journalists seek out the shortest way to say something. "Moreover" gets replaced with "and," "however" gets replaced with "but," and "although" with "yet." But, that's beside the point.

Best-selling business books also use shorter sentences. And sometimes a noun that conveys action such as "the chimes" removes the need for a verb, as in "The chimes overhead. The sand below." (Wilbers gives examples of nouns that remove the need for verbs in non-academic writing.)

Wilbers found the formula for fixing wordiness:

- If a word isn't necessary, get rid of it.
- Keep only the important words.
- Don't use long-winded phrases like "the fact that" or "in spite of the fact that." Instead, use "because" or "although."
- Remove anything that doesn't add to your meaning or that doesn't provide rhythm.
- When referencing time, get rid of wordiness. Instead of saying "during the time it takes" or "in this day and age," just say, "when" or "today."

Viable Verbs

I first read about punchy verbs in Helen Sword's book *Stylish Academic Writing*. I know. I know. But, most books on writing repeat what Helen says. She says to show-off vibrant verbs wherever you can. For instance, take a multisyllabic verb like *appreciate* and switch it to something short and lively like *cherish*.

And Helen advised against zombie nouns, which are those words that end with suffixes like "ize," "ation," "ity." Take those nouns and convert them into zesty verbs. For instance, *realization* can convert to *realize* or, better yet, *grasp*.

Wilbers offers some advice on how to make your verbs pulse:

- You can use verb inspired nouns, such as "the howl" or "the cry" to liven up your writing.
- Instead of using vague words like "higher floor," use more precise terms, such as "the 103rd floor."
- Try to take your tame verbs and replace them with vivid ones. For instance, "the flame's shadow appeared on the wall," say, "the flame's shadow licked out and flickered on the wall."
- Don't sound pompous with multisyllabic nouns that could be reframed as verbs. Instead of saying, "He entered the contemplation of life," just say, "He contemplated life."
- You can turn some nouns into verbs. For instance, you can be pigeon-holed, where pigeon-hole, a noun, becomes a verb. [Wilbers suggest converting nouns into verbs, creating verbs that don't appear in the dictionary. His approach might work well with fiction-writing, but for academic writing, ask your professor for permission first.]
- When converting your nouns into verbs, look at the object you are writing about, and find some smaller part of it that you can turn into a verb. For instance, you could take a fish and reduce it to its gills; thus, you come up with the sentence, "The salmon gilled its way to the surface."

- When you have a lot of stuffy nouns stacked together, take one near the end, convert it to a verb (or adjectives) if possible, and rewrite the sentence. For instance, "the human right's periodical literature campaign institution" could be turned into the "the institution's campaign for human rights through periodical literature."

Cuddle Up! Verbs and Subjects

Prefer clarity over confusion in your writing. So, cuddle your verbs up against their subjects. And if you write a long string of clauses, first snuggle your subject and verb at the start of the sentence and then follow with all the *but's*, *that's*, or *which's* you want.

Wilbers gives a taste of what it means to keep your verb and subject close together:

- If you distance your noun from your verb, your sentence will become harder to understand.
- Try not to use the passive verb "is" when you separate your noun from your verb.
- Put your verb as close to your subject as you can without losing rhythm or meaning.
- Sometimes, when you put a great distance between your subject and verb, your sentence gains suspense. However, you normally want to keep your subject and verb together.

So, there's nothing to fear. The Study Dude is determined to make right for you all the wrongs I made in grad school—one A+ at a time.

References

Wilbers, Stephen. (2014). *Mastering the Craft of Writing: How to Write with Clarity, Emphasis, & Style*. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books.

Student Sizzle AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following what's hot around AU's social media sites.

AthaU Facebook Group

Miranda seeks feedback from students regarding grouped study courses at Lethbridge College. Marcy is impressed with her tutor's overnight turnaround on assignment marking.

Other posts include AU's budget, contacting tutors, and courses PHIL 252, PSYC 402, and WGST 421.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "What are the most notorious Online Education myths?"
<http://goo.gl/y6X35t> ..."

@AthabascaUSU (AUSU) tweets: "Want some study help? Check out @AthabascaU Study Resources!"
<http://bit.ly/1QyvUij> #disted #cdnpse #AthaU."

@AU Press tweets: "We scoured the catalogues of @aaupresses to bring you our summer reads! Check them out here: <http://ow.ly/Zcxz302CNTL>."

Youtube

Impress your friends with Myths and Truths About Online Degrees, posted by edificationtv.



The Fit Student

Goal-Getting

Marie Well



Goal-setting plants seeds for goal-getting. Any student benefits from goal-setting, including the ones chasing the loftiest goals, such as medical degrees.

Recently, my hour a night of goal-setting led to many opportunities and many dreams: I landed extra work. And I aimed to teach at a college, start my entrepreneurial activities, get a doctorate degree in education, do research, and publish.

And then, it all crashed.

I realized that I never did well in group-setting; that's why I go to Athabasca University. So, teaching in a classroom would drain me. And if teaching in a classroom drains me, why get a doctorate degree? And if I don't teach, I likely won't do research. And if I don't research, I likely won't publish. Poof!

So, it's time to revise. How? Better goal-setting.

In the book *Goal Setting: The Ultimate Guide to Achieving Goals That Truly Excite You*, Thibaut Meurisse helps you achieve your dreams. Thibaut advises you to do the following five things:

First, ensure your goals involve giving out of love. If love isn't your motivation or if love isn't what your dream creates, rethink your goals. Sometimes I like to achieve goals too much for the sake of achieving them. For instance, I would feel stressed teaching in a physical classroom, but the idea of achievement lures me anyway. Sadly, when I served as a TA for a semester, I fled to the gym bawling my eyes out after every class. Not a great fit, huh? Yet, my priorities would be in order if I chose things that brought happiness, not suffering, for myself and those around me.

Love is key to goal-setting.

Second, make big goals and break them down into tiny chunks. You might feel overwhelmed with the goal of starting a global restaurant chain. But you might feel better equipped to take a first step: researching courses on management, as an example. But, don't stop there. Every day take a step, even a baby step. Just move closer to that goal every day. Sometimes, it takes months for a plant to bud, but when it does, expect flowers in a hurry.

Baby steps snowball.

Third, read books to learn skills or to learn what successful people do. If you want to go the entrepreneurial route, for instance, take an accounting course and an e-marketing course at AU. Also, start reading books on Wordpress to create a do-it-yourself ecommerce platform.

Books open doors.

Fourth, ensure that what you do today, if repeated each day, would lead you to your goals. Just as importantly, make sure that you do more than your usual routine each day. Or, better yet, add in a half hour to an hour each day for journaling your goals and for exploring your goals. I journal my goals for an hour each night.

As an example, recently while journaling I spent time researching on my smart phone the words "market research" following by a space and a letter of the alphabet to see what would come up. And, when market research journals and organizations came up, I contacted them by email to inquire about submissions or memberships.

Also, during my late night journaling session, I found books about market research on Amazon, which found their way into my shopping cart. And every day, I spend a half hour or more reading about statistics and other methods needed for market research.

Every day, acquire skills, connections, and resources.

Fifth, draft monthly, weekly, and daily goals—and plan for a years of achievements. When I journal each night, I always list out my following day's strategies in half hour increments. I plan everything from showering and eating to studying and working. As for planning a week or a month in advance, Thibaut says, simply choose three (or more) things you want to achieve for the week, and do the same for the month.

But when planning years ahead, be wary that small seeds can grow into multi-million-dollar-generating vineyards faster than you think. So, plan for exponential, not linear, growth.

Sixth, spend time daily visualizing your successes. I haven't learned this skill yet. I thought of drawing story boards of my actions in a prayer journal. But, the images I would draw would bore most anyone. I don't like to travel. I don't like to party. I don't like to go to concerts or clubs or the theater or parades. I just love to learn.

But, if you want a life where you travel the world, where you perform on stage, or where you earn a million dollars, than visualize it in any way you can: storyboards, collages, or artwork.

And, hey, I could probably storyboard the office I would like to own one day. As for an ecommerce site I'm building, I regularly map out the details of my site on a whiteboard.

Use any medium to visualize your goals: whiteboards, chalkboards, corkboards, storyboards, collages, or plain-old daydreams. Indulge.

Seventh, chase goals that thrill you—goals that are fun to chase, not just to achieve. I love learning methods, and I love doing research. Big goals of mine. In the past, I enjoyed working in market research, watching the data emerge, creating beautiful reports. I want to start a market research company in spite of barriers to entry. But, if I love chasing the dream, and if I have some talent for research, then I should dig in. Let the doors find me while I have fun tip-toeing my way to the top.

Eighth, stay flexible. If a goal doesn't work out or doors shut, quickly try out a new door and revise or tweak your goal, says Tai Lopez. Whatever you do, don't mope like I did. Instead, drum up lots of goals. Simply move on if one fails or traps you into something you hate.

As for my dream of teaching, I can still teach online. But, instead of waiting for goals to find me, I'll dream them up. Lots of them.

As many sages say, *when one door closes, a window opens.*



Summer: Half Empty or Half Full?

Barbara Lehtiniemi



The end of July marks roughly summer's half-way point. I often dread the act of flipping the calendar over to August because it forces me to acknowledge the beginning of the end of summer.

As long as the calendar reads "July", summer seems to stretch far into the hazy horizon. In August, though, summer seems finite and brutally short. Every day screams, "It's almost over!"

To stave off despair, I indulge in Pollyanna-ish thinking. I tell myself that summer isn't *really* half over until the second week of August, that there are weeks and weeks left for summer fun, that the weather will still be nice in September and probably into October, too.

But even with rose-coloured glasses on I can't ignore that daylight hours are waning, birds are preparing for their fall migration, and retail stores are promoting back-to-school gear.

Summer becomes a philosophical dilemma. Why should the second half of summer be any less enjoyable than the first? Is summer half-empty, as my calendar taunts me, or half-full?

If summer is half-empty, then the clock ticks loudly. Fall is around the corner and winter won't be far behind. The opportunity for summer leisure is diminishing day by day and there's an urgency to fit more in. Time is short.

If summer is half-full, then there's no need to count the remaining days. It's summer today and will be summer tomorrow. Summer days in August are no different than summer days in July. I can look back and contemplate how many summer activities I've engaged in so far and marvel at how much can be squeezed into half a summer. There's still plenty of time.

Too much focussing on the empty half—the summer days already spent—robs the upcoming full half of its enjoyment. I keep anticipating the end instead of enjoying the middle.

Focussing on the full half—the majority of summer yet to come—gives each day a lazy, laid-back feeling. I recapture that beginning-of-summer feeling of endless summer stretching off to a point too distant to be of concern.

Despite my determination to view summer as half-full, I usually vacillate between half-full and half-empty. It takes a lot of discipline (or denial?) to enjoy days as they are unfolding and not fret about time slipping away. And it requires mental juggling to simultaneously enjoy the current season while also looking forward to the next. I love autumn but, like summer, the second half is a mental struggle.

I have a few days to prepare. When I flip the calendar to August on Monday, I hope I can view it as yet another full month of summer with summers' end out of sight on the next page. Summer is more than half full.

Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU student. She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario



Summer Hours

Deanna Roney



Summer is a time of many distractions. The sun is shining, the water is cool, and the wilderness is calling. It can be difficult to concentrate on what needs to be done versus what wants to be done. This is the time of year to cut ourselves a little slack though. Make time to drift in the water or through the bush and reenergize yourself. I think it is still important to strike a balance between work and play. Throughout my undergrad, and now as I continue to work from home, I find myself saying "no" more than "yes", putting work before play and trying to keep myself motivated to move forward and make progress.

I have to remind myself that these days are numbered and the long nights of winter will be here sooner than I think. I need to allow myself this time to enjoy where I am and live in the moment. To take joy in the sun and

lay in the lake. But it can be more difficult than you might expect to do this. Saying "yes" is often accompanied by feelings of guilt. But, with the hours of work that everyone puts in, we need to allow ourselves to say "yes" without the burden of thinking of what should be done instead. This time is just as important as the hours sitting at a desk with our heads down.

The reality of it is that, for most, the longer we work the more drained we become. The moments of "yes" recharge us. By taking the time to get away from the desk the work will come easier and the time will pass more quickly when we return. The time spent at the desk will be more productive because of the days we said "yes" instead of "no". I have noticed in my small town that small businesses tend to heed this advice. Many switch their regular hours to "summer hours" and grant themselves a long weekend every weekend. It is time to take advantage of the flexibility offered by AU, continue your studies or your work but grant yourself more time away than you do the rest of the year. Give yourself a long weekend every weekend and catch up on time with friends and family.

The work can't stop because the sun is out. But you can allow yourself the freedom to have more time away from the desk. Create a schedule if you must and give yourself more time off. Even if it means working three days a week with a fourth as catch up. Be as ruthless now with your time away as you generally are with your time at work. It will undoubtedly benefit both yourself and your work in the long run.

Deanna Roney is an AU student who loves adventure in life and literature.

The Writer's Toolbox

An Aside, Part II

Christina M. Frey



Last week we began our mini-series on parentheses and when, where, and how to use them. This week we'll go a little deeper, focusing on the way they interact with other sentence elements—particularly where capitalization and punctuation are concerned.

Capitalization

The general rule is to **avoid capitalization if the parenthetical is located midsentence**, even if the text inside the parentheses is structured as a full sentence.

Example A: He's not really addressing her argument (she insisted that the situations were different, warranting different treatment).

Of course, proper nouns are an exception.

Example B: Sarah, Jenn, and Kenaia (Jenn's sister-in-law) drove up together.

If the parentheses are **situated separately from the sentence**, normal sentence punctuation is used.

Example C: He's not really addressing her argument. (Or maybe he just doesn't want to admit he's wrong.)

What about multiple sentences enclosed within parentheses? If you can avoid it, don't include them within another sentence.

Example D (incorrect—or just awkward): I passed the ice cream truck on the way home (as always, it was surrounded by customers. It's really an excellent business model) but continued on my way.

In the above, it's hard to determine which sentence should be capitalized, which should get a period, and how you make the two sentences line up with established punctuation norms. That's why in most cases it's best to rewrite:

Example D (rewritten): I passed the ice cream truck on the way home (as always, it was surrounded by customers; it's really an excellent business model) but continued on my way.

Example D (rewritten): I passed the ice cream truck on the way home but continued on my way. (As always, it was surrounded by customers. It's really an excellent business model.)

In editing, I don't often like to say never, and sometimes applying this preference gets fuzzy in fiction, particularly with short, question-type parentheticals. In cases like Example E below, separating the questions with a comma wouldn't create the same tone as using question marks. My strategy—and one I've seen used elsewhere—

would be to use the question marks and eschew capitalization altogether. Can you see the following construction fitting in, say, a Young Adult novel?

Example E: I don't know what to ask him (why? how? when?), and I'm not sure I'd understand his answer, either.

Punctuation

Punctuation that belongs in the parentheses stays between the parentheses—obviously.

Example G: I didn't think we'd ever met before (had we?), but she seemed to think otherwise.

But what about punctuation belonging to the surrounding text?

The key here is to treat the parentheses (and the text between them) as one unit *with whatever they're clarifying or explaining*. Therefore, commas and periods and other punctuation that would follow a word normally must follow the entire unit, or word + parentheses.

Example F (incorrect): She submitted her assignment, (which was a redo) her essay, and her final project in the same week.

Example F (corrected): She submitted her assignment (which was a redo), her essay, and her final project in the same week.

The same applies when a parenthetical follows a phrase or thought or concept:

Example G (incorrect): I had expected some argument, (he was, after all, the child of two lawyers) but he agreed to my terms quite readily.

Example G (corrected): I had expected some argument (he was, after all, the child of two lawyers), but he agreed to my terms quite readily.

And watch for double commas, a common error when we try to break the rule and keep it too:

Example H (incorrect): She'd told me that a hundred times, (okay, maybe more like ten), but I kept forgetting.

Example H (corrected): She'd told me that a hundred times (okay, maybe more like ten), but I kept forgetting.

That's the basics on parentheses, but don't forget that capitalizing and punctuating parentheticals correctly isn't the whole story. As I showed last week, too many parentheticals (even done well) can be altogether too much of a good thing. Use like a good seasoning—just the right amount, and suited to whatever you're preparing.

Christina M. Frey is a book editor, literary coach, and lover of great writing. For more tips and techniques for your toolbox, follow her on Twitter (@turntopage2) or visit her [blog](#).

Music Review

Yes We Mystic

Samantha Stevens



Band: Yes We Mystic

Album: *Forgiver*

Rules are made to be broken. At least, that seems to be the motto of Winnipeg's orchestral rock group, Yes We Mystic,' while composing their latest album *Forgiver*. Full of genre-busting and rule-breaking musical compositions and melodies, the tunes on *Forgiver* are unique, imaginative, and beautifully odd.

Formed in 2011, musicians Adam Fuhr, Keegan Steele, Jodi Plenert, Jordon Ottenson, and Eric Ross came together to create Yes We Mystic. Their latest album, *Forgiver*, was released April 29th and has been met with a great deal of praise. Laura Stanley of Exclaim! writes that "*Forgiver* an utterly enthralling listen." And the single from the album "Undertow" secured 29th place on CBC Radio-3's top 30 songs for the week of July 18. Recorded in just three weeks with

"legendary Canadian producer Jace Lasek" (<http://yeswemystic.com/about/>), the songs on *Forgiver* bring to mind a mash-up between Elbow and Coldplay. All of the arrangements were compiled by the band members, with the exception of "Monument", which includes a string arrangement by Mamoru Kobayakawa.

The melodies are melodramatic with a gradual build to an inevitable climax that explodes with an air of elaborate grandeur. The album's overall theme, forgiveness, is intensified by the intricate interplay between orchestral instruments, conventional vocals, and boundary busting arrangements. Each song features several layers of sounds, which means that, at times, the music deviates from the normal and can become confusing. However, amidst the chaos, there is a subtle beauty, an elusive elegance that Yes We Mystic was able to tap into. Given the album's theme of forgiveness, a convoluted phenomenon of everyday life, this mixing of tones, harmonies, and melodies is a perfect fit.

But the album is not totally melancholy, focusing solely on the struggles of forgiveness. Thanks to the poetic lyrics, lulling vocals, and soothing tones, there are also feelings of hope, renewal, and redemption woven deeply into each song. "Working for the Future in the Interlake" is especially uplifting with its slow crescendo and uplifting notes. "Born Into Language" is hypnotizing with its piano trill intro. Like watching birds fly across a rising sun as it peaks over the trees, there is a sense of wonder, beauty, and peace woven into the depths of the track.

Yes We Mystic seems to have wrapped up their touring for the summer, so keep an eye on their website for any upcoming dates. But, thankfully, *Forgiver* is widely available for purchase, which is great for listening to while reading, studying, or just simply relaxing.

Samantha Stevens is an aspiring writer who loves combining her love for literature with photography, painting, music, and all creative pursuits.

In Conversation with PISS-OFF!

Wanda Waterman



"PISS-OFF! wants to wet your pants and blow your mind. They combine powers to create noisy, jumping, dancing, screaming, bouncing, rap, punk, electronic, hardcore music. PISS-OFF! is the anti-band. They rock rap shows and turn avante-garde dance performances into dirty raves." - from the band's website

PISS-OFF! is the Brooklyn-based electro-hip-hop duo consisting of Anika Trujillo and Gumball Eyeball. They've just released their EP, *Perfect is for*

Remixes, made up of exciting remixes from their already exciting debut EP, *Perfect is for Amateurs*, and will be busy touring New York this fall. Recently they took the time to answer our questions about their weird past, their bizarre present, and their loud future.

Describe your musical backgrounds. What role did music play in your childhoods?

ANIKA: I used to remix and sing songs with my sisters, making up new words to any song on the radio; we would mostly sing about pee and farts.

DANIEL: I started banging on the piano at age six, then at age 12 I wanted to bang on the drums instead, but my parents were terrified of the noise. I'm still getting rid of that angst today.

Who had the most—and best—creative influence on you?

DANIEL: My DJ friends, who taught me that you can get a whole room to dance to the sound of cows mooing as long as there's a hot beat under it.

ANIKA: I had a big homie in my hometown who made me freestyle all the time; I was a budding teen so I evolved to rapped about girls, butts, and farts.

What was the most mesmerizing musical experience of your life?

ANIKA: Every single time I see a room full of people dancing my mind explodes, my heart rumbles, and I'm entranced. It never gets old.

DANIEL: When we dropped the bass in Cyberfrog on New Years Eve and everyone did the frog-squat dance.

Has anything funny or bizarre ever happened to you in a performance?

DANIEL: There were some moments when I toppled over from screaming too long, and a few bathroom-related accidents. I once walked in on a sound guy on the toilet before we went on stage, and then he cut our set short to get back at us!

ANIKA: One time a person ran up during our set, grabbed the mic and started to scream "I fucking love your music!" over and over until Daniel took the mic back to spit his verse.

You manage to make hip-hop musically ingenious while keeping the fun. How do you manage that? And how many of your fans can appreciate the musical innovations?

ANIKA: Daniel and I are really goofy; our fans know when they put on a PISS-OFF! song they're getting candy for their ears. You can't fake the funk—you must feel the flow.

DANIEL: Our fans need release and we deliver. We all love hip-hop, electronica, and punk, so I think folks were just waiting for some mad scientists like us to mix these things up.

According to an interview I read online, you experience an almost magical power when you play. Where do you think that comes from? And what does it do for you?

DANIEL: You must mean the power of the Techno Viking. I shake my fluorescent maraca while chanting his name, then that power infects me and I begin to rap in triplets.

ANIKA: So before moving to New York I was in an open field during a lightning storm; I was struck then passed out. When I came to a drum machine and a clean pair of underwear were next to me. I cherish both to this day.

How do you inspire DJ's to create such brilliant remixes of your music?

ANIKA: We bribed them with bottomless brunch mimosas and promises of fame.

DANIEL: We use a lot of dirty words so that they want to sample us. Plus, they know we'll never complain that the bass is too loud.

Is Brooklyn a creativity-enhancing city for you?

DANIEL: Yes. Creative people come to Brooklyn then fall into the Gowanus Canal and come out weird like we did.

ANIKA: YES. Brooklyn speaks to me. It says: Go hard or go home to the city you're from; you're driving rent up, gentrifying, and ordering too much take-out.

So far, what do you love best about the new EP? And what will you be calling it?

ANIKA: I love how different this is from recording traditionally; each remix is so fun and original. It doesn't get better than a dance remix of a dance song.

DANIEL: Collaborating with other DJs has been super fun. We eat pizza together and they do unexpected things to our recordings.

How did you come up with your band's name?

ANIKA: I am a sucker for a good sneak diss. PISS-OFF! fit like a glove.

DANIEL: It was while talking in British accents. Our rule is any time we're mad at each other we have to talk in an accent.

If your band's life were a movie, what kinds of scenes would make you laugh? Or cry?

DANIEL: I would have to die in a hail of bullets, then come back to life a la RoboCop. I would have a computerized voice that was completely monotone but I could use it to rap at superhuman speed.

ANIKA: After Daniel sacrifices his life in a hail of bullets I become the leader of the new free world. I have THE BEST inaugural parade. I get attacked by a computer virus, Daniel comes back to life as Robocop and challenges it to a battle. He outraps the virus and codes a program to trap it. We both air guitar as the credits roll.

What conditions do you require in your life in order to go on being creative?

DANIEL: A steady stream of iced coffee, followed by a nearby bathroom.

ANIKA: All the feels.

What do you feed your muse? Are there any books, films, or albums that have deeply influenced your development as an artist?

ANIKA: I start with real life in large healthy doses, 100% unfiltered. I also make sure to laugh maniacally every time I'm making a beat. If I don't go "Muwahahaha!" while making it, I don't use it.

DANIEL: Non-stop electronic music. My headphones are basically a pacemaker.

If you had an artistic mission statement, what would it be?

DANIEL: We want to wet your pants and blow your mind.

ANIKA: Perfect is for amateurs.

Do you feel that artists have an obligation to straighten the world out?

ANIKA: Artists should relate to the world through their creative lens, be 100%. Creative entrepreneurs should make smart business decisions; they are different but similar.

DANIEL: We aim for inclusion and positive, loving energy, and if you like us on Facebook we can advise you on who to vote for.

Tell us about your upcoming projects.

DANIEL: More drums, more bass, more yelling in your face!

ANIKA: Dance off those pants; just shake it loose. I know you can.

Do you have anything else to add?

ANIKA: We have a Northeast tour this fall, we have music, and we always have a good time. Come get some.

DANIEL: Visit <http://pissoff.nyc> to watch nutty videos, hear our music, learn about shows and discover our secret kinky chatroom.

Wanda also writes the blog The Mindful Bard: [The Care and Feeding of the Creative Self](#).



Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

Stripping the Argument

Dear Barb:

My boyfriend and I have been dating for three months. We get along pretty well and have a lot of fun together. Recently he's been talking about going to watch strippers. He even wants me to go with him to see them! To be honest I never really thought much about strippers, it's never come up in any other relationship. I haven't said anything yet, just kind of laughed when he said it. Since then he has brought it up a few times and he is serious, he really wants me to go with him. Also he admits that he goes by himself, which I was unaware of. The more I think about this the more it is bothering me. I really don't want to go watch naked women dancing around and I really don't want him going either. I don't know why he would want to do that when he has a girlfriend. It feels like a betrayal? Am I alone in my thinking? Help, Vicki

Hi Vicki,

Great question. Going to strip bars is basically a personal choice between you and your boyfriend, there is no right or wrong answer. Problems arise when one party wants to go and the other doesn't want them too. For example, if you are dead set against going to strip bars and you don't want your boyfriend going either, but he decides to go anyway, then there are obviously going to be problems. Going to see strippers creates an atmosphere that many people don't feel comfortable with. So don't think you are alone in your thinking. Thanks, Vickie.

Dear Barb:

My best friend and I had a big argument after she said some things which were very hurtful to me. We didn't speak for three months and recently she sent me a text and apologized for what she said. I accepted her apology, but now she wants me to apologize to her. I said I didn't do anything wrong and I don't think I should apologize. She said if I don't take ownership of my part of the argument, we can't have a relationship. I really like her, but I can't apologize for something I didn't do. Am I being stubborn? Stacy

Hey Stacy:

Great question! No I don't think you should apologize for something you didn't do, but you can apologize for the way this situation made your friend feel. For example, you can tell her you want to mend the relationship, and if she was hurt, that was not your intention. Your friend did make the first move and apologized to you and if the relationship is important to you, then you are going to have to meet her part way. It's rare that only one person is 100% at fault in a relationship, you may have said some things that hurt her but you didn't realize it at the time. Apologize and move forward. Thanks for taking the time to write Stacy.

Follow on Barb on Twitter @BarbGod

Email your questions to voice@voicemagazine.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality; your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.

OVERHEARD

Want to know
the kind of man that
makes me feel like a
real woman?



A STRONG man.
A man who takes
control.
A man who isn't afraid
to get a little rough.



I have one locked up
in my cellar right
now.



WRITTEN BY WANDA WATERMAN



This space is provided free to AUSU: The Voice does not create this content. Contact services@ausu.org with questions or comments about this page.

Year-Round Bursaries

AUSU offers a number of year-round bursaries for AUSU members who demonstrate financial need.

Computer Bursary - available to members that need a new computer for their AU course work. AUSU buys the computers directly (worth up to \$800 each) and has them delivered to the bursary recipients.

Emergency Bursary - to pay for AU course extensions or supplemental exams for members who require them due to unforeseen circumstances. AUSU pays AU directly for approved course extensions or supplemental exams.

Travel Bursary - for members who need to travel for their AU studies, such as to convocation, labs, exams, or practicums. Applicants must submit quotes for travel and/or accommodations, and AUSU pays for these directly up to a maximum of \$1000.



Qualifications: Applicants must be current AUSU members, and have completed a minimum of *12 AU credits with a minimum GPA of 2.0 (C grade) over the last *12 credits. Applicants will also be required to explain their financial situation and provide tax documents.

Find complete details or apply online [here](#).

IMPORTANT DATES

- **July 29:** August course extension deadline
- **Aug 4:** [AU Open House Webinar](#)
- **Aug 9:** AUSU Council Meeting (5:30pm MT)
- **Aug 10:** Deadline to register in a course starting Sep 1
- **Aug 15:** Sept degree requirements deadline
- **Aug 31:** September course extension deadline
- **Sept 6:** [AU Open House Webinar](#)

Fill out a Course Evaluation!

AUSU needs your input! We launched new online undergraduate course evaluations in September, and we need as many students as possible to fill out evaluations so our members can view the feedback!

Make note, these course evaluations are different than the ones sent out by AU. These evaluations can be accessed anytime, even after your course is completed. Your answers are completely confidential, and will be listed online so that other undergraduate students can get informed feedback about AU courses.

Fill out a course evaluation online [here](#).



AUSU Council Meeting

AUSU's next public council meeting is coming up on **August 9 at 5:30pm MDT**. The council meeting will be held by teleconference, and all members are welcome!

The agenda and teleconference info will be posted to our website [here](#) at least 3 business days prior to the meeting.

For the complete meeting package, just drop a line to services@ausu.org.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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www.voicemagazine.org

The Voice is published every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

Contact *The Voice* at voice@voicemagazine.org.

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