



THE VOICE

Vol 26 Issue 36 2018-09-14

Meeting the Minds

Talking with AU Educator's and Administration

Surviving School while Grieving

Informed by Experience

RateMyProfessors

What it Means for AU and You



Plus:

*Fly on the Wall: Back to School, AU Style
Apps Students Need, Part II
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

Meeting the Minds: *Pamela Hawranik* 4

Articles

Editorial: *Notwithstanding* 3

RateMyProfessors, AU and You 8

Surviving School while Grieving 12

Focussing on Options 19

Apps Every Student Should Have: *Part II* 22

Columns

The Fly on the Wall: *Back to School Inspiration* 10

Course Exam: *COMM 243* 14

The Fit Student: *Win Olympic Medals* 16

PorkPie Hat: *Cracked Wide Open* 18

The Creative Spark!: *Are you Self-Aware?*..... 20

Dear Barb: *When you are Between a Rock and a Hard Place*..... 24

News and Events

AU-Thentic Events 6

Scholarship of the Week..... 21

Student Sizzle 23

AUSU Update 26

Graphic

Poet Maeve: *Off to School*..... 25

The Voice Magazine

www.voicemagazine.org
301 Energy Square
10109 – 106 ST NW
Edmonton AB
T5J 3L7

Email

voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Jodi Campbell

Managing Editor

Karl Low

Regular Contributors

Barb Godin, Scott Jacobsen,
Carla Knipe, Barbara
Lehtiniemi, Tara Panrucker,
Deanna Roney, Wanda
Waterman, Xin Xu

Views and articles
presented here are those
of the contributors and do
not represent the views of
AUSU Student Council.

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

For weekly email reminders
as each issue is posted, fill
out the subscription form
[here](#).

The Voice does not share its
subscriber list with anyone.
Even I don't look at it, it's
all on auto.

Volume 26, Issue 35

© 2018 by The Voice
Magazine

ISSN 2561-3634

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and comments to 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 Notwithstanding

Karl Low



This week, our feature interview is with the Acting Associate Vice President for Research at AU, Dr. Pamela Hawranik. Scott Jacobsen talks to her about her background and about how AU might look at expanding research opportunities to undergraduate students.

I also want to draw your attention to Tara Panrucker's piece this week, as she recently experienced the loss of her mother, and has used that to write a piece that could be of help to other AU students. With the average AU student being somewhat older than those at traditional universities, this is no doubt a topic that far too many of us will have to face. Tara's article is both touching and provides some solid advice and information.

And Carla Knipe returns with her look at RateMyProfessor and the wider issue of how as AU students, while we have enormous freedom in how we take our courses, we have so little information or choice about who it is that will be advising or educating us through a specific course.

Getting away from The Voice for a moment however, the big news that is taking up all the air-time this week is Doug Ford's use of the Notwithstanding Clause to push through changes to the composition of Toronto's City Council during the current election.

Many seem to look at this through the lens of it being a good thing that someone is finally doing whatever it takes to just get things done, but I'm always leery of that approach. It's that kind of approach that leads, through the best of intentions, to corruption. It's always easier to govern a group of people if they don't know what you're doing and you don't need to pay attention to various checks and safeguards that have been set up, but just because something is easier doesn't make it better.

This applies whether we're talking about the government of the province or simply the government of a students' association. Whenever I've heard somebody say, "It's a good thing students don't know," my hackles rise. Yes, students or people can be terribly uninformed about what their governing bodies are doing, and sometimes that causes a level of reaction that really isn't warranted once the entire situation is known, but the moment we start thinking, "Oh, this makes our lives much easier," that's the time when we need to beware, because that's the point where it should be clear to us that we're putting our own judgement over that of those we are supposed to be representing. Will it be difficult to explain the full context to them? Maybe. But not giving them any opportunity to understand everything that's going on does them a disservice and chips away at our own integrity.

That's why other people are calling this action by Doug Ford the actions of a "tin-pot dictator", even though perfectly legal. Rather than doing things the hard way, appealing the judgement or delaying the change, Mr. Ford has decided that his own wisdom is simply superior to the laws that have been created for the province over generations. And perhaps he's even right about it, but the question must be asked, what if he's not?

Enjoy the read!

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

MEETING THE MINDS

INTERVIEWS with AU's EDUCATORS



Pamela Hawranik is the Acting Associate Vice President of Research for Athabasca University. She was previously the Dean of Graduate studies, and this week, Scott Jacobsen interviews her about her background, what she did there, and what's happening now.

So, tell us about yourself, where are you from and what drives you?

I was born and raised in a small town called Whitemouth in Eastern Manitoba. It had 300 or so people. It most likely has the same number of people now as when I left. My dad was born in Germany. He came over when he was 2-years-old. My mom was born in Canada. I went to a public consolidated school in Whitemouth. I participated in almost every sport and club. I wanted to keep busy.

I attended the University of Manitoba for my undergraduate degree in nursing and worked in public health in rural Manitoba for five and a half years after I graduated. Then I went back for my Master's in Nursing, also from the University of Manitoba. I

worked as a clinical nurse specialist in St. Boniface General Hospital in Winnipeg. It had the largest geriatric wing in Manitoba. I was there for a few years and then became an executive director for a community health organization.

I returned to the U of MB for my Ph.D. in the Faculty of Medicine in Community Health Sciences. I specialized in Gerontology and Health Policy and Evaluation. I became a professor at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Manitoba. For a while, I was Associate Dean within the Faculty of Nursing for the Graduate Programs. I was there for 16 years.

While at the U of MB, I was Associate Dean in the Faculty of Graduate Studies. I oversaw the development of new innovative programs, program evaluations, and new projects across all the graduate degree programs.

Then an opportunity arose through AU. They were looking for a Dean of Graduate Studies. I was successful in attaining that position and so moved to Alberta. That was 10 years ago.

At that time, my husband was a practicing lawyer, had his own firm, and, as well, was a member of the Legislative Assembly in Manitoba. He ran for election and had won three elections. He was an MLA for 9 years. He finished his term and had to sell his law practice and building prior to relocating to Alberta. That was two or two and a half years after my moving here to Alberta.

We have two daughters and four grandchildren. One daughter still lives in Manitoba. The other is in Calgary. One of the activities that my husband and I did that we are very proud of was the

creation of a food bank outside of an urban centre. This was in 1991. At that time, the Chretien government was in power and pledged to reduce and eliminate poverty in Canada.

We were on holidays visiting my husband's brother in California. We went to the shopping center to buy some snacks. There was this woman with a sign saying, "Will work for food." That was the first time that it alerted me to the fact that, "Hey, there are people who are struggling to for basics such as food." Both of use were shocked and dismayed at how ignorant we had been.

When we returned to Manitoba, we started to gather some stats. And yes, poverty existed with people living considerably below the poverty line for significant lengths of time. There had been food banks started in major centres with one in Winnipeg called Winnipeg Harvest. Rural areas tended to be ignored. People seemed to have the perception that rural people could grow their own food and that would sustain them. But a lot of people do not have gardens.

Rural areas tend to have lower incomes and poorer health status compared to people in urban areas. There is also a lack of access to healthcare. We started newspaper campaigns for about 6 to 8 months before the food bank opened its doors. It took a long time and a lot of work. Our daughters were small at that point. It took about eight months of publicity in the paper about poverty, in-person presentations on the need for a food bank, and to answer criticisms about providing food at no cost. We contacted groups such as the Co-Op, the hockey teams, the 4H clubs, the rural municipality, the town, and at least 40 other groups.

It became the first food bank outside a large urban center in Canada. Shortly after that, we received donations for the food and the equipment – e.g., freezers, tables, chairs, shelving, and so on. It was from individuals and groups. That food bank is still going. It is totally managed by volunteers. There are no paid staff. The food bank is totally supported by individuals and different organizations. it. Eventually, some of these groups started having food drives of their own, e.g. the cadets, the Co-Op store would have their own event each year. The community eventually adopted it.

After that, we were asked to help groups and share our policy manual with groups in other Canadian provinces who wanted to start a food bank We were nominated for and received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

Now, as the Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies at AU, how has this background in gerontology, in community care, in nursing, helped build toward this position done by you now?

The absolute and relative number of people aged 65 and over is increasing. By 2040, 20 to 25% of the population will be 65 and over. It has largely been a neglected area. It was an area that I enjoyed working in, when I was in public health and home care. I visited a lot of people in their home. They appreciated the home visit, the health teaching, and the informational resources that I had for them. So, I decided to continue in that area. Part of that influenced my work in the university, where I taught courses on gerontology and health promotion in older adults, I participated in the development of a gerontology course in the faculty. My main goal is to erase ageism and ageist views. I repeatedly tell students you can't assume that the pain, confusion, mobility problems, or vision problems are due to aging changes alone. Health and aging are very complex. Always look for a cause other than aging, because there will be other influencing factors besides aging, that can be treated or reduced.

Certainly, the work with people in AU graduate studies through supporting researchers working in that area has helped tremendously. I have been able to collaborate and work with them as a collaborator on some of the research done here. I am trying to increase the awareness of faculty and students in that area.

When you are working with researchers or mentoring them, what are you bearing in mind as a professional in terms of making the research go as well as possible and the guidance given through mentorship is appropriate for the individual for the research by them?

Partly, it is to find their goals and passion in the area of research. I work with students and some have not necessarily been in gerontology, but have been interested in multi-method research, research design, or research analysis. I look at their passion and goals.

Certainly, it is being available and answering their questions, whether contacting by email, phone, or person. Trying to be as helpful as possible and doing as much informal teaching as possible with them. Examples, from my experiences of different situations, of how I dealt with it, or how I could have dealt with it differently - looking at different situations over time.

When it comes to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and as the dean, what are some of the initiatives or updates happening in later 2018, early 2019? How can students who are undergraduates about to graduate and enter graduate studies bear some of these updates and initiatives in mind?

I was the inaugural dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. There was no website, no consistent regulations or guidelines across the faculties about how to select an advisor or guidelines for intellectual property. My experience from the U of MB and as a student guided me. I remembered my experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student and wanted to create a better experience for AU students. I like the atmosphere and the collegial relationships at AU, which encouraged me to create a student-friendly and student-focused FGS.

Certainly, another priority was making them aware of awards and encouraging them to apply. There are certain scholarships that cover their travel, supplies and equipment. We have to continually remind them of these awards/scholarships.

I established a committee of faculty members that can review the applications and critique them. We

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

City Wide Welcome - Edmonton

Sat, Sept 15, 12:00 to 3:00 pm MDT
Shaw Conference Centre, 9797 Jasper Avenue,
Hall D, Edmonton AB

In person

Hosted by AU, City of Edmonton, and 6 others

www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_schools_students_teachers/city-wide-welcome.aspx

Register online at above link

Star Party

Sat, Sept 15, 6:00 to 11:00 pm MDT
AU Central, 1 University Dr, ARC Building,
Athabasca AB

In person

Hosted by AU and The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada

www.eventbrite.ca/e/athabasca-university-star-party-tickets-48241583876

Register online at above link

Online MBA Application Workshop

Wed, Sept 19, 10:00 to 11:00 am MDT
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

<https://business.athabascau.ca/event-details/online-mba-executives-information-session-15/>

Register online at above link

An Introduction to Network Science

Wed, Sept 19, 2:00 to 3:00 pm MDT
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

fgs.athabascau.ca/news/presentations/
e-mail fgs@athabascau.ca with your student number to register

Nursing and Health Studies Library Orientation

Sat, Sept 22, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT
Online

Hosted by AU Library

library.athabascau.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration required

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

send them back to the students, so they can revise them and strengthen the applications to be competitive for a national award.

I started a graduate student conference. The conference is held annually and is co-sponsored by FGS and AUGSA. Students are strongly encouraged to submit an abstract, that is peer-reviewed before it is accepted. I wanted a conference that would be modelled after the professional disciplinary conference they would attend as a professional but would have a supportive environment with fellow students and faculty members. Because these abstracts are peer-reviewed, students have had them accepted at national and international conferences after that.

You may not know, but I am no longer dean for FGS but accepted the interim position as Associate Vice President at AU on July 1, 2018.

Congratulations! What are the tasks and responsibilities with the position?

There is less contact with students, which is disappointing, but there is still funding of student research. The main purpose is to increase research capacity in the faculty members and increase the success in research proposal submissions.

It is helping them get resources to write research grants. It is informing faculty of ways in which to include undergraduate and graduate students in their research. We are one of the four research intensive universities in Alberta and therefore research is a high priority.

Has there been discussion between different domains of undergraduate and graduate life of AU – so the more motivated students can begin to build the early research careers?

There has not been any consistent formal discussions about encouraging and incorporating opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students into research. We have the annual graduate student conference at which 2 years ago undergraduate students were invited to submit an abstract to present.

Discussion on the development of an Honours year in the undergraduate program would be another strategy to have students 'try out' a small research project. Greater advertising of the independent study or readings courses could be another avenue to introducing them to independent work.

Unfortunately, there are no awards for undergraduate students to present at conferences. Therefore, no incentive to cover their financial expenses to prepare a paper to present at a conference. Another possible opportunity is for undergraduate students to be hired as research assistants. I don't have any numbers whether undergrads have been hired in these positions.

When I took the initiative to seek out researching positions, people in the university were thrilled to see a student with an interest. I am sure there are other students with similar interests but how do we connect with them?

That is simply another big potential area to inform our undergraduate students, particularly the program ones about other research groups, because a lot of them do not know that it is available. AU is a very unique university. The staff really want to help students become successful and reduce/remove the barriers they may have to learning. We all know that having an education is one of the most valuable assets an individual can possess and is a major contributor to the health and quality of life of their family and their community.

Scott Douglas Jacobsen works with various organizations and runs In-Sight: Independent Interview-Based Journal and In-Sight Publishing.



RateMyProfessors, AU and You

Carla Knipe



From the moment they sign up for a course, AU students know they are in a unique learning situation compared to other university students because of the self-directed learning format. Even if they weren't familiar with it before, AU students discover that they alone are responsible for their learning—no falling asleep in the back of lecture halls for them! Although this promotes independence and ownership of the education, one drawback is that there is limited interaction between AU students and their tutors, particularly at the lower undergraduate level.

Athabasca University's anytime, anywhere format means that its students do not need to construct their own timetables when making their course selections. Beyond the course name and number, there is no juggling of schedules and figuring out which professor would be best for them to work with and which is to be avoided. As university costs rise, university students in general are adopting a more consumerist mindset and want to get the best value for money. This may mean seeking out the academics who will best support their needs. But in Athabasca's case, often it is a complete surprise which tutor a student is assigned. An even more baffling part of the AU student experience compared to that of other universities is that AU students often have no at-hand information about their tutors at all. There is the staff listing on the main AU website, and profiles on the department webpages, but the amount of detail is inconsistent. Students are often left completely in the dark about what their tutor looks like, what they are like as people or even what their voice sounds like. Students also don't often know what the academic specialty, background, or research interests of their tutors are, so the AU student experience seldom goes beyond submitting assignments through the Moodle portal and then receiving a grade with some written comments by their tutor in return.

Of course, some students prefer this anonymity, and, in turn, don't reveal a lot about themselves to their tutor. But for those that want to develop a bit of a rapport with their tutor there aren't many ways to do this. They can either resort to a bit of online stalking through social media or a Google search to find out something about the academics who will be helping them through the degree process. Or, they can use RateMyProfessors.com, a website that has become extremely popular over the past decade as a way for students to learn about and evaluate the quality of the education experience.

For those unfamiliar with the website, anyone can search for a university for ratings and comments about the general quality of education as well as search for those of a specific professor at that school. The ratings used to include a "chili pepper rating" for a professor's degree of hotness, but this was deemed inappropriate and irrelevant so was dropped.

While on the surface, RateMyProfessors (RMP) seems like a valuable tool for students to gain insight about what a prof is really like, anyone who has been involved with statistical research

knows that getting a truly a objective representative sample from a self-selected group is nearly impossible. In the case of RMP, the quality of the comments and ratings seem to fall in two main categories; those who hold a grudge against a prof because they may have been a tough marker or assigned a lot of work (or there was just a total personality clash), or those students who aced the course and want to curry favour with that person. Also, the ratings for many profs are based on a pitiful number of students who have taken the time to give a rating. Thus, a prof's positive or negative rating can be based on just a few reviews. This meagre sample is not enough to give any sort of accurate profile, and even though the site asserts that it is completely anonymous, the comments made by students may be deduced as coming from them. There are also issues of slander/libel and what damage that might cause a professor in the future.

On the other hand, because there are so few ways for students to publicly voice their opinion, websites such as RMP are often one of the only communication avenues available. The comments on RMP can serve as valuable insights into a professor's teaching style and way of working. There are of course social media forums such as Reddit and Facebook groups, but they are often based on mere anecdotes and opinion—not reflective of a large number of students. Many universities and colleges use some sort of internal student course satisfaction survey from students who have completed courses, but the results are rarely made public.

Because of AU's format, students are unable to even chat with each other at a student pub or meeting place and are left wondering if other students are experiencing the same thing they are going through with a particular course or tutor. AUSU provided its own form of course evaluations by students but they were discontinued because student response was poor and they were often confused with AU's own internal evaluations.

I asked on the unofficial AU Facebook page about whether AU students value websites such as RMP. I received some surprising feedback. Several students that they hadn't even heard of ratings websites such as RateMyProfessors. Among those that had, they said that RMP is of little value to them.

The issue of RateMyProfessors and the student experience at Athabasca brings to light a larger issue: one of communication between students, teaching faculty, and AU's staff and administration. Even though learning at AU is done primarily through the internet, arguably the world's largest communication tool, AU is failing to achieve a real connection between the hubs that make up its community. As discussed in the August, 2018, AUSU monthly meeting (as well as AUSU's recent in-person meet and greet events) the issue of communication and improving the student experience has been noticed by AU administration and is a key area for discussion in AU's proposed learning framework. A summary of this framework is detailed in [the ImaginePlan document](#).

The task to revamp AU's best practices to decide how it will execute its programs and services in the future is huge. The framework is just beginning to be rolled out and the consultation process is also just starting with AU stakeholders. More details will emerge as the process gets underway.

But this engagement process by AU will only be as effective as its communication. It remains to be seen whether current AU students—as well as alumni—are invited to share their experiences and how they will be allowed to do that. The process will also only be as valuable as the level that the AU takes on board the recommendations and suggestions made through the process to improve the overall learning experience at AU. Until this happens, students are left with few platforms other than Facebook and RateMyProfessors to share their views.

Carla is an AU student who lives and writes in Calgary, Alberta. Say "hi" to her on Twitter @LunchBuster.



The Fly on the Wall

Back to School Inspiration—Athabasca Style!

Jason Sullivan



“Ok, listen up! Everyone take off their shoes and put them on the table.” Are we in a post 9/11 airport? Nope, it's the first day of art class and the student body is being asked as one to draw their own shoe. Inspiration drains away like chlorophyll from autumn leaves with the forced return of students to the flattening malaise of rigour and ritual wrought by institutionalized education. We AU savants aren't immune to the busywork of courses but at least we do it how, when, and where we want. We may miss out on personal interactions with course-mates but at least we learn in our own way; it helps to remember

the tension and challenges that we are liberated from as we return to, or continue, our distance education this fall.

A peculiar energy envelops students during their first moments in a new classroom, like being plunked into a hive of bees only to realize that we're all bees too. So much uncertainty! What will the instructor be like: strict, strident, charismatic? And what of the other students; will they be friends, bullies, soul mates? At AU we generally miss out on the concrete tangible components of classroom life. Yet, our inspiration is intact and even expanded because we are *here* in our cyber classroom largely of our own volition. Our freedom of choice has brought us back to school in a special way; being *at* AU can be like having a secret agent identity or inhabiting an alternate universe. Social circumstances fall away and we learn face to face with the material; the personality of our tutor matters less than their efficacy in assisting our process.

As such, back to school sensations do exist in a distance setting. Many courses mandatory to complete our major can be pretty intimidating. And there's no study buddy sitting with us to compare notes or maybe even to copy answers from. What we get from AU is pretty much what we put in; it all falls to us.

Martin Heidegger utilizes the term *verfallen* as a way of thinking of cause and effect: effects fall from causes such as for our graduation to fall into place we must take various core courses; our success falls from applying ourselves and leads to the effect of success. We stand and fall on our own at AU. In this way, for Heidegger, living authentically sounds very much like being a distance student. He uses the term *Das Man* ("The They") to refer to the socio-cultural superstructure in which we are embedded in brick and mortar educational settings.

“It is the-they which informs us, implicitly or explicitly, what is to be done and how it is to be done. The influence of the-they comes through (or is disclosed) when Dasein does what one does, such as when a workman hammers the way one hammers; or when a person drinks tea the way one drinks tea; or when somebody is shocked, delighted or appalled by what one is shocked, delighted, appalled by. Yet to act merely by virtue of the perceived injunctions of the-they runs the risk of what Heidegger calls ‘inauthenticity’ (Uneigentlich).” (Royle).

Classrooms being the pressure cookers they are, we at AU may benefit from the absence of *Das Man*. Things that seem to matter in a classroom (fashion, television shows, tech gadgets) easily take on a life of their own and can lead us away from seeing the big picture of our own academic inspiration as it unfolds. This ubiquitous *The They* can insidiously enter every fibre of our being.

Collective social environments bring further challenges. Certainly, classrooms can at times feel a bit like noxious war zones. With this in mind we might recall the Canadian folk singer Buffy St Marie who once decried the tendency of people to join wars en masse. She sang:

"he knows he shouldn't kill and he knows he always will kill

You'll for me my friend and me for you" (St. Marie).

School cliques and in-groups with their conflicts and peer pressure have these elements, but happily AU allows our return to school to remain focused on academic matters. We do still have to manage our personal lives, but we typically have more control over those since we choose who constitutes our friend group and family unit. If we don't like someone it doesn't have to be a battle; they can be unfriended and ignored rather than seen in class for the rest of a semester. In my experience online forums have been respectful, caring, and not fraught with the drama of more traditional settings. After all, we're here to learn and glean wisdom from one another at AU!

The proverbial violence of classroom relations can also be tinged with power because of group-think. When most or all students have a particular political or social view, such as dominate in disciplines ranging from physics to psychology, it can be difficult to chart an independent or creative course. The weight of convention easily breeds conformity and the overarching power of *The They* translates into a powerful *We*. Perhaps a certain nursery rhyme (twisted Fly on the Wall-style) applies:

"This little pronoun went to market

This little pronoun stayed home

This little pronoun had roast beef, this little pronoun had none.

And this little pronoun went WE WE WE all the way home"

Preoccupation with what others think (*the We* if you will) and what constitutes a socially approved *right answer* can make classroom courses an exercise less in learning new things than in learning how to demonstrate fidelity to the professor's viewpoint, or the classroom consensus, or both. As the old farming phrase goes *the tallest weed in the field is always the first to be hacked down*. Sometimes, in a typical classroom, it doesn't pay to express our true beliefs on a given topic, but at AU we can write our essays and interact with our tutors free of the peanut gallery of our peers.

Forums are similar: others are willing to hear differing viewpoints and, even if not in agreement, we all have bigger fish to fry than engaging in egoistic peeing-matches so notorious in classroom settings dominated by a few loudmouths. In our forums, students are respectful and earnest rather than *playing to an audience*. This may be because the key audience we are trying to impress and gain respect from is ourselves and our future selves who we wish to become as we proceed through our educational journey.

But is it all serious pedagogical business during back to school season? By some accounts school is supposed to be fun! But not so fast; years ago a first-year sociology course I took began with us all reading an essay titled something like *having fun as a social problem*. Even fun can be problematic in school, such as during music appreciation at the primary level, where students are expected to participate and *do the actions*. In these settings being a part of the group is rigidly

enforced, such as when a song like Sharon Lois and Brahm's 'Skinnamarinky Dinky Dink' is played on the stereo. Like the 'Macarena' at a high school dance, non-participants may be singled out for ridicule or chastisement. Or they may be implored to join in and *just have fun* or *just be happy*.

The fact is, not everyone has fun performing asinine dance moves or actions and here AU allows us to say *Skiddery don't you dare*. No one minds if we don't dance because we're here to learn and that's fun in itself! Likewise, we don't all have to engage in identical learning techniques like drawing our shoe. We can tailor our learning to our personal abilities and take advantage of what makes us effective; if it's a shoe we must do, it can be anytime and anyplace...maybe while autumn camping next to a roaring fire! As we've seen, back to school Athabasca-style turns up the good and down the lame for distance students who would rather focus on their studies than the vicissitudes of classroom interaction. And if we do decide to dance, we can do it to our own drum because it's as though no one is watching, or, at least, not a group of judgemental peers.

References

- 'Head Shoulders Knees and Toes and Other Action Rhymes'. (2002). Mother Goose. Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46943/this-little-piggy>
- Royle, A. (2018). 'Heidegger's Ways of Being'. Philosophy Now Retrieved from https://philosophynow.org/issues/125/Heideggers_Ways_of_Being
- Sharon, Lois & Brahm. (1978). 'Skinnamarink'. Metrolyrics. Retrieved from <http://www.metrolyrics.com/skinamarink-lyrics-sharon-lois-bram.html>
- St. Marie, B. (1964). 'Universal Soldier'. Metrolyrics. Retrieved from <http://www.metrolyrics.com/universal-soldier-lyrics-buffy-sainte-marie.html>

Jason Hazel-rah Sullivan is a Masters of Integrated Studies student who loves engaging in discourse while working in the sunny orchards and forests of the Okanagan.



Surviving School While Grieving

Tara Panrucker



I've always aimed to keep things upbeat in my writing, with the added goal of offering helpful information. I guess I always wished I'd had a mentor myself. So I fulfilled it with writing—in the hopes I could help someone out there with their life struggles.

My mom died at the end of August and I am struggling to find any meaning whatsoever in anything right now. I know, death is inevitable, we all die, the circle of life, and all that. That does not invalidate the intolerable, unbearable, bone-crushing pain of losing your touchstone and best

friend for the last 49 years. That is what my lovely Mom was to me, and I cannot conceive of not

hearing her voice over the phone any old time I feel like, or never feeling her warm presence again.

Day to day living is challenging enough while stricken with grief. Indeed, showering, getting out of bed, or eating anything can seem an unmanageable task when it feels like a 1000-pound weight of sorrow is pressed upon your chest. And focusing on university school work can seem insurmountable after losing a person who was close.

Everyone deals with grief differently. Some people who cannot deal with it, period, will avoid you like the plague. The best advice I can give is to keep those people close at hand who have experienced loss themselves and are reaching out to you. Let them surround you with words of comfort and compassion, even if it doesn't alleviate any of your pain. People do care about you and want to help, even if it's just an emoji hug.

Depending on your situation, you may be exhausted from caring for the ailing loved one you just lost, feeling guilty because you weren't able to spend more time with them due to school work, or in shock because of a sudden death. Check your university's bereavement policy to find out your options. Some people require a few weeks off to grieve; some people need an entire year. Everyone reacts differently to grief and there are no rules. Do whatever is best for you. Losing a loved one is a crisis and if you're an Athabasca student in need of help, go to http://counselling.athabascau.ca/student_support.php.

Academic pressures can make dealing with grief hard to face with resilience, particularly if you do not have empathetic support from family or friends. If you decide to continue with your studies, a routine may help provide structure and relief from your grief. Some heal best by maintaining their studies, and that is okay. Perhaps at some point, you can benefit others with their grief by applying your grief experience in your schoolwork.

Expect a range of emotions and remember none of them are wrong. I've experienced severe nausea, numbness, nightmares, and tears that never seem to end. Most of these things are just easier for me to experience alone because they make other people uncomfortable and being around those people makes me feel like I'm not handling grief as capably as I should. Get rid of the idea of any "should" when you're grieving.

While you may not have an appetite, or, alternatively, find yourself voraciously hungry for unhealthy foods, try your best to maintain a healthy diet and avoid consuming drugs and alcohol to numb the sorrow. While prescription drugs can provide temporary relief from the pain, becoming addicted will only cause further burdens to you down the road, and impair your ability to study and concentrate.

Coping with grief is not something you should undertake alone but withdrawing from social activities when you are weighted by sadness is completely natural. Expecting yourself to be cheerful for others after devastating loss is not realistic. It's good to reflect about your loss, remember better times with your loved one, and let yourself feel the sadness and grief that show up. You may need to ask for an extension on courses so you can take time off to grieve and heal. Contact your university as soon as possible so your course work doesn't suffer—it will still be there when you are ready.

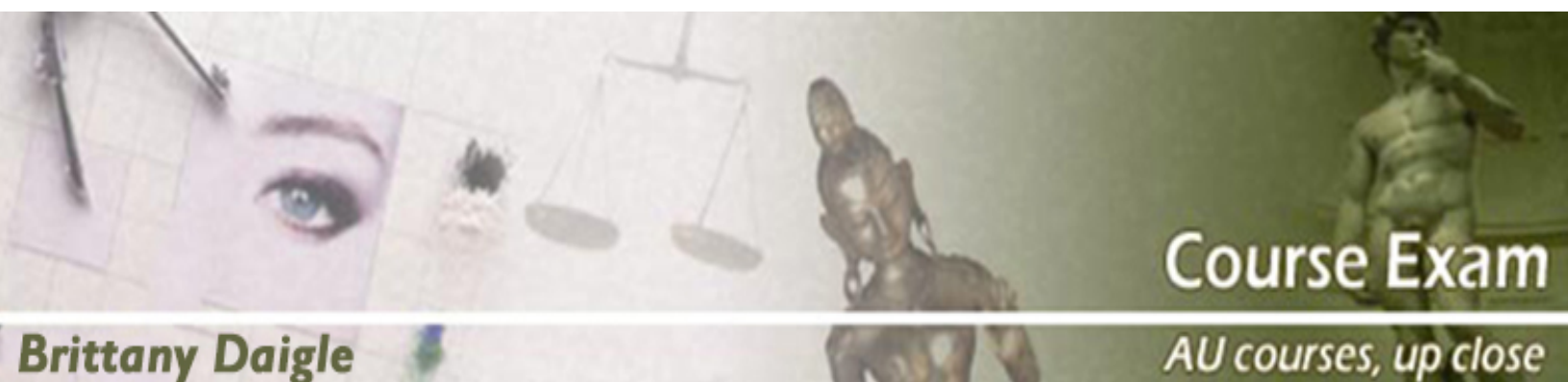
Try not to make hasty decisions like dropping all your courses without speaking to an advisor. Grief makes it difficult to make any clear choices. Seek the help you need, talk to friends, talk to your family.

After the death of my Mom I was responsible for writing her eulogy and making a photo collage celebrating her life. Avoiding any of these tasks due to emotional pain would have deprived me of the grieving process. I also wanted to honour her and the impact her humble life made on those who knew her. Drop unnecessary activities and make time for what you need. Indeed, you may go months without social outings and gym visits. It's okay. You can return after you've had time. Discovering a creative way to honour your lost loved one in art or school assignments can be of comfort, and also help others to understand the enormity of your loss.

By far, this article was the most helpful to me after the loss of my Mom, Christy writes authentically about her grief, and that is the most helpful to anyone suffering from the painful loss of a loved one.

Grief is inevitable when you lose someone you cherish. It is proof of how much you cared for that person, and it honours a relationship that affected your life deeply and meaningfully. Be gentle with yourself, find a compassionate ear, don't suffer in silence, and don't judge yourself for how you're dealing (or not) with grief and schoolwork.

Tara Panrucker lives on Vancouver Island and is seeking a General Arts Degree at AU.



Brittany Daigle

Course Exam

COMM 243 (Interpersonal Communication)

Course Exam

AU courses, up close

Brittany Daigle

COMM 243 (Interpersonal Communication) is a three-credit business and administrative studies course that teaches students all about strengthening their interpersonal communication skills. These skills can improve social relations at home with your family, with your friends, in the office with coworkers, or at social functions. This course has no prerequisites and has a challenge for credit option if that is of interest to you.

Interpersonal Communication is made up of ten lessons, two assignments weighing twenty-five percent, one collaborative learning activity (an online forum) worth ten percent, lesson quizzes weighing ten percent, and a final examination worth thirty percent. The ten lessons within this course cover topics such as perception, emotions, listening, communication, identity, nonverbal communication, and managing interpersonal conflicts.

To receive credit for COMM 243 students must complete two written assignments and two online commentaries, achieve a minimum grade of fifty percent on the final examination, and achieve an overall grade of at least fifty percent in the entire course. Students should note that quizzes

that are not submitted for evaluation will receive a grade of zero percent. Completing all ten lesson quizzes will ensure that you receive the highest possible overall grade. Also, all examinations for this course are taken online and must be taken at an invigilated location.

Dr. Pierre Wilhelm joined Athabasca University's Faculty of Business in 2001 after completing a PhD program in Mass Communication at the University of Alabama. He states, "I am a course coordinator at the Faculty of Business, Athabasca University where I have taught the undergraduate business communication course in this institution for seventeen years. During this period of time, I have come to appreciate the many challenges that Athabasca University students face as they complete this course. Learning at a distance can be a trying experience because it requires that a student follow a self-paced schedule and manage their course time. They must complete demanding course readings and learning activities while balancing other responsibilities such as working full-time and looking after family members."

He continues, "I oversee four communication courses that a number of instructors teach online under my direction. Students in this course are regrouped into 'blocks' or units of students overseen by an academic expert. Like these instructors, I too teach to a particular group of students and communicate with them on a continuous basis while I grade their papers and exams over their six-month long course term. My administrative responsibilities extend to supervising AU students registered in four communication courses under my watch: COMM 243 – Interpersonal Communication; COMM 277 (Group Communication), COMM 329 (Mediated Interpersonal Communication), and ADMN 233 (Writing in Organizations)."

If you are interested in learning more about ADMN 233, read my [Course Exam Article!](#)

Dr. Wilhelm states that COMM 243 "introduces students to the challenges and rewards of interacting with others. After completing this course, these course participants should be able to think as astute observers of communication problems. They should act as effective communicators and be able to provide sound advice about ways to improve communication outcomes. Course readings and learning activities provide them a broad critical context from which to learn to evaluate communication problems."

He continues, "COMM 243 lessons and assignments are video-based to help students situate communication problems in various social contexts, notably in the workplace. Video scenarios generally demonstrate how people often misunderstand each other and how they practice poor communication skills leading them to experience misunderstandings and situations of conflict. Students are asked to assess these communication problems by referring to particular communication skills, concepts and examples taught in course lesson. They are required to evaluate the problems they view from a critical perspective and to provide others insight into these problems."

"COMM 243 offers students a chance to practice assessing video characters' poor communication skills in order to learn how to relate to course teachings to communication problems they experience on a relation level with family members, in the office with colleagues, or at social functions among people with whom they may not necessarily be familiar. Students taking COMM 243 must learn to provide advice in writing about ways to avoid interpersonal differences, and they must also learn to prescribe ways to resolve differences in a way that is satisfactory to others. Students must learn to practice this type of evidence-based, reflective writing in order to become effective communication observers, practitioners and advisers. This skill takes time and effort to practice and learn. Students should set aside the time necessary to complete course readings and assignments as well as to prepare to write a final exam."

Dr. Wilhelm notes that COMM 243 is well-suited for “students of communication, psychology, health and nursing, and organizational behaviour who are interested in acquiring a better understanding about resolving interpersonal misunderstandings, misperceptions and disputes. The insight that communication students gain in this course by practicing lesson and assignment activities should transfer well to the workplace and to other social settings. They may encounter similar ‘real-world’ communication problems outside of the course where they may need to defuse or resolve them effectively.”

As for which aspects of COMM 243 are the most difficult to comprehend, he states “One of the hardest skills to acquire in this course is that of progressing from writing descriptively about communication problems to writing analytically and reflectively. Many students focus their attention on interpersonal problems they see playing out onscreen. Yet, they also need to spend time observing, pondering and writing about the poor communication skills that the movie characters exemplify in a particular movie scenario. In their written analyses about communication problems, they should learn to explain how these characters’ lack of effective communication skills or their poor attitudes toward one another in a particular movie scene helps shape and determine a particular poor communication outcome.”

He concludes, “Furthermore, to effectively address communication issues raised in this course, a COMM 243 student must not only demonstrate how the problems depicted in videos not only exemplify the concepts, skills and other knowledge students acquire in this course. In their written discussions about a particular communication problem, students should be ready to explain how this relates to their own experience in a way that helps make sense of a particularly difficult relational problem a student has experienced in the past.”

Whether COMM 243 is a degree requirement of yours or if the topics above are of interest to you, this course will have students learning valuable interpersonal communication skills!

Brittany Daigle is 22 years old and completing her BSc in Computing Science & Information Systems with AU from Toronto, Ontario.



The Fit Student Win Olympic Medals

Marie Well

Would you froth if you won an Olympic medal? Well, you could score gold—in another lifetime. Believers in rebirth say wisdom from this lifetime carries over into the next. So, wise-up with sports primers and old-timer teams. Yes, you could win an Olympics, if not this life, then maybe the next. I study sports rules for that very reason. Seriously.

It’s because I had the worst friends in grade seven. My friends tortured me, plastering clown makeup on my face before school. So, I asked my step dad how I could grow popular. He (a sports fanatic) said join sports teams. When I asked which one, he said join them all. So, I did. Each year, I won most improved player for most every team. By grade nine, I won the bronze

medal for top female athlete. Best of all, I made great friends and raised my grades to the mid-nineties.

If blessed with height, I might've tried out for high school sports. If so, I would've scored sky-high grades and bonded with better buddies. But, much later, in my mid-30s, I joined my university's wrestling team. I stood a wee chance of competing in an Olympics. After all, the coach groomed umpteen Olympians. But my dreams dashed away when an Olympian sprained my sternum and tagged me too old and too brittle to play.

To this day, I awaken from dreams of winning most valuable player in hockey, basketball, and football. But in these dreams, I often find myself lost or late when seeking the team tryout fields.

A soccer primer for kids will surely bolster our sports know-how. And any know-how leaves "impressions" in the brain that transcend lifetimes, says the Dalai Lama. Plus, with soccer skills, you can join teams, slim down, and have fun. Andrew Latham boost our soccer skills in his book *Soccer Smarts for Kids: 60 Skills, Strategies, & Secrets*:

- How do you score goals? Just kick the ball: "Be confident and take a risk. If you don't try a shot, you definitely won't score a goal. The worst thing that can happen is that you might miss. The best thing is that you score a goal that helps your team" (p. 52, 33%).
- But kick the ball in the goal sweet spots: "The two best places to put the ball are low in the corners of the goal or high in the corners of the goal. If the ball goes between the knees and shoulders of the keeper, there is more chance it will be saved" (p. 45, 28%).
- Don't just use your feet. Use the total bod: "Using different part of the body to control the ball is something good players appear to do naturally" (p. 24, 18%). "When it comes toward you between your feet and head, there are two body parts you can use to control the ball: your thigh and your chest" (p. 24, 18%).
- And stand like a duck sans quack: "When you receive the pass, start on your toes with your left foot pointing at ten o'clock and your right foot pointing at two o'clock. This will help you receive the ball with either foot and give you more options for your first touch" p. 21, 16%).
- And do the shoulders: "As the ball is coming to you ... instead of having your hips both face the player who is passing you the ball, move one of your feet back so one of your shoulders is pointing in the direction the ball is coming and the other shoulder is pointing in the opposite direction" (p. 22, 17%).
- Best of all, win the World Cup: "If you have passion for soccer and enjoy it, you'll be able to enjoy playing throughout your lifetime. You may even make it to the World Cup" (p. 10, 10%).

A mom I met spent her paychecks on her girls' pro gymnastics. While both daughters were skilled, one had the size to compete at the Olympics. But the mom gave her girls a choice: Olympic-train or world-travel. The daughters chose world-travel.

If you've got the Olympian knack, don't spin sick on Disneyland Dumbo rides. Go to the Olympics! *Sheesh!*



Porkpie Hat Cracked Wide Open

Darjeeling Jones



Picture taken at MOCO Amsterdam
Museum, art by Icy and Sot

“Kids think with their brains cracked wide open; becoming an adult, I’ve decided, is only a slow sewing shut.”

- Jodi Picoult

There is a place on the borderlands of our consciousness, where the great beasts of human inventiveness—human potential—frolic and prowl. It is the realm where art and science, left brain attention to detail and right brain inspiration, are inextricably fused. Perhaps it is that “savage place...holy and enchanted,” described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his enigmatic poem “Kubla Khan”. The place where he found himself midst laudanum-fueled delirium, and to which he longed to return. A land filled with wonders; the wild, lonely realm where Albert Einstein and Frida Kahlo wandered freely. Walking in such a place, looking out at the awe-inspiring vistas, breathing in the richly perfumed air, what spores might insinuate themselves into the hemispheres of your brain? Would you catch glimpses of the ghosts of the great navigators and explorers who had left their footprints there? William Shakespeare, Leonardo da Vinci, J.S. Bach, Marie Curie, Stanley Kubrick, Miles Davis, Georgia O’Keefe, Billie Holiday. There are many who have passed through those gates, yet still far too few.

Children, I believe, travel more lightly and easily into that world of inspiration and imagination. Before we are taught otherwise, we are all born explorers, born navigators, artists, scientists, poets, philosophers. At what point, I wonder, do so many of us lose that gift of the wild, unfettered mind. At what point do we learn and accept our “limitations”?

As a teacher, I worry that the institutions whose purpose is to educate our children, and young adults too often take part in what Picoult in the above quote describes as the “slow sewing shut.” Too often, we are concerned with a process of socializing and creating mediocre citizens who conform to outdated norms of right-thinking and obedience to the status quo. Too often, joy, energy, curiosity, and wonder are stamped out by the clumsy boots of bureaucratic institutions, as if they were stray sparks that have landed on the precious Persian carpet of our accepted values. Some of this is clearly by design. Some of it is purely a result of systemic inadequacies. Either way, it keeps many of the brightest and the best from achieving, or even getting a sense of, their full potential.

It seems to me that if we are to survive and thrive as a species, we must find a way to unlock that portal into a world of unlimited possibilities, allowing more and more of humanity to pass through. It truly feels as though we are in dire times, on the brink of so many potential disasters. Now, more than ever, we need to weld together inspiration and practicality. We need to free our minds of self-defeating limitations and binary ways of seeing the world. We need to find solutions that bring together heart and soul, brain and body. We need to push forward to the edge of that great continent of human potential. We need to find the uncharted ocean there, dive

into the intermingled currents of surrealism and science, poetry and mechanics, spirituality and physics, and break surface once more with some pearls of elegant understanding. It is the only way we might save ourselves.

It is treacherous water, though, when we've been taught to believe we are not able to swim. Perhaps, if we do our jobs well as parents and educators, future generations just might see that enchanted place as their homeland—and migrate more freely.



Focussing on Options

Deanna Roney



Being focused is great. Determination to find your way on a path, also great—and necessary. But it is important to keep an open mind as you work toward a goal—to allow yourself room to grow and to grant yourself permission to change that goal.

This was something I did, for the first time, throughout my undergrad degree. A question I was frequently asked was “what are you going to do with it?” The more I was asked, the more I was okay with saying, “I don’t know yet, one step at a time.” And, I didn’t know. I knew I wanted something more, and I knew this

degree was a step closer to whatever that *more* might be. I knew a few things that definitely were not the *more* I was after, but even then I didn’t close the door until I took a course and really tested myself in that environment first.

I found it extremely beneficial to keep my options open, and, after a time, I grew more comfortable with admitting I didn’t know. Working through the degree this way, I found career options that I didn’t know existed. I took courses that forever changed my perspective on the world and how I view things, and these have inspired me to be better and to create narratives around them. These courses, that originally felt unrelated to one of my possible dreams have, in the end, played a vital role, and had I not given myself grace to keep an open mind I would not have taken them. I don’t know where I would be now, had I been too focused on one of the possible dreams.

This lesson is one that I have taken with me beyond the degree. Even now as I work toward a goal I keep my options open.

The truth is, sometimes what a career is in our minds, even after plenty of research, is not always the reality. We need to grant ourselves permission to see that and re-evaluate where we want to end up. We should never stay on a path if it isn’t what we want just because we have worked so hard to get there. But, that does not mean the effort was in vain. Every step forward we take is shaping us, guiding us to where we are happy. And sometimes the career isn’t exactly what we thought, but we still push forward and learn as much as we can and it is still where we want to be.

Whatever stage we are at, there is always room for growth and change. Regardless of where you are in a degree or a career, if you have an opportunity to try something new—if it is something you want to seek out, then you should never feel that by doing it you are throwing away any work you have put in. Instead, it is a chance to make that work pay off, even more than you may have ever thought possible.

AU taught me a lot of things, the courses, the connections, everything pushed me to be better—pushed me to seek further, and to strive for what I want. To never settle. But, it also taught me to keep my options open—to never put the blinders on and, while working forward, never be afraid to take the trail that looks like it might stray, because you just never know what incredible sights you might see.

Deanna is an AU graduate who loves adventure in life and literature. Follow her path on the writing journey at

<https://deannaroney.wordpress.com/>



The Creative Spark

Are you Self-Aware?

Marie Well



Hug books about self-awareness. Pore over positive and negative trait thesauruses—even over the emotional wound thesaurus. Relish readings about traits that tag family and friends. These tomes teach about life.

We all bear nice *and* nasty traits. But how do we flee our own poor traits or those flagged in others? Well, many of us have unhealthy family dynamics. Yet our family doesn't change. And we can't change them. And we often don't change either, despite the saying "we can't change others but can change ourselves."

The worst family role is the black sheep. Black sheep are often judged at fault for family failures. Yet, ma, pa, and the siblings each kick in their own flaws. Some are pushy, others devious, catty, insecure, and so on. There's never just one stooge to blame when families clash.

When brooding over woes, ask *what* questions rather than *why* questions, says author Tash Eurich. When we ask ourselves *why* questions, we act like victims. Take, "Why am I unloved?" Victim! But when we ask ourselves *what* questions, we power up. Take, "What do we each need that we aren't giving one another?" Now that's a clue!

But maybe we can change both ourselves and others. Or at least grow more self-aware. Tasha Eurich gleans light on self-awareness in her book *Insight: The Surprising Truth About How Others See Us, How We See Ourselves, and Why the Answers Matter More than We Think*:

- What marks the self-aware? "Self-aware people possessed seven distinct types of insight ... They understood their values ... passions ... aspirations ... fit ... patterns ... reactions ... and impact" (location 456, 8%).
- To be self-aware, ask *what* instead of *why* questions. By doing so, you'll power-up, not victim-down: "If you ask *why*, you're putting yourself into a victim mentality" (a citation from a 42-year-old mother, location 1656, 29%). Ask instead, "What's going on?" "What

am I feeling?’ ... ‘What can I do to respond better?’” (citation from a 42-year-old mother, location 1656, 29%).

- To grow self-aware, ask, “What major themes, feelings, or lessons do you see in our story? What does the story of your life say about the kind of person you are and might become—your values, passions, aspirations, fit, patterns, reactions, and impact on others?” (location 2219, 38%).
- Also, to polish your personality, ask yourself, “What went well today? What didn’t go well? What did I learn and how will I be smarter tomorrow?” (location 2187, 38%).
- And to up your game, cross-examine events from many lenses: “Looking at both the good and bad from multiple angles will help you maximize your insight and success” (location 2142, 37%).
- But don’t beat yourself up. After all, even Mother Teresa would feel like a stooge if she read news stories about herself: “Ruminators are less accurate at identifying their emotions: their minds are so laser-focused on an incident, reaction, or personal weakness that they miss the larger picture” (location 1821, 31%).
- You can change yourself. But you also stand a chance of changing others, or at least suffering them, with these tricks: “[showing] compassion without judgement ... reframing ... [asking] what can he/she teach me? ... laughing ... stating your needs ... clarifying your boundaries ... walking away... confronting with compassion” (location 4340, 75%).

I read articles that trashed Mother Teresa. I also read write-ups that slammed Minister Joel Osteen. But these two are saints.

So, accept criticism that helps you grow, not kills your spirit.

Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Odenza Marketing Group Scholarship

Sponsored by: Odenza Marketing Group

Deadline: September 30, 2018, 11:59pm EDT

Potential payout: \$500

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be between 16 and 25 years of age as of September 30, 2018, have at least one full year of post secondary studies remaining, have a GPA of at least 2.5, and be citizens of Canada or the U.S.

What's required: An completed online application form, including two maximum 500-word essays on specified topics; you must also like the Odenza Facebook page.

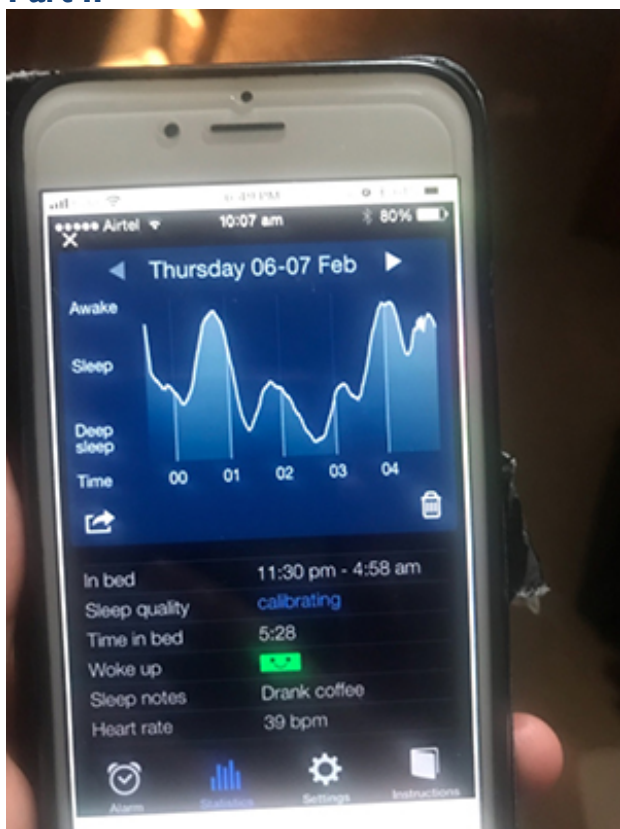
Tips: Essays must follow proper form and structure. Read the requirements carefully.

Where to get info: odenzascholarships.com/



Apps Every Student Should Have Part II

Xin Xu



A few weeks ago, I made a list of fantastic apps every student should have. This week, after some digging around, I found 5 additional apps that students would benefit from. Mobile applications are becoming an essential for everyday living; from helping wake us up in the morning to matching us for romantic dates, mobile applications have come to dominate much of our lives. But which applications will be handy for the AU student this Fall semester?

Sleep Cycle:

When I first heard the name sleep cycle, I rolled my eyes. What kind of sleep cycle do most students have? A highly irregular one. But after the initial bout of skepticism, I tried the app only to be pleasantly surprised by the impact it had on my sleep routine. The typical night owl in me has struggled to wake up for my early morning classes since the beginning of elementary school. However, since installing this application at the end of high school, I discovered a better way to understand my sleeping patterns and, better yet, use the application to wake up in a less abrupt, alarm-shaken way.

Dropbox:

Many students already have this handy application that enables fast transferring, and syncing of files and making sure that even when technology fails you, your files are backed up and restored in a heartbeat. Dropbox is similar to Google Docs and can be accessed online, on your phone and electronic tablets. Dropbox offers a limited amount of storage space, however, if you're using only documents with no large video or media files, the free storage space can last many years without reaching its limit. Save yourself the burden of carrying a USB and use this application instead.

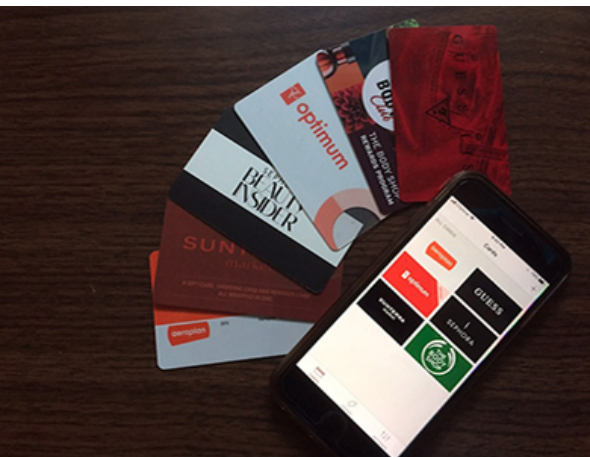
My Fitness Pal:

Having neglected my workout routine for many weeks during final exam season of last year, I downloaded this application in hopes of improving my diet and exercise. While the application won't motivate you to achieve new milestones in your workout routine, I did find the application helpful for managing our diet. The application enables you to find food items and track your calorie consumption over the course of the day, week, month and year. I was particularly surprised the application has a database of just about every food item from my favorite shrimp cracker snacks to homemade lamb roast.



Voice Recorder:

In my early undergraduate years, no matter how fast my words-per-minute typing speed was, there was always one professor who spoke at the pace of lightning. To save myself the pain of having to type at the pace he spoke at, I recorded his lectures (with his permission) which allowed me to review his lecture at my own pace. Voice Recorder is an excellent application as it also enables me to slow any recorded audio file to 0.5x pace or speed it up to a 2x pace. If a professor is speaking too slow or fast, you can always adjust the lecture recording to ease your understanding.



Stocard:

Ever forgot to bring a membership card while shopping and missed out on a member-exclusive deal? I certainly have. This summer, I discovered Stocard, an application that stores the barcodes of just about every membership card available. The app is easy to use and has a scanning feature that stores the barcode that can be scanned at checkout.

Xin Xu is a post-graduate health-science AU student, aspiring clinician, globe-trotter, parrot-breeder and tea-connoisseur.



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

Following What's Hot around AU's Social Media Sites.

AthaU Facebook Group

Thomas seeks feedback on the PLAR process; one commenter suggests there is a wait list. Kari's starting off her AU studies by taking five courses; she gets many responses about her program and course selection. Riley finds a course he wants is "under revision" and wonders when it will be available again.

Other posts include architecture courses, citing from a course study guide, exam-grading timeline, and courses CHEM 217, COMP 210, EDPY 351, and MKTG 420.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "We're proud to unveil 'The Hub' — our new learner-focused, social-centered blog that is the place for all things #onlineEd + #AthabascaU! What do you think? <http://bit.ly/2oKbZEM>."

@austudentsunion tweets: "AUSU provides a FREE mobile app to all AU undergraduates. This is a great way to stay organized, have easy access to services, get event notifications, and a chance to interact with other AU students. Download it today to keep on top of schooling! t.co/pvXMkKFKsl."





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

When you are Between a Rock and a Hard Place!

Hi, I am in my thirties and a couple of years ago I was diagnosed with a heart condition, cardiomyopathy. It took me a long time to come to grips with the reality that I will have to live with for the rest of my life. I have a great cardiologist, who monitors me regularly, and with my medication my condition is stable. Also my husband is very supportive. The heart condition I have may have a genetic link, and I am considering whether I want to go for genetic testing to see if my heart condition is familial. I have talked to a genetic counselor and she suggested I consider carefully whether I want to find out, as if it is genetic, it will be very hard for anyone in my immediate family to get life insurance or critical illness insurance. I am worried if my two young sons have inherited the gene and will ultimately end up with the same condition. My two sisters have different opinions, one of them thinks I should do the testing and the other one says she does not want to know the results. I am so confused and looking for another opinion. Thanks, Mara.

Hey Mara:

So sorry to hear about your condition. You do have a difficult decision to make, however just because someone inherited the gene doesn't mean they will develop the condition. Harvard Health offers some insight into what genetic testing can reveal.

The most important aspect is to live a heart healthy lifestyle, which includes watching your cholesterol, getting enough exercise, and reducing your intake of red meat. As well, regular monitoring by your family doctor or a cardiologist is essential. You need a yearly echocardiogram and stress test where any changes can be discovered early and treated. When your family members tell their doctor of your condition, there shouldn't be a problem with close monitoring. On the other hand, if you have inherited the gene and familial cardiomyopathy has been confirmed, your boys will be monitored more closely, especially if they go into sports. Often this condition is discovered through a sudden cardiac event which has occurred while active in intense sports. There are considerations for genetic testing of children and the age at which this should be done. These are questions that you can discuss with your genetic counselor, and I believe your family members should also meet with a genetic counselor. As a family you need to find out all the information you can and discuss the possible scenarios and how to handle them. Thank you for your letter Mara. I found a couple of websites that might be helpful for you to read and forward to your family members:

<https://www.4hcm.org/content.asp?contentid=187>

<https://www.genedx.com/test-catalog/dilated-cardiomyopathy/>

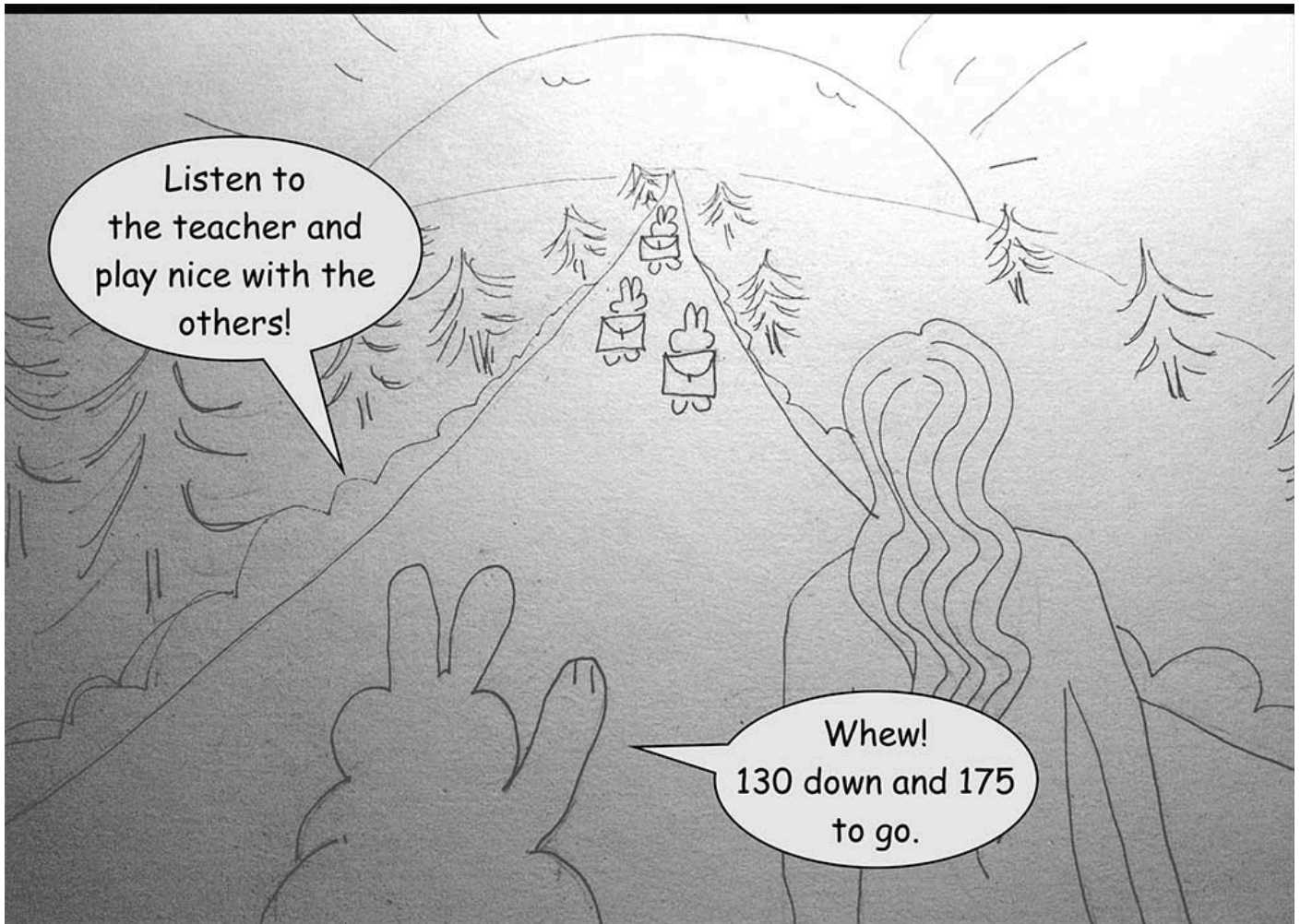
Follow Barb on twitter @BarbGod

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.



Poet Maeve
Off to School

Wanda Waterman





AUSU
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS' UNION

This space is provided by AUSU. The Voice does not create or edit this content. Contact services@ausu.org with any questions.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **August 24th:** Athabasca Meet & Greet
- **August 31st:** **AUSU Twitter Giveaway closes**
- **September 3rd:** **AUSU Office is closed for Labour Day**
- **September 13th:** **Public Council Meeting**

FYi Doctors Discounts

FYi Doctor is a partnered with AUSU to bring AUSU members some great deals for their vision needs. They have some great deals going on right now that you won't want to miss out on!

BACK TO SCHOOL
BACK TO WORK
— EVENT —

KIDS & STUDENTS
**BUY 1 PAIR
GET 1 PAIR
FREE***
Complete Frame & Lenses
Second pair must be of equal or lesser value.
Applicable on select frames only.

ADULTS
**BUY 1 PAIR
GET 1 PAIR
40% OFF***
Complete Frame & Lenses
Second pair must be of equal or lesser value.

See more. A whole new perspective is waiting.

[Visit our website to be linked to these great deals and more!](#)

While you are there, be sure to take a minute to check out all of the other great services AUSU has to offer. Let us help make your AU experience a little easier.

Twitter Giveaway

That's right, AUSU has more great prizes to give away!



Tweet [@austudentsunion](https://twitter.com/austudentsunion) about how you are getting ready for fall for your chance to win Amazon gift cards, Swell water bottles, and more! Be sure to use the hashtag #aufallprep

Our contest ends **August 31st**, so don't miss out before September long weekend.

Contact Us

Phone (local): 780-497-7000
Phone (toll free): 1-855-497-7003
Email: admin@auss.org
Twitter: [@austudentsunion](https://twitter.com/austudentsunion)
Facebook: [@austudentsunion](https://facebook.com/austudentsunion)
Instagram: [@austudentsunion](https://instagram.com/austudentsunion)
Website: ausu.org

AUSU will keep students at the heart of the organization, understanding that its primary objective is to enhance the overall undergraduate student experience at Athabasca University. AUSU accomplishes this by keeping students first, remaining relevant, being accountable, striving for excellence, fostering community, and strongly advocating for our members.

We'd love to hear from you!

CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

301 Energy Square - 10109 - 106 St NW - Edmonton AB - T5J 3L7
Ph: 855.497.7003

Publisher	Athabasca University Students' Union
Editor-In-Chief	Jodi Campbell
Managing Editor	Karl Low

Regular Columnists Barb Godin, Scott Jacobsen, Carla Knipe, Barbara Lehtiniemi,
Tara Panrucker, Deanne Roney, Wanda Waterman, Xin Xu

www.voicemagazine.org

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

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

To receive a weekly email announcing each issue, subscribe [here](#). *The Voice* does not share its subscriber list.

© 2018 by *The Voice Magazine*

ISSN 2561-3634