



THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 15 2019-04-12

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

Some Kind of Special

The Days Gone By

Call to a New Goodness

Is it Really Relative?

Plus:

Gluten Free For Health?

Is Medical Marijuana a Hoax?

and much more!



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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 Alberta Votes

Karl Low



If you're an AU student, this next week is a critical one for you. If you're an Albertan, you get to have a say in it. Albertans go to the polls to elect a new provincial government on April 16th. If you're an AU student this matters, because who is elected will end up having a significant effect on the affordability, and perhaps the quality of your education.

In Alberta, there are 13 parties running, but the race is primarily between the incumbent New Democratic Party, and their conservative challenges, the United Conservative Party. Unfortunately, neither one of these parties has made post-secondary education a priority in their campaigns, but there is some information in their platforms. Two other parties, the Alberta Liberal Party and the Alberta Party have shown some traction in Alberta, both managing to have elected members to the legislature in the past. So to help AU students out, here's a quick breakdown of the policies they offer, as I see them.

United Conservative Party

Their four policy goals include bringing in more international students, strengthen intellectual property frameworks, make universities guarantee freedom of speech on campus, and measuring

how successful a post-secondary institution is by measuring "labour market outcomes" with funding to the institutions being connected to how well they perform. The first item is a good one for AU, as no institution is better poised to take advantage of international students, simply through our delivery format, but the remaining three are troubling. Toughened IP laws mean courses become more expensive to create, and hence more expensive for students to take. Requiring a guarantee of freedom of speech is simply more busy-work being required from an already stretched staff, and in AU's case particularly, would mean little. But the most troubling is trying to monitor AU's performance vs. labour market outcomes. Many of AU's students are not in the Alberta labour market, thus, AU's effect on the Alberta labour market might be extremely hard to quantify. AU already receives much less funding on a student basis because of this, the UCP proposal may end up making that even worse.

While not in their election platform specifically, the UCP general policies also list support for voluntary payment initiatives for things like students' unions and other fees that students pay when attending post-secondary. You can see my thoughts on that in [an earlier article](#).

The New Democratic Party

Their platform indicates that it wants to work with post-secondary institutions to review funding formulas and focus new resources on creating additional spaces for new students. They have indicated they want to ensure a lack of seats does not halt qualified students from being enrolled in desired programs. Beyond that, it simply says they are committed to providing consistent and stable funding to post-secondary institutions in Alberta. Their platform makes no mention of continuing the tuition freeze that they enacted over the last four years.

The vagueness of the platform is concerning, as it suggests that not a lot of thought has really gone into what they intend to do with post-secondary education, although the portion about ensuring that a lack of space is not a hindrance for students could bode well for AU, because, as a fully distance based university, AU is the best suited to be able to easily ramp up space depending on the number of students that are seeking post-secondary.

The Alberta Liberal Party

The Liberal party is seeking to support the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematical fields specifically, and have said they want to increase the number of seats available in these programs by 25% over the next term. They have also promised to address the issue of deferred maintenance, that is, maintenance on physical buildings and campuses that universities have been putting off due to a lack of resources. No dollar amount was attached to this. They have also promised to provide more student financial aid to those who need it, and have come out directly to say that they are against the idea of making student union fees voluntary.

Overall, there's not a lot here that AU looks like it could specifically benefit from. We have no seat limits, so there's no reason to expect more money from that, we generally don't use the AU campus, so while I suppose it's nice if any nagging issues get fixed with the infrastructure at AU, unless that include technological infrastructure, it doesn't mean a lot to most students. However, student aid to those who need it will always be a solid policy in my books. Money should never be the reason that someone doesn't pursue further education as the statistics all show that the more education a society has overall, the better it does.

The Alberta Party

Some interesting policy proposals are on offer here, including a student loan forgiveness program if the student agrees to remain in the province to work, with additional loan forgiveness for those who choose to work in underserved areas. While this won't help most students at AU, for Alberta students, it's can be a significant boost. Like the Liberal party, the Alberta party also wants to increase capacity, by 45,000 seats, 3,000 specifically reserved for indigenous lead programming.

The Alberta party is also suggesting it would expand employment opportunities within the province for students in part by expanding the Summer Temporary Employment Program.

They are also the only party among the four major parties to promise to continue to keep tuition capped at all post-secondary institutions. This cap is something that will definitely benefit AU students, no matter where they are.

Now, make your choice, enjoy the read, and go vote!



Unearthing classic articles from previous issues of The Voice Magazine.



Students who become wizards with words for essays may be interested in Scrabble Day on Saturday, April 13. We've got a few winning words for that, too.

Obit envy. Writer Bill Pollett compares his life to the glorious achievements described in obituaries. "I become so desperate for something interesting to happen to me that I consider wearing a large papier mache trout head and skateboarding naked down Fourth Avenue with a burning roman candle in each hand." Lost & Found — Thoughts of a Late Bloomer, March 30, 2005.

Talking back to yourself. El-ahrairah Jones plumbs the soul of the inner voice. "*If I had been smarter, bigger, richer, luckier, could carry a tune, had one less mole, better oes, a different name, a faster car, a tip on the fifth race, more reliable friends, it could have been different...*" One Dark Night, October 20, 2004.

MINDS WE MEET



Amanda Welton-Hagen is a thirty-three year old living in Whistler, British Columbia. She graduated from Vancouver Community College's paralegal program and she has almost completed the Bachelor of Professional Arts Degree in Governance, Law & Management at Athabasca University. She has applied to Law School and is awaiting acceptance. This is her story.

Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself? Who are you? Where do you live, where do you come from?

My name is Amanda, I'm 33 years old, I live in Whistler, B.C, and I work as a paralegal. I grew up in Calgary, Alberta, but have lived in Whistler for the last six years. I have two sisters and two brothers. I also have two small dogs.

So what brought you to AU?

I graduated from the paralegal program at Vancouver Community College. I was working at a law firm and started looking in to the requirements for attending law school in Canada. I want to be a lawyer. That requires a degree. I looked at the Vancouver Community College website at the possibility of

transferring my credits to a degree program, and found that the Bachelor of Professional Arts Degree in Governance, Law & Management at Athabasca University was listed as a transfer program. So that's the program that I signed up for.

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

I love to play soccer! I'm actively involved in the soccer community here in Whistler. I also enjoy reading and playing with my two dogs. I'm also very close with my family, so I try to spend as much time with them as I can.

What's next? How have your studies and AU fit into your plans for the future?

I have applied for Law School, so hopefully I will be accepted. AU has allowed me to continue working as a paralegal in Whistler, while being able to complete my degree.

And where do you plan to go to Law School?

I hope in Calgary or Edmonton, so I can be close to my family.

Okay, so who in your life had the greatest influence on your desire to learn?

My Aunt Chrissy. She lived in Edmonton and worked helping students with learning disabilities. She taught studying tips/techniques to high school kids all over Alberta. She encouraged me to pursue education and was always supportive of what I wanted to do.

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

I enjoy taking online courses. I like being able to work on my courses at any time of the day. I like the flexibility they provide. I can go away on vacation and work on my courses by the pool if I want to. In class courses don't allow you to do that. There isn't really anything that I dislike about online learning.

Was there a point that you wavered about continuing your schooling? What motivated you to go through with it?

I haven't really wavered about continuing my schooling. I want to go to law school and I need this degree to get there. There are times when working full time and taking full time courses does get a bit overwhelming. My family is very supportive, so they are there to get me through those times.

What is your most memorable Athabasca University course so far, and why?

My most memorable course was Astronomy 205, the Universe – the Ultimate Frontier. It was the hardest course I've ever taken in my life! It was interesting but there was just so much information to memorize.

What have you given up to go to Athabasca University that you regret the most? Was it worth it?

I've given up a lot of time with my family and friends and had to quit coaching youth soccer. It was just too much of a time commitment. I believe it has been worth it, though. I have one and a half semesters left of my degree and have been able to get decent marks.

How do you find communications with your course tutors?

For the most part I find communications with my course tutors just fine. A large majority of them answer within a reasonable amount of time and are very helpful.

What is your pet peeve if you have one?

My pet peeve is people that chew with their mouth open. It drives me crazy!

What famous person, past or present, would you like to have lunch with, and why?

I would like to have lunch with Nellie McClung. She was an important figure in the women's suffrage movement in Canada. She was a strong, female politician.

Describe the proudest moment in your life.

The proudest moment in my life would be walking across the stage and receiving my paralegal diploma. It had been a long road to get there and I was so proud that I had finally graduated with my diploma.

Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.

I am a very caring person. I would do anything to help the people around me. Few people know that I have had two sponsor kids for the last few years. They are two little boys and I love receiving letters and drawings from them.

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

I've learned that nothing comes easy. You will have to work hard for the things you want, but it will be worth it in the end.

Have you done any travelling? Where has life taken you so far?

I have done a little bit of travelling. I've been to Mexico, Cuba, Haiti, England and Italy, as well as various places in Canada and the US. I've lived in Calgary, Lethbridge, Vancouver, Scottsdale and Whistler. I enjoy travelling and wish I could do more!

Out of the places you have travelled to, which have been your favorites, and why?

My favourite place to travel is Italy. The food was amazing and there was so much history and beautiful sights to take in.

Where would you like to travel to in the future, and why?

There are so many places I would love to travel. Germany and France are at the top of my list. My family ancestry is German so it would be neat to see where they came from. I've heard France is amazing and has so many different historical sights to see.

What (non-AU) book are you reading now?

I am re-reading *Pride & Prejudice*. I am a huge Jane Austen fan!

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

**Call to a New Goodness****Wanda Waterman**

Years ago, I read an article on the history of adoption in Canada. For decades, orphaned or abandoned children were informally “adopted” by farmers to be used as cheap labour (Anne of Green Gables was adopted by Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert for just this reason and caused great disappointment for not arriving as a boy). The abuses reported under this system lead to the reforms we have in place today. Sadly, in the farm adoption days those who managed to survive to adulthood weren't granted any reward for their years of hard service, and without the benefit of the sound parenting necessary to success many of them led deeply troubled lives.

But not all the farm families, the article pointed out, were self-serving slave drivers. In one anecdote a farmer's wife looked out the window while washing up and caught a farm hand trying to lure her adopted little girl into the barn, proffering a doll. The woman ran out and fired the man on the spot.

The little girl, nurtured and well-taught, grew up to become a doctor's wife.

No farm wife to save us from evil

Today we're surrounded by evil forces—that is, the complex of actions and intentions intended to do harm—striving to lure us into a barn with some shiny new plaything, and we often find ourselves helplessly alone, no furious adopted mother to come to our rescue.

How else do you explain the present reality that avarice is no longer considered a sin but rather a virtue? That young people are groomed from ever earlier ages to see themselves and each other as sex objects? And that we still have the old moral hypocrisies of the past hanging around (and even picking up steam at times), for example the renouncing of personal responsibility through blind obedience to tyrants, or the eye-for-an-eye justice model.

In many ways our society has become more ethically sophisticated, but in many ways we've declined in moral fortitude. Even the words "moral fortitude" sound so hokey and old-fashioned that they arrive with a hint of embarrassment. With postmodern relativism we've grown beyond an objective moral code and all its baggage, right?

Not exactly. Relativism never did quite win a victory over traditional morality, perhaps because of a simple irony: claiming that no one has the right to morally judge another because morality is subjective is, well, a *moral judgment*. And it doesn't help that those who support this way of thinking are often the finger-waggingest folks in town, snorting and sneering at anyone who doesn't subscribe to the new and progressive moral agenda.

Marvelous spiritual beings

Our first encounters with relativism (the belief that there is no objective moral code and that we each choose what's right and wrong for ourselves) enticed us to minimise the value of goodness by seeing it as circumscribed by ourselves. But this was only because we still had no idea what marvelous spiritual beings we are and how deeply we're connected to mysteries much bigger than we are.

I hesitate to call for a new morality, as this is already a movement, one which doesn't seem to have moved far past the magical thinking and blind obedience of the old morality.

What I'd like to see take off is a movement for a new *goodness*, one that cherishes and preserves the most excellent moral ideals of the past while taking into consideration the deep lessons we humans have learned on our long blundering journey, individually and in community.

The lecherous farm hand

Here are just a few ways in which evil tries to tempt us into the barn of moral destruction:

- Persuading us to reject the moral precepts of the past in their entirety, without examining them for the value they may still hold for us
- Persuading us to accept strict moral standards wholly on the orders of an external authority
- Making us reject new moral ideas because they don't feel familiar or safe
- Getting us away from our "inner farm wife," that vigilant alertness that keeps us on guard against harmful forces
- Keeping us in the dark about our personal weaknesses
- Keeping us in the dark about our personal wondrousness

Follow the Good Path

The way to begin the path to goodness is simple: maintain a daily spiritual practice with a goal to improve your virtue and make you a better person. This doesn't have to be according to any

established religion, and I've come to doubt that rigid adherence to any one religion has any lasting moral value in itself.

Rather you should strive to get to know your true self and your higher power however you envision them. If you don't believe in the idea of the true self or a higher power, simply spend some time in reflection, perhaps communing with nature or the fine arts or simply journaling. Any artistic activity is a spiritual practice, as is any striving for good relationship.

If enough of us did this we might see our profound collective stupidity diminish a little, resulting in a safer, happier world for everyone and fewer social sins like forcing children to serve as unpaid labourers.

This kind of thing can't effectively be imposed from without, so it has to start with us.

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



Fly on the Wall

Eternal Dump Runs of the Cartesian Mind

Jason Sullivan



Living out near the town dump is better than it sounds. There're stunning views east to the rugged volcanic batholith of Giant's Head mountain and, beyond that, an open vista with Okanagan Lake (and the mythical Ogopogo) out of sight far below. Along the horizon the line of mountains further away frames the picture like the edge of a flat earth. It's quite paradisaical on a sunny spring Saturday, and on some such days I take a stroll out past marmot dens and along the street leading to our local sanitary landfill. Lines of trucks, as many as a dozen long, await their turn to drop off yard waste;

each driver fulfilling either an internal or external portion of their weekend honey-do list. It's a beautiful time of year and, having been in that lineup myself, I can tell you that the mind wanders as the rapturous sunlight expresses an almost Mediterranean lucidity.

The air and the breeze flows free and clean; you'd never guess there was a mountain of garbage there. You see, our town dump is and is not a dump. That's because where garbage was once plowed under the soil it now is collected in huge blue dumpsters and carted far away. Likewise, drivers waiting to deposit their loads are both sitting at the wheel and not; many look distracted, as though dreaming, and, with windows rolled up and air conditioning cranked, they enjoy a moment of respite that fairly begs to be wiled away in reverie.

It all might seem a bit mad, a bit nuts on a sunny day, to have ones' windows up and to have shut out the gorgeous immediate surroundings. Yet that is precisely how we distance students can appear to others. First, we are choosing to engage in schooling, yet more schooling, while many of our peers were happy long ago to scamper out and away from education facilities with as much haste as possible. Second, our education process is in many cases partly or wholly voluntary; we

may be attending AU merely for personal development. And, when an education fails the *what are you going to do with that* test, the looks askance proliferate like spring mushrooms. As with drivers idling with their windows rolled up, why don't we let the proverbial real world in? But herein lies the crux; AU allows our minds to stretch out and embrace an expansiveness not necessary tied to the landscapes we corporeally inhabit.

Descartes and his Dream, or was he Mad?

Aristotle famously stated that we must know ourselves and, in pursuit of this end, the equally memorable Rene Descartes comprised his *Meditations*, wherein he sat alone with his fire and considered what, if anything, he could know with supreme certainty. His conclusion was 'cogito, ergo sum'; I think, therefore I am. To be sure he was thinking Descartes had to take leave of his senses enough to conclude that his mind, separate from his body, was the essential instrument of his existence. After all, no brain in a jar can match or replicate the fecund garden that is a human mind. Neuroscience explains much and yet the vividness of a dream remains beyond the sway of even the best brain scan. Likewise, all Descartes could be sure of was that indeed he was a thinking being. To arrive at this conclusion he had to conclude that he wasn't dreaming; otherwise even his own thoughts could be an illusion.

Michel Foucault noted that Descartes' emergent thought, that would come to be named Cartesian, required a provisional certainty that sensory impressions were lucid as real rather than only a really believable dream. Foucault stated that in life there are "impressions which, in the first instance, one would be quite tempted not to doubt. They are the same impressions that can be found identically in dreaming" (Foucault, 583). Unless a dream is lucid it feels for a time as true as daily life; how are we to know the difference? Just as we ponder a new morsel of course material, perhaps stroking an imaginary philosophic beard as we digest the information, so too do drivers at the town dump have a moment to transcend the material bondage of their status as chore-do-ers. In a sense, then, any moment where our mind can roam free of immediate material preoccupations, is a moment of dreaming in that we are not clearly and distinctly engaging in what from a physical point of view would appear to be clear and present reality.

Far from being a bit mad, the rich inner life of drivers in a lineup composes the essential substrate of their existence in that moment. As with monks the world over, the mind becomes ground zero

AU-thentic Events **Upcoming AU Related Events**

Undergrad Program Orientation for New Students

Wed, Apr 17, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

business.athabascau.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-april17-2019/

Register online at above link

Edmonton Meet & Greet

Wed, Apr 17, 5:00 to 7:00 pm MDT

The Rec Room, 1725 99 St NW, Edmonton AB

In person

Hosted by AUSU

www.ausu.org/event/edmonton-meet-greet-8/

Email services@ausu.org to RSVP

Improving Recommender Systems for Learning through Web Mining to Discover Relevant Learning Objects from the Web

Fri, Apr 19, 2:00 to 3:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

www.eventbrite.ca/e/fgs-presents-the-graduate-student-research-series-featuring-mohammad-belghiszadeh-master-of-science-tickets-55306466129

Register online at above link

All events are free unless otherwise specified

for reality. And this surely is where many judgements and misunderstandings arise. Staring off into space appears a waste of time when in fact it can be part of a creative and constructive cycle.

For Descartes to arrive at his foundational belief that he could at least be certain that he was himself sitting and thinking he first discounted that he was dreaming. Tied to this assumption was “the word ‘eccentric’, which is used to characterize both the imagination of the mad and the fantasy of dreamers. And as dreamers are even more eccentric than the mad, madness dissolves quite naturally into dreaming” (Foucault, 582). There’s a fine mental line there, and to be truly creative and think outside the box surely means to embrace our inner mad genius. After all, learning to think critically isn’t necessarily comparable to filling out a Sudoku puzzle or a Bingo card. It requires rigorous flexibility and a syncretic capacity to combine information in new, and even hitherto unimagined ways.

So to be certain that he was certain about his singular certainty, that he himself was sitting there thinking, Descartes had also to discount that he was dreaming of his own peculiar certainty and also to discount that he was insane. Following this line of thought, Foucault notes that if the line of possible madness was followed too far “I might disqualify myself” and risk “carrying out nothing more than an eccentric meditation” (Foucault, 583). The fact that our studies are part of a larger educational project helps focus us and keep us from meandering off and away from the productive pursuit of our degree. Lifelong learning on our own time is great but AU gives us a concrete purpose; it’s no coincidence that while many people may own, say, Naomi Klein’s book *No Logo*, to have it as part of a course syllabus gives us a definite push to really engage with its content and read it cover to cover. In the end, we are left with the tangible diploma bearing our credentials but at a deeper level our selves as changed beings. One cannot unlearn the sociological imagination; like developing facility in a new language, we will always be more capable of thinking ourselves in to the larger framework of society once we’ve taken sociology courses. This applies uniquely to each academic discipline.

Learning represents an invisible force not easily quantified in physical terms (although certainly in terms of wage outcome!). Just as daydreams and night dreams each remain outside of recordable reality, our learning itself eludes the sensory and can remain especially invisible to others (and least until we open our mouth to speak!). As happens occasionally, one’s laptop may fail or one might chuck out legions of old school notes. And after that, what is learning reduced to? Nothing measurable or tangible in a physical way. Learning exists in our changed minds but, like an especially vibrant dream, lurks nowhere in the material world. And yet, like Descartes, we know that, as learners, inputs are leading us to grow and think in new and important ways. But AU’s not a woodworking or sewing class where we bring home gifts for the family although we probably will be great at editing any letters they have to write. The gifts we bring are primarily to ourselves, it’s only in their use that their reality is made manifest.

Next week we’ll dive deeper into the mental landscape of education and the gentle curvature that demarcates internal mental dreamland from external physical reality.

References

Foucault, M. (1972). ‘Reply to Derrida’. In *History of Madness*. New York: Routledge.

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.



Porkpie Hat Some Kind of Special

Darjeeling Jones



tentative kiss. Her long red hair smells like cigarettes, fireworks, and cinnamon chewing gum. On the far shore, a coyote is calling. When we get back, everyone's huddled around a ouija board, passing a joint, summoning forces we can't understand. A ghost walks over my grave.

Our last year of high school. What remarkable creatures we were back then, practically another species altogether. We were budding movie stars and romantic poets. We were engineers and artists; we were drama queens and mechanics; drug dealers and track stars; philosophers without a clue; all of us poised on the rim of a future that may or may not have any need for us. Everything was so fraught and so uncertain, but thankfully we didn't know what we didn't know. We just sang our songs and traded our stories. We fooled around and we skylarked, and we sparked with inspiration. We waded through a river of tears and despair, holding each others' hands. Looking back, it seems almost breathtaking how innocent and confident we were. We had no idea about the razor-sharp hooks that floated like deadly fishing lures around us in the lake of time: breast cancer, miscarriage, drug addiction, divorce. The cosmos plays spin-the-bottle with all of us: who will be the last to kiss? Who will be the first to die?

Sometimes I try to remember if I had any real fear back then. I should probably have been scared shitless, but I don't think that I was. I just mucked and muddled about. I had no skills; no plans; a reckless, experimental nature; and very little sense. I had what counted, though. I had a one-eyed Malibu, a pack of cigarettes on the dash, and a few dollars from working at the general store—enough to buy some beer from my neighbour and a put a little gas in the tank. I had hope to burn, passion in my heart, and I had love and friends I thought would last forever.

For sure I was plenty dumb back then, and pretty arrogant as well. I really thought I was special. But I was also having a lot of fun. And maybe there was a wisdom at play of which middle age has caused me to lose sight. I mean, I was living in the moment, worrying about neither the future nor the past. Isn't this what all the self-help gurus tells us we should be doing? Isn't this why we fill prescriptions and go to church? Sure, I was insecure, neurotic, confused about every little thing. But in my heart of hearts, I never *truly* doubted that it would all turn out just fine. Somehow I would find a job. Somehow I would find a way to make love stay. Somehow I would change the world. Doofus that I was, maybe I was sort of special after all. Just like everyone else.



The Fit Student Is Medical Marijuana a Hoax?

Marie Well



Positive My doctor tried selling me on marijuana for anxiety. I shouted “No!” After all, “cannabis use can cause anxiety or panic” (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). Plus, “using cannabis regularly and continuously over time makes you more likely to experience anxiety, depression, psychosis, and schizophrenia” (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). Medical marijuana, huh? I read online comments that said my doctor would go so far as to drive marijuana to his patients’ homes. Had I not known how devastating marijuana could be, I might have ended up his next victim. His clinic would have gained a cannabis consumer, but I might’ve grown sick.

You see, next-door neighbors smoked marijuana nonstop this entire weekend. Past two in the morning each night. My sheets reeked of skunk. And the odor caused me nausea. I opened the windows, but the stench stayed.

But a sad thing happened. For the next three days straight, I had a return of chronic fatigue syndrome. I felt nausea, and I slept excessive hours. Before this, I believed I had chronic fatigue syndrome beat. Fitness and diet surely had cured me. Not any longer! So, to stop the chronic fatigue, I took B-complex, vitamin D, and a supplement called ubiquinol while eating extra apples and almond butter. And today marks the first day the chronic fatigue faded.

But the weekend is coming, so I fear the neighbors’ marijuana smoke will make me sick again. And what if, like many people with chronic fatigue syndrome, I reach the point of no return—where the sickness never lifts, but leaves me bed-ridden until death? Lawyers call marijuana odors “nuisances.” So, legal action can be taken. I may seek a lawyer’s advice.

Let’s get it straight: marijuana is a toxin. “Cannabis smoke contains many of the same harmful substances as tobacco smoke. Like smoking cigarettes, smoking cannabis can damage your lungs” (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). As well, cannabis causes impaired driving and poor decision-making (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). Plus, in the case of pregnant mothers, “research strongly suggests that marijuana may have serious risks for the child, including abnormalities, cancer, development problems, increased leukemia risks, low birth weight, and reduced attention skills” (Valdez, location 110 of 137, 80%). Also, cannabis is addictive: “Close to 1 in 10 adults who have ever used cannabis will develop an addiction to it. This statistic rises to about 1 in 6 people who started using cannabis as a teenager. Between 1 in 4 and 1 in 2 of those who smoke cannabis daily will develop an addiction to it” (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). Great medicine, huh?

Consider opioids. I recently watched a documentary on Amazon Prime called *Do No Harm: The Opioid Epidemic*. The documentary subjects who were given opioids for medical reasons became addicts. Yet these people came from good homes, had professional backgrounds, and led stellar lives. One doctor became addicted to opioids on his first hit. But pharmaceutical companies, the

health care system, and the government all okay the medical drug, despite healthier alternatives. Another great medicine, huh?

On the topic of pharmaceuticals, a Dr. Mercola article revealed that Amazon Prime removed a documentary called *Vaxxed*: “Amazon immediately bowed to the government pressure and removed the movie ‘Vaxxed’ from Amazon Prime Streaming and similar videos critical of vaccine safety. However, CNN is urging Amazon to go further and ‘burn’ all the books, too, by completely removing them from the site” (Fisher, April 2, 2019). I recently watched the documentary *Vaxxed* on Amazon Prime, but today I confirmed it’s been removed. *Vaxxed* shows normal children who became seriously developmentally disabled right after vaccination. I saw the before and after footage. *What horror!*

Yet, a guest author on Dr. Mercola says the public can’t litigate against vaccinations: “the pharmaceutical industry, which was handed a partial liability shield from vaccine injury lawsuits by the U.S. Congress in 1986, which was turned into a total liability shield by the Supreme Court in 2011, is fighting to keep an economic stranglehold on a crumbling U.S. health care system” (Fisher, April 2, 2019). And these vaccines are often mandatory: “as of March 27, 2019, any infant, child, or teen under the age of 18 in Rockland County, New York, who is not vaccinated against measles is barred from entering ‘public places’ until the state of emergency is lifted in 30 days or until they get an MMR shot” (Mercola, n.d.). Dr. Mercola (n.d.) likens this to house arrest. Plus, “parents of an unvaccinated child who is caught in a public place could face six months in jail or a \$500 fine” (Mercola, n.d.).

Pharmaceutical companies jump at any chance to impose more vaccines. According to the guest author on Dr. Mercola, “For children born in American in 1983, the federal government recommended 23 doses of seven vaccines given between 2 months and 6 years old. Today,” he claims, “the child vaccination schedule is 69 doses of 16 vaccines given between the day of birth and age 18, with 50 doses administered before age 6, at a current price tag of more than \$3000 per child” (Fisher, April 2, 2019). Cha-ching!

To put this in perspective, imagine yourself getting 50 doses of vaccines over the next six years. I got two doses of one vaccine during the graduate program. My face broke out into giant boils and I felt ill for nearly two months, so I stopped before the third dose of the vaccine. I don’t think my immune system could’ve withstood eight doses of vaccines every year for six years. So, imagine forcing a toddler through fifty doses in the first six years of its life?

At least, I’d like to have the choice, wouldn’t you?

But now I have no choice. I’m growing sicker from the stench of marijuana. And just because the health care system and the government say it’s okay doesn’t make it so.

While researching Amazon for this article, I saw nothing but pro-marijuana books. Strangely, many of Amazon’s books claim marijuana benefits people with mental illness. But marijuana can trigger mental illness: “Cannabis can trigger a psychotic episode (not knowing what is real, experiencing paranoia, having disorganized thoughts, and in some cases having hallucination” (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). Also, “there have been reports of people experiencing psychotic symptoms after smoking a lot of cannabis or more cannabis than they are used to. This is called drug-induced psychosis. It is uncommon and the symptoms, although frightening at the time, go away when cannabis use is stopped” (Valdez, location 95 of 137, 69%). Some people are not so lucky: “The use of medical marijuana may in fact lead to other psychiatric disorders such as anxiety and depression” (Valdez, location 82 of 137, 60%). A great way to treat anxiety, huh?

A hoax? My dad insists bottled water is the biggest hoax of this century. I insist it's medical marijuana.

But the biggest hoax is on marijuana-smoking students: "After using cannabis, you may have problems paying attention, remembering or learning things, and making decisions. Using cannabis can reduce your ability to perform well on the job or at school" (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts). And "how long the impairing effects of cannabis last depends on how it was consumed (smoked, inhaled, ingested) and how much was taken, but effects can last at least six (6) hours or longer after use" (Government of Canada, Cannabis in Canada: Get the Facts).

When it comes to medical marijuana, stay away, especially if you want *A's*.

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Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: NEADS National Student Awards Program

Sponsored by: National Educational Association of Disabled Students

Deadline: May 10, 2019

Potential payout: \$1000 to \$5000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, have a permanent disability, and be currently registered in and returning to a full-time program at an accredited Canadian post-secondary college or university. See full [eligibility](#) criteria.

What's required: An online application form including contact, education, and reference info; a résumé, academic transcript, proof of enrolment, and proof of disability; and short (250-word maximum) answers to four questions.

Tips: Read the [FAQs](#) for more additional information.

Where to get info: www.neads.ca/en/about/projects/ete2/scholarship/



The Not-So Starving Student Vegas Buffet Review, Part II

Xin Xu



For those looking for a graduation splurge or even a celebratory vacation for the end of the semester, Las Vegas should be an option worth considering. For those who follow this blog series, you will have known that one of the highlights of my trips to the sin city is actually to feast at the beloved buffets. Unlike buffets at the local restaurant, these buffets are incomparable and provide foodies with endless choices.

In [part 1 of this series](#), I explored two famous buffets: the buffet at Aria and the buffet at The Cosmopolitan. This time, I

returned to sample some of what I had missed. This time, I made a stop at two buffets in the MGM hotel family: The Bellagio and MGM Grand Buffets.

The Buffet at Bellagio

Being one of the iconic hotels known for its musical fountains and Italian architecture, the buffet at the Bellagio was one of my top bucket list items during this trip. After landing in Las Vegas at 8:00 pm, I was ready for a late dinner at The Bellagio.

Personal rating: ★★★★★

The food

The pros: The selection of different American fares was impressive. I particularly enjoyed the crawfish and DIY sashimi section. There was a soda machine that allowed full customization of each drink. For example, mixing

sprite with vitamin water was not taboo here.

The cons: Despite the diverse American and European fare available, I found a lack of Asian cuisines and Mediterranean cuisines. The sashimi station did not have the freshest ingredients.

The ambience:

The atmosphere was dim and romantic compared to other more well-lit buffet scenes. The sheer size of the buffet meant I had to walk a whole two minutes to get from my seat to the buffet area.



The MGM Grand Buffet

After taking a break from buffets for the next day, I returned on the third day to experience the unique food options at the MGM grand. I decided to avoid the evening rush and arrived early at 4:00 pm for my feast.

Personal rating: ★★★★★ stars

The food:

The pros: One unique experience in this buffet was the made to order steak station. Despite not being a huge fan of steak, I ordered a medium rare American steak and was blown away at the tender texture and complex flavors of the cut. I was also glad there was a wider array of Asian and Mediterranean cuisines.

The cons: besides the made to order steak station, the other options were not unique in the Vegas buffet scene. The seafood was classic.

The ambience: Unlike the dimly lit romantic look of the Bellagio buffet, this buffet was bright and uplifting. Personally, I enjoyed the look more as I could clearly see my food and my friends at the table.

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



Course Exam

Brittany Daigle

HRMT 387 (Strategic Human Resource Management) is a three-credit upper-level business and administrative studies course that was designed to complement HRMT 386 / ORGB 386 (Introduction to Human Resource Management) or a similar course offered at another institution. As a result, HRMT 387 is not designed to cover all human resource management or employee relations issues addressed in such courses. This course has no required prerequisites; however, HRMT 386 or ORGB 386 is recommended.

Students should be aware that HRMT 387 is a cross-listed course, meaning that it is listed under two different disciplines with ORGB 387 (Strategic Human Resource Management). HRMT 387 cannot be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit in ORGB 387. This course is not available for challenge.

Strategic Human Resource Management is made up of three units, three assignments (theoretical) weighing twenty-five percent each, and a multiple-choice final examination worth the remaining twenty-five percent. The three units within this course cover some interesting topics, such as management, managing employee performance, managing employee relations, and international human resource management. In order to receive credit for HRMT 387, students must receive a grade of fifty percent or better on the final exam and achieve an overall course grade of at least fifty percent for the entire course.

Dr. Saud Taj started working at Athabasca University on July 1st, 2016 and has been the coordinator for HRMT 387 since September of 2016. Alongside HRMT 387, he coordinates HRMT 300 (Human Resource Planning). If you would like to learn more about Human Resource Planning, read my Course Exam article for HRMT 300.

I asked about his experience, and he stated, “I graduated from the University Of Glasgow (UK) in 2014 with a PhD in Strategic/International Human Resource Management and spent the first three years of my academic career teaching as a Lecturer of Human Resource Management at Glasgow Caledonian University (UK). I am an expert in the field of ‘Employer Branding’ and ‘Employee Engagement’ and have been researching these phenomena throughout my academic career. Hailing originally from a small city in Pakistan called Quetta; I started my career as a Customer Services Representative working for a telecom multinational operating in my home town. Due to my interest in teaching and learning, I joined a local public sector university, University of Balochistan, as a part-time lecturer of business and management in 2006. I wanted to build a career in academia, but I knew I had no way to survive until I earned a doctorate degree. Therefore, I started working toward it and was eventually successful in earning funding for PhD degree that resulted in my travel to Scotland to study a master’s degree at the University of Glasgow followed by the PhD.”

He continues, “I have always been very fond of playing cricket and wanted to become a professional cricketer but due to the unavailability of facilities in my home town, I decided to quit the sport and focus on my education to build a sustainable career. My wife is grateful I never became a sportsman due to the immense amount of sole travelling involved in it. My parents live in Pakistan and I have a young family and live with my wife Tabin and our 3 children; my gorgeous girl Saerene, and sons Muhammad, and Umer here. We chose to settle down in Canada due to the rich and peaceful family life this beautiful country has to offer. At the birth of our first child, Saerene, my wife and I went through a lot of emotional jerks that brought forth the philanthropist inside us and resulted in the creation of our on-demand delivery business called ‘Vdropp’ in 2017. The company is a ‘Social and Community Enterprise’ that aims at creating opportunities for our communities and bringing convenience to peoples’ lives with everything delivered to their door at affordable price. We intend to divert 50% of the company’s profits towards social and charitable causes specifically to help pregnant women and educate young children in poor countries. The young business is currently operating in four cities across two countries, Pakistan and Canada.”

Dr. Taj explains that, “HRMT 387 provides a strategic insight to Human Resource Management and extends a student’s understanding about HR’s role in strategic management. Students develop an understanding about HR’s role on the top tables and how crucial it is to deal with this management function in a proper way so as to ensure success and sustainability for the business. Students will learn about the laws and legal requirements in applying HR policies at the top level while also addressing diversity related issues. What excites me the most is the topics that this course covers in terms of HR management which will specifically interest students who intend to take HR as a career or want to pursue entrepreneurship interests as managing employees will be

their number one challenge. So this course kind of trains them to prepare rational HR strategies to guarantee business success."

He continues, "HRMT 387 is a well-structured course with three assignments worth twenty-five each and a multiple-choice final exam worth twenty-five percent. To obtain credits for HRMT 387, students must achieve a composite course grade of at least fifty percent and pass the Final Exam. Students will need to be well-organized and disciplined in their study approach to pass this course with flying colours."

As for advice, Dr. Saud Taj states "My advice is the same as above, be organized, plan in advance and you will have no problems at all."

When asked what he believes students will take away from this course, he states "This course has a lot to offer to students who wish to pursue HR careers or want to start their own businesses. It will teach them the real value and importance of HR as a business function in their organizations and how to best approach HR decisions at the top management level. They will also develop skills and knowledge about dealing with HR issues at the top level."

Whether HRMT 387 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or if the course content that was discussed above is of interest to you, this course will have you learning interesting material surrounding the topic of strategic human resource management.

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



Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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



AthaU Facebook Group

Alyssa seeks help looking for peer-reviewed articles; suggestions include AU's library and Google Scholar. Renee is looking for a course she can complete in one week; apparently, there are a few! Sharaya wonders if course extensions are possible for OSAP-funded students; responses suggest generally not.

Other posts include exam-free courses, MA-IS program, accessing completed courses, and courses FNCE 249, HUMN 201, INST 369, LGST 331, and PSYC 228.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Announcing an incredible opportunity for #AthabascaU students & alum: exclusive livestreaming of #SUCanSummit on April 23 & 24! Learn from the brightest minds & explore the possibilities of tech, while gaining a sense of the mindset that propels leaders. <https://t.co/Gk0s21MmrB>."

@austudentsunion tweets: "AUSU is hiring a new Governance and Advocacy Coordinator! This is a full-time staff position working out of our Edmonton office. Check out the full details on our website at <https://bit.ly/2G1EcAc>."

Gluten Free Doesn't Always Mean Healthy

Francesca Carone



As students, our lives are busy and can be demanding. We don't always have time to think about what we are eating but some people are concerned about what they eat.

The gluten-free diet has been striking up a lot of interest lately. Almost any grocery store now carries gluten-free products such as gluten-free cake mixes, pasta, bread, cereal, and even gluten-free nut milk. Many people buy into gluten-free alternatives because it's a new fad. The thing is, just because something is gluten-free doesn't mean it is healthier than non-gluten alternatives.

Gluten is only found in grains such as wheat, rye, barley, and some other grain products (which have remarkably less than those main three). It is not present in corn, nuts, fruit and vegetables, or coconut. But, for marketing reasons, these are often labeled as "gluten-free". I remember buying a bag of organic bean chips and seeing the label "gluten-free". I thought to myself, of course they are; beans don't have gluten anyway! But for those who have no allergies, or those who have not done research, they can easily be fooled by these labels into thinking it means extra work or care has been taken.

While avoiding gluten if you have an allergy is important, unless you are sure you are allergic to gluten (by taking a blood test), then you may just have an intolerance, or no allergy at all. Yes, if you have allergies this is important, and reading the label for hidden wheat is essential.

But let's get back to the health thing. Students are, more likely than not, pretty busy, and because of that, we look for quick option when it comes to eating. Gluten-free products usually contain the same ingredients as the other junk food which has gluten in it. They are just assumed to be healthier because of this new label, but this is not so.

Take for example gluten-free pretzel sticks. They will still have all the salt, sugar, and coloring that regular pretzels will have. Many people will just choose the gluten-free product (even when they do not have allergies) because they may assume it is healthier, after all, it is in the organic section. This is the same with organic products. Yes, they may be better in the sense that there are less chemicals in the products, but they are still loaded with unhealthy fats, sugars, and salts that the non-organic junk food contains as well.

The popularity of the "gluten-free" diet has caused people to somehow believe that if they only remove gluten products from their diet, they will be healthier. I understand, because I was one of them. My son has slight allergies to gluten, and I found this out 7 years ago, and since then our whole family has been gluten-free. This is mainly because it wouldn't be fair to eat products that my son couldn't eat and plus, according to a book I read called "Wheat Belly", wheat isn't really that healthy anyway.

But this diet caused me to trust these "gluten-free" products and gave me an illusion of being healthier. Then I started to read the ingredients and noticed that the main difference in the

products is the type of flour used. Not only that, but I noticed some gluten-free products had more unpronounceable ingredients than regular ones.

So, I guess the point is that it is important to read the ingredients and not just go by what the product is marketed as or what is written on the label. I know most students don't have a lot of time in the grocery store, but I think it is important to make a little extra time because it is your health after all. As they say, you are what you eat, or at least, you become what you eat.

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Top Gardening Tips and Tricks

Tara Panrucker



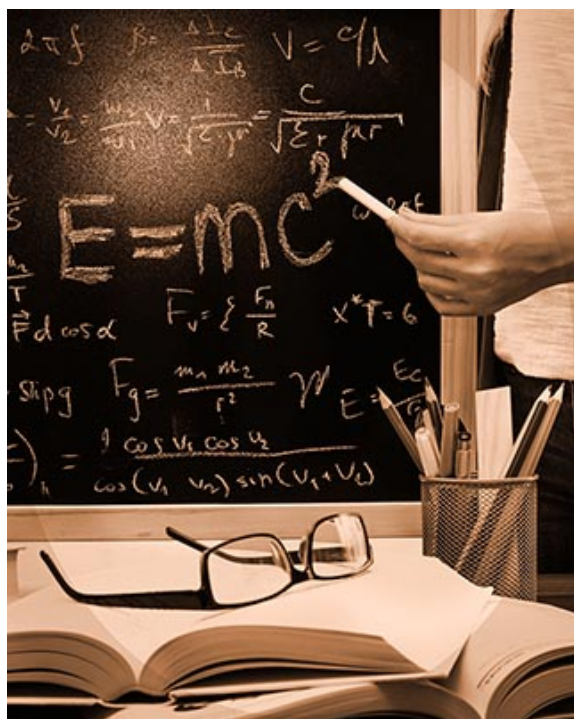
Now that you know all the benefits of cultivating your own garden, you're probably excited about all the delicious and fresh possibilities ahead. Still, you want guaranteed results with your hard work. Search no more, here are 15 tips and tricks gathered from skilled gardeners to assist you in creating the garden of your dreams—yum!

1. First, test new methods on a small part of your garden first. Handy garden ideas may work great in one area of Canada, but not in another. Start small and 'grow' from there.
2. Healthy soil will provide healthy plantings—it's that simple. Nutritious soil begins with healthy roots. You'll require organic matter (compost or manure) on top of the potting soil. This enriches soil with nutrients that help a garden thrive.
3. Improve plant longevity and the likelihood of blooms by aerating the soil twice a year. With an auger bit on a cordless drill, simply puncture holes throughout the garden area. Fill select holes with grit (gravel/sand). Aerating increases oxygen in the root zone, and that equals healthier plants.
4. Coffee grounds are a rich source of nitrogen for soil, so mix them in a compost pile with shredded paper or dry leaves. Nitrogen helps the 'good' microorganisms in soil to grow and reproduce.
5. Where slugs are a problem, eggshells have long been a solution. Crushed shells sprinkled around plants prevent slugs from damaging leaves since they don't like the sharp edges.
6. Collect your leftover winter bath Epsom salts, dissolve 15-30 ml in 1 litre of water, and add—in small quantities—to soil. It helps produce, such as tomatoes, develop due to its nutrient-rich magnesium sulfate, thus eliminating the need for expensive fertilizer.
7. A practical way to deter insects from plants is with a tin foil barrier. Wrap around squash or tomatoes—bugs don't like crossing aluminum foil.

8. You don't have to purchase expensive insecticide. Make your own with 5 ml liquid dish soap and 1 litre of water. Spray on infested plants. It suffocates or dehydrates them (I know it sounds awful, but you want to eat your vegetables). This insecticidal soap also does double duty for washing debris from leaves.
9. Many garden novices don't water long enough or deep enough. Spend roughly one-minute watering larger plants to reach the plant roots, but don't drown them.
10. Be mindful of placing plants (and pots) correctly. Plant shade plants in the shade and full sun plants in a sunny area. Eager gardeners succeed by planning ahead for seed and plant placement.
11. Additionally, equip yourself with a compass and figure out directions and where the sun faces in your garden. Doing so assists with ideal plant selection and placement.
12. Remember to create drainage holes in pots to avoid root rot. I place a layer of small rocks in the bottoms of all my pots and so far, so good.
13. Take notes on what works and doesn't in a gardening journal. This can become a rich source of material in the years of gardening ahead.
14. Don't give up gardening because a few plants died. It's inevitable to lose some plantings. Take note and move on.
15. Relax and let nature take its course. Gardening isn't rocket science, but it is miraculous when you discover how life insists on living—an excellent learning tool for children and grown-ups alike.

Get growing and don't wait for the weather to warm up. Start seeds inside because before you know it, the sun will shine again.

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



The Study Dude

Marie Well

Study Tips to Thrive—and Survive!

If you bombed your first year of university, don't fret. You can still survive and thrive. You don't need an Einsteinian brain either, but instead, a rigorous work ethic. And if you go to both AU and a physical university, I have a tip on how you can survive a nasty safe space.

Here are five tips on how to thrive and survive at university:

Tip 1: Practice through physical—and mental—rehearsal.

"People become faster at a task as the neural pathway for the action over time develops more myelination of nerve fibers and increased neurotransmitter storage at the related synaptic junction" (p. 138 of 243, 61%). As I learn this imaging software I've been using, I realize that it's not enough to watch tutorials and then try them out. It's better to watch the tutorials, try them out, and run the steps over and over in your head as you fall asleep. But take this further. If you can't remember a step, get out of

bed and relearn it. Keep rehearsing and correcting until you get all the steps down. Then go to sleep.

I've been wanting to master a jab-cross-hook-upper cut combination. For months, my right lead punches looked good but my left lead flailed. So, last night I mentally rehearsed the punches while I went to sleep. The next morning my punch form looked fantastic. Mental rehearsal corrected my months of bad form overnight. The same goes for your studies.

Tip 2: Aim high but seek social wisdom to survive.

"When you aim high, you are more likely to achieve high" (p. 142 of 243, 62%). But you're also more likely to wind up a target of jealousy. So, you need social wisdom. When I started getting top grades in math classes, I set my sights on claiming a PhD. But, along the way, I faced severe social backlash. Ironically, today's safe spaces would have been filled with my harassers. I would've had to seek a safe space from the safe spaces.

The wisdom of my boyfriend helped me survive. Given what he's taught me, here's my social survival tip for you: don't Google your issues. You'll likely find Western tips laced with anger and blame. Instead, Google your issue with the word "Buddhism" in the search field. You'll drum up positive tips—tips that turn you mindfully inward. No need to finger point. After all, "social wisdom includes letting a lot of little stuff go to facilitate maintaining good working relationships and a focus on the larger goals" (p. 153 of 243, 66%).

Tip 3: Sink a ton of time into your studies.

To master any topic, sink endless time into your studies. Dr. K. Anders Ericsson is quoted to have said it takes 10,000 hours to gain mastery. So, "how long does it take to reach 10,000 hours? Three hours of practice per day for a year is just a little over 1,000 hours. 'How can one accelerate the process?' You could practice more hours per day. Better yet, a good teacher, mentor, or coach can accelerate the learning curve" (p. 144 of 243, 62%).

Tip 4: Persistence trumps brains.

To master anything, you need persistence more than brains. The smarter kids in high school who didn't have a work ethic often bombed at university. It's the kids with the work ethic, not necessarily the brains, who get the PhD's. But if you have both a work ethic and the brains, there's nothing stopping you. Similarly, with wrestling, "many a muscle-bound opponent learned the hard way that muscles are for mirrors, and technique is where it's at" (p. 144 of 243, 63%). Once you study nonstop, broken up with an hour gym-time, you gain a serious edge.

Tip 5: But also take short breaks.

Take a five-minute break after every thirty minutes of study. I took fifteen-minute breaks every thirty minutes of study. With that kind of time off, I could've taken two extra courses. But outside of breaks, I didn't take any time off except gym time. "The big challenge is to develop a good new habit. Once established, it just takes a little discipline to maintain the good habit" (p. 147 of 243, 63%).

Author Wallace Wattles says it doesn't take brains to get rich. It takes doing certain things in a certain way—over and over again. So, don't let a bad year break your spirit. Instead, Google the words "success and Buddhism" and hit the books hard. And keep mentally rehearsing your goals until they appear in your GPA.

You've got a top student in you. So, survive and thrive at university.

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Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Failing Grade

Dear Barb:

Hi, I am just finishing my first year of university and I didn't do well. I am failing most of my courses and I don't think school is for me. The problem is my parents made such a big deal about me going to university, since I was the only one of three kids who wanted to pursue post-secondary education. They paid for everything and I feel really bad that they spent all that money for nothing. I haven't told them how I feel yet; they think I'm doing great. I'm not sure if I should try to go for another year and hope things get better and not tell them how bad I am doing, or should I be truthful and tell them school is not for me.

Help, Jonathan.

Hey Jonathan:

Many young people follow the group and go on to university because their friends are going without seriously considering whether University is for them. Then, like you, they realize part way through their first year they made a mistake. You are entitled to make a mistake, but before you make another decision make sure it is the right one for you. I sense a bit of hesitation in your letter, as you are contemplating going for another year before you drop out. If you decide to attend university for another year and you are not sure this is what

you want, you may just be adding more expenses for your parents. Plus, if you haven't passed your courses this year, you may end up with an additional year of failed credits. Twenty-six percent of university students end up dropping out. Before you tell your parents, you need to have an alternate plan. For example you may be going to work full time, or maybe try attending college. You can get a college degree in a much shorter time than a university degree and also obtain a successful career. Do you have any idea what career you would like to pursue? Possibly you need a year off to consider what you want to do. Your parents will be more receptive to you giving up university if you have an alternate plan. This will show them that you have given this serious thought and it's not just a whim. They may not readily accept your decision and may be angry or disappointed that you are not following through on your original plan, but try not to overreact and also become angry. Be the cool head. Show them that you are confident in your decision, whatever that may be. Ultimately it is your life and you need to do what feels right for you. Once your parents see that you are confident in your chosen path, I'm sure they will accept your decision, as parents just want their children to be happy.

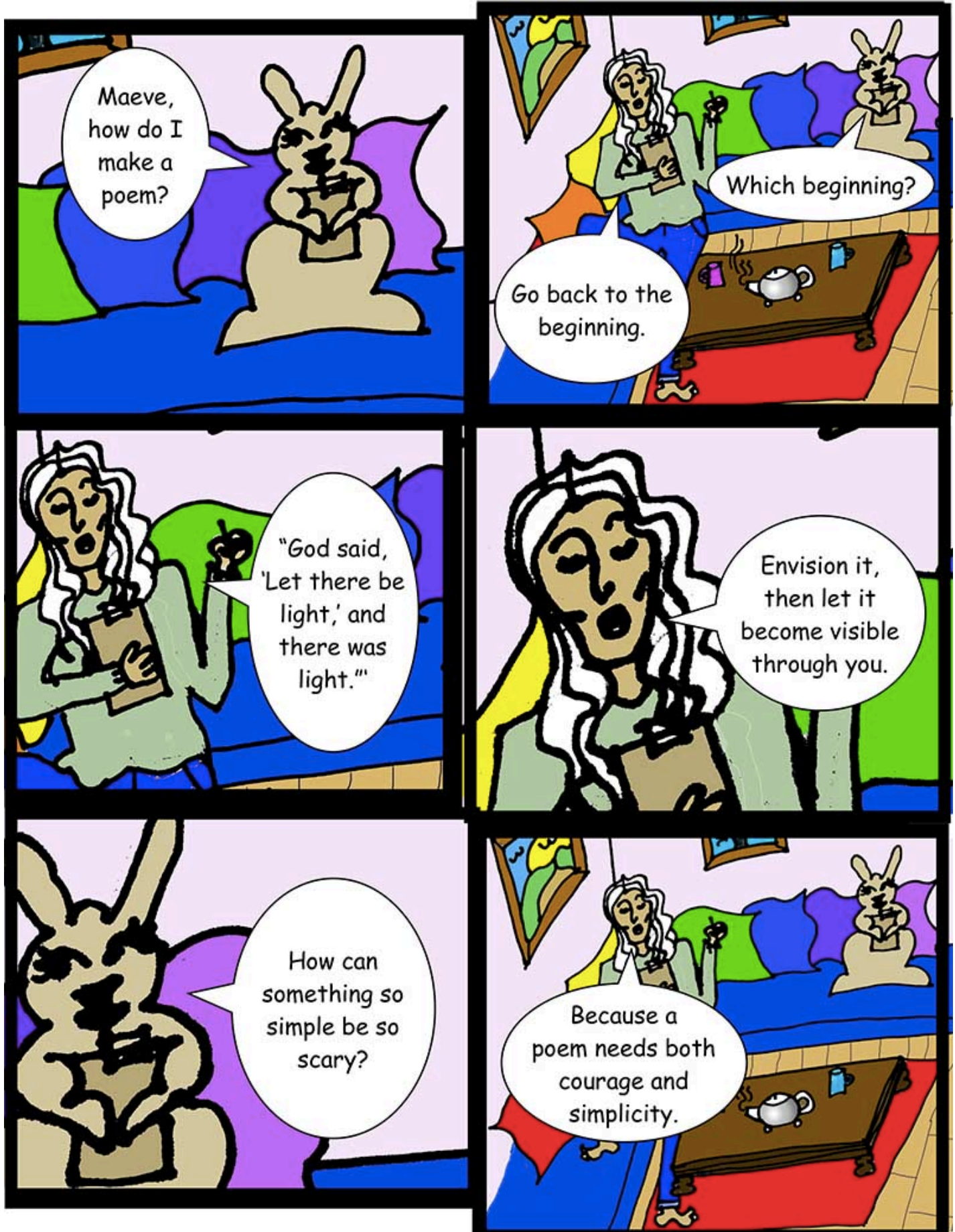
Good luck, Jonathan.

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
How to Make a Poem

Wanda Waterman



IMPORTANT DATES

- **Apr 15:** [May degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Apr 17:** [Edmonton Student Meet & Greet](#)
- **Apr 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for June](#)
- **May 9:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **May 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Jun 1](#)

Your Vote Matters!

April 16, 2019 is going to be a big day for Athabasca University students. If you live in Alberta, I am sure you are already aware this date is important because it's the final day to vote in the Alberta Provincial Election. So why does this affect you, as an AU student, even if you are not studying in Alberta?

The answer is that the Alberta Government oversees and funds AU. Changes that affect post-secondary education in Alberta often have a ripple effect on all AU students.

Find out more in this week's [Executive Blog!](#)

Get out the VOTE



AUSU's New Logo!

AUSU is proud to unveil our NEW logo! We decided it was time to create a new look to better represent ourselves as the Students' Union for Athabasca University undergraduate students. The intent behind the design was to create a fresh, bold look to keep it easy to recognize and able to serve AUSU long into the future!



AUSU will also be launching a new website soon! Stay tuned for the announcement!

AUSU Open Mic Podcast

AUSU is proud to announce the launch of our NEW podcast, AUSU Open Mic! AUSU Open Mic is a free podcast with episodes on a range of topics such as interviews, services, resources, advocacy, tips for students, and more.

Open Mic is also available free on [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), and [Pocket Casts](#) (search "AUSU Podcast").

Episodes:

[Episode One:](#) Podcast Launch

Join the AUSU executive team while they introduce the first episode of AUSU Open Mic, on location at the 2019 executive retreat. The team discusses officially naming the podcast, their favourite classes, and tips for balancing life, work, and studies at AU.

[Episode Two:](#) What Does AUSU Do for You?

Join the AUSU staff team as they discuss what AUSU has to offer its members!

[Episode Three:](#) From Punk Rocker to Cowboy

Join AUSU staff as they interview AUSU's President Brandon Simmons about balancing his work, life, and school!

New episodes soon. Visit our [website](#) for more!



CLASSIFIEDS

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

THE VOICE

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