



# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 32 2019-08-16

## **Minds We Meet**

Interviewing Students Like You!

## **The Slow Movement Movement** Taking the Time

## **Help is Out There** Mental Health at AU

*Plus:  
All A-Board!  
Seven Study Tips!  
and much more!*



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presented here are those  
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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  
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Even I don't look at it, it's  
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Volume 27, Issue 31

© 2019 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](http://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 All A-Board!

Karl Low



The UCP government of Alberta has made its first legal concrete moves (as opposed to those that a judge found concerning enough to reverse) toward post-secondary education. I don't think they're good ones.

They have started appointing/rewarding their cronies on the campaign trail, including failed UCP candidates, by putting them on various boards across the province. Including those of post-secondary institutions. Now, it is their right, and indeed is expected that they will make their own selections for various boards that reflect their own political ideology. I've got no issue with that.

However, there are two things I do take issue with. The first is that the UCP are not simply filling these positions as they come open, as the NDP government did before them, respecting the terms that the previous conservative government had provided. Instead, they are moving wholesale to simply replace anybody that the NDP appointed.

The second, more serious problem is that most of the people they are appointing have almost zero connection, experience, or relevance to the fields that

the boards they're being appointed to control. It has been noted that most of the people the UCP has seen fit to appoint were all primarily people involved on the boards of oil and gas industries within the province, where they were not failed UCP candidates or large donors to the UCP cause.

For Athabasca University, our new board chair is Nancy M. Laird. Unlike the previous chair, Vivian Manasc, who had some considerable experience with Athabasca University (including helping design AU's own architecture program) today marks the first day of Ms. Laird's involvement with AU, at least from what I can find of her resume and experience. Her education was all completed in Ontario, and the only connection I can find to Alberta education is that she was once a board member of SAIT Polytechnic back in the early 2000s. Her primary claim to fame seems to be as a president and director for various oil and gas projects and companies, especially in the marketing departments.

Which is great. If you want to run a university like a business, making sure to cut off all the non-profitable ventures (aka everything that involves helping students once you have their tuition money) and focus only on the profitable ventures (aka research and development of technologies that might support the oil and natural gas industries, and marketing to get new students).

Another appointee to the board includes Mr. Bryan Berg, a managing director at CIBC world markets. He, at least, was educated in Alberta, so may have some idea about how the system works. His major? Petroleum Engineering, of course. His work in education before now? None he felt worth mentioning on his own linked in page.

The final new appointee to the Athabasca board is Ilario (Larry) Spagnolo. Mr. Spagnolo is probably the most appropriate of the new appointees when it comes to Athabasca University as he not only graduated from NAIT, but was on the board of it for a time, and is currently the Vice President of Emerson Automation System's spin off company Zedi, concentrating on Cloud SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) systems. Cloud systems and data acquisition have been something that Athabasca University has been looking at for some time now in an effort to improve and modernize their course delivery systems and to make them work better for students. However, if you're one of those students that dislikes e-texts, I think you should get used to seeking your own solutions.

Of course, none of this means that these people come into this position with anything but the best interests of AU students at the forefront of their minds, but certainly there's nothing in their backgrounds that suggests this will be the case, or that they'll be able to integrate with AU's own organizational culture, to say nothing of the wider culture of an academic institution. Corporate boards are useful for running corporations, but academic institutions, especially universities, are a different beast, one where profit simply cannot be the first concern.

Still, this is what we in Alberta voted for. I'll remain hopeful that my first impressions are too cynical, and that what will result won't be a lessening of the idea that a university is supposed to search for new truth in the unknown, often failing in the hopes of sea-change advancements. That instead of being relegated to a super-charged technical institute – confined to refining and making iterative progress on what we know already works, these new members will see the advantage in Universities being a place of risk and creativity. Reaching for things that may have no obvious value now, because we're reaching for what may be of worth in the future we don't know yet. Enjoy the read!

## Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

#### AthaU Facebook Group

You can't escape the cute cat pictures anywhere on the internet. Kari shows how her cat loves receiving textbooks just as much as she does. (Good luck doing that with e-texts!) Kevin asks about out of province pricing, as the figures for tuition don't seem to match his receipts. Students point out that there are materials fees and others added on. Casey asks about delaying exams when booking through AU and Proctor U, it's noted that within 10 days can be done without involving AU. Also being discussed, delays in grading, using RRSPs for education, and balancing employment with AU studies.

#### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "Have you had the chance to learn about our trailblazing AU MBA alumni @denise\_pothier? Denise is of French Acadian and Mi'kmaq heritage, and earned one of Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100™ Awards from @WXN. #NationalAcadianDay #FeteNationaleAcadie"

@austudentsunion tweets: "Being a student can be tough. Being a student while juggling work, family & health can be even tougher. If you are struggling and need someone to talk to, there is help available, through @AthabascaU's Homewood Health program. <https://bit.ly/2G8Jxm8>"



# MINDS WE MEET



*Donna Canfield hops between BC and Alberta while taking her studies. She is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of General Studies program and hopes to eventually be a police officer, a SWAT team agent, or an DEA agent. 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? What program are you in? Do you like your program?**

My name is Donna Canfield, I live in Edmonton, Alberta and Sicamous, British Columbia. I travel between the two houses and I'm completing the Bachelor of General Studies program. So far, I'm loving the options that I have in my program and I am really enjoying the courses I'm taking right now! University has been very different from high school for me, in a good way.

**Describe the path that led you to AU. What was it that made you realize you wanted to go back to school, and what pushed you into the program you've signed up for?**

When I was in grade ten, I left public high school to complete all of my schooling online. I wanted to be

able to travel and spend time away from the classroom, and I discovered that I learn really well on my own without much help. I've always wanted to go to university, and AU was a perfect option for me as I could travel and get an education.

**Any advice for people who are on the fence about going back to school?**

I would advise anyone who is considering returning to post-secondary to follow their gut feeling and do what would make them happy.

**What do you do like to do when you're not studying? Any hobbies?**

In the winter, I snowmobile a lot and, in the summer, I spend a lot of time on the boat and I also enjoy dirt biking. Living in both Alberta and British Columbia gives me a lot of opportunities to try new things and meet new people. I also enjoy exercising and painting when I'm taking a break from studying, it helps to release any stress and improve my mood.



**What are your plans for this education once you finish?**

I am hoping to finish my bachelor's degree and hopefully apply for a masters in something. I have a lot of education in occupational health and safety so I would like to work as an OH&S officer for a few years, but ultimately, I'd like to pursue a career in criminal justice or psychology.

**What would be your dream job?**

My dream job would definitely be a police officer, SWAT team or DEA agent. I think it would be rewarding to help others and protect people from danger.

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

My mom has always encouraged me to continue my education and go to university. She was very smart in high school and college and she went on to become an amazing nurse. She was always there to help me with my school work if I needed it and she always supported me no matter what I was doing.

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

As I mentioned, I started online learning in grade ten and I like it a lot better than classroom learning. I learn better on my own and I work through courses very quickly. I started my degree about seven months ago and I already have over fifty credits. Sometimes, it gets lonely working on courses all by myself, which is the only part I don't like about it. I manage to find lots of time to spend with my friends and family though.

**At what point did you waver the most about continuing your schooling? What caused it and what got you through it?**

I never questioned my choice to go back to school. I graduated high school six months early and I always knew that I would go to university in the following winter. I like learning about new things, and I value my education a lot.

**What's your favorite AU course that you have taken so far, and why? Would you recommend the course to others?**

PSYC 350 (Adolescent Psychology) has been my favorite course. As an adolescent myself, it was interesting to learn about our brains and how we function, and also the influence that others have on us. It was also interesting to learn about other cultures and how adolescents differ in other countries. I would definitely recommend this course to others.

**What have you given up to go to AU that you regret the most? Was it worth it?**

The traditional "high school and university experience", and every bit of it was worth it. I don't have to sacrifice my evenings and nights to write an essay that's due the next day, and if I don't feel like studying, I don't have to. I have lots of time for my family and friends, and I can enjoy my life while still getting an education. All of my other university friends complain about how stressed and tired they are, and I really can't relate, which is a good thing.

**How do you find communications with your course tutors?**

I like to learn by myself, so I hardly ever contact my tutors. When I do, they are very responsive and answer any questions I have. If I felt like I was stuck and really needed their help, I feel like I could rely on them. Most of them are really friendly and you can tell that they enjoy their jobs.

**What's your pet peeve if you have one?**

People who lack motivation for simple tasks and would rather not do anything at all than do a satisfactory job. I once heard from someone that anything worth doing is worth doing an adequate amount of work instead of striving for perfection. If you have an essay due that you

have no idea how to start, you don't just give up, at least try to write something and get half points. So many people are so unmotivated, and I think it's becoming a problem for employers and professors.

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

I would want to meet Robin Williams. I have been told by many people that I have a great sense of humour and I can see the good parts in everything, and I think it would be interesting to share that with and speak with the funniest person of all time. He was such a knowledgeable, wise man and he always seemed so happy, which is the kind of person I try to be. It's a good reminder to others to make sure your friends are okay and help them through any tough times.

**What has been the proudest moment in your life?**

Receiving my high school diploma six months early when I considered dropping out in grade 9. I didn't like classroom learning and I wanted to quit, which is why I'm so glad that I found online learning and was able to make it work for myself. Without online learning and AU, I would have a really limited education. I worked so hard for my diploma and I was so proud that I finally made it when I received the diploma in the mail.

**Describe one thing that distinguishes you from most other people.**

I don't struggle with deadlines at all. I've always finished my courses and assignments at least four months early and I can finish assignments very quickly. I like reading and writing, so I don't have any issues with course extensions or deadlines. I am really proud of myself motivation and the discipline I have to be able to meet every single deadline.

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

Any education at all is very important and valid. It doesn't matter if you're completing a certificate, one-month course, diploma or a PhD., any education is something to be proud of and no one should feel bad about the courses they have taken. It's so important to learn and strive for success. Those who have some form of education should be proud of themselves and value the knowledge they have.

**Have you traveled? Where has life taken you so far? Out of the places you have been to, which was your favorite and why?**

I've been to several of the states in the US, also Mexico and the Dominican Republic. My favorite place that I've visited was Seattle. I liked seeing the big city and meeting a whole bunch of new people in a large city and seeing how successful the educated ones were. It's my dream to save a lot of money and live in a big city with no financial issues. I'd love to save enough money to live comfortably and spend money on the luxuries, and a lot of people in Seattle pursue that lifestyle.

**What non-AU book are you reading now?**

*Goodnight Stranger* by Miciah Bay Gault.

**Could you describe the book? Would you recommend the read?**

It's about a family who has a stranger show up at their house and claim that he is their younger brother. The family has to find out if he's real or not. I'm really enjoying the book right now because I like mystery and crime novels. I would definitely recommend it to those who are also interested in novels of those genres.

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





## The Slow Movement Movement (and Six Good Reasons to Join it)

Wanda Waterman



"Slow down, you're movin' too fast  
You got to make the morning last  
Just kicking down the cobblestones  
Looking for fun and feelin' groovy"

- Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, "The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)"

Not to be confused with the various types of "the slow \_\_\_\_\_ movement," an umbrella term for a host of cultural practices that together comprise a reaction to the fast pace life has taken on in the last 50 years or so: the slow food movement, the slow education movement, the slow travel movement,

and similar crusades have helped millions get off the treadmill long enough to realize how unhappy they were hurrying through pointless tasks in pursuit of questionable goals.

Today I'm offering a new category to the blessed coterie of slow movers: *slow movement*, by which I mean exactly what it sounds like—the practice of moving more slowly.

Do you leap out of bed the moment the alarm rings and race to the shower? You're mad. Do you spend three or more days a week at the gym, sweating and panting to up your pulse rate? You don't get that time back. Is your day scheduled so tightly that you leap from one task to another without time to shift gears? You need my help.

Here are six reasons why you need to stop moving so fast and start feelin' groovy:

1. The scientific jury is in. Moderate regular exercise improves physical and mental health. Longer periods of faster exercise don't in themselves prevent diabetes or heart disease *or* help you lose weight, live longer, get smarter, or be more productive. Exercise programs like yoga, tai chi, and walking meditations, on the other hand, have wonderful effects on longevity and are actually quite pleasant to carry out. If you're concerned about your cardiovascular health, there are plenty of slow exercises that can raise your heart rate long enough to build fitness. Swimming, cross-country skiing, cycling, hiking, and many other activities can all be done slowly, granting health benefits with less risk than you'd face on a squash court.
2. Doing anything under time pressure increases your level of stress for the duration of that task. This tires you out, weakens your immune system, and demands longer recovery time.
3. If you rush to finish a task that would normally take an hour, you might, if you're lucky, shave ten minutes from the job. If you do that all day you may end up with an extra hour. What amazing and world-changing thing are you going to achieve in that hour, if you don't pile it up with more rushed jobs or use it to flake out after having pushed the stress button repeatedly all day?
4. If you're honest with yourself, you'll admit that what you really want to do is to just stop. Stop worrying about time, stop performing meaningless tasks, stop long enough to enjoy life and feel at peace. The world says that to gain a peaceful, happy future you have to

always be in a hurry now, but that's only because the world doesn't want you to stop long enough to realize how absurd its demands are. Tell the world to shut up; you can stop, or at least slow down, any time you want.

5. Slow movement with plenty of pauses is the best thing for reflection and creative inspiration. Sitting beside that stream might help you solve that engineering problem, come up with an idea for a book, figure out that formula, or decide on a change of course in your life. Doing yoga can teach you tranquil contentment in the now. Prayer and meditation can bring meaning and fullness to your life. These are the things that money can't buy.
6. If money does matter, which it does for all of us to some extent, slow movement may or may not fatten your bank account (time is funny that way), but it will most certainly increase your time wealth. Having ample time is better than money in the bank, which is why rich people will pay so much to get it.

Slow movement doesn't mean wasting time. It's a way of taking control of your time. This may mean limiting the time you're willing to give certain tasks, both to train yourself to get them done faster and to reduce time stress. This will free up more time for important things like drinking tea by the window and watching the rain fall before moving slowly through your day.

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



## Help is Out There

**Cindy B. Sternberg**



Anxiety affects every facet of a student's life, and stress is a significant roadblock to our success. There are deadlines and coursework in multiple courses, exams looming, home-life, and expenses and responsibilities to consider. Taken all in one day, we can burden ourselves into a massive anxiety attack. This attack can take hours to resolve, with or without medication, then all of the things we mean to do on that day are delayed. The worry about missing those hours compounds the problem, possibly ending a student's career before reaching their degree.

But Athabasca University has created a strong support network to help students cope with day to day struggles. Through careful acknowledgement of the problems an online learner may face, Athabasca University has taken steps to assist us in all areas of mental health and educational counselling. There is help for students suffering from anxiety, whether due to exams or just the day to day pressure that may accompany online learning. Mental health and wellness services are essential, and Athabasca University continues to recognize the need for mental health services.

These services were first provided by Athabasca University Student Union; they offered the Student Lifeline counselling from 2015 to the 2018 transition to Homewood Health Services now provided by AU. The new service presents the support of qualified mental health personnel, with a 24-hour helpline, as well as web-based support. Sometimes, all a person needs is an impartial listener, but private counselling is available. AU's site tells us that Homewood has service in 150 languages by certified staff with a minimum of a master's level degree. Services are accessible by phone and any electronic device.

Homewood Health online topics include childcare and parenting, elder and family care, and grief and relationship counselling, with many other subjects available concerning our endeavours with online learning. Services cover all of the issues beyond school, because everything going on in life can intrude into learning hours. With online learning, our designated study hours are crucial, so it wouldn't go over well to have work or legal issues distracting us. Moreover, Homewood Health offers everything from legal and financial information through to cognitive behavioural therapy online.

Along with mental health services, students will discover excellent counselling support in MY AU for other things such as academic progress and direction, because sometimes it is difficult to choose our educational path. Finding our way is more comfortable with qualified counsellors standing there at the entrance of the path, reaching out a helping hand to a suffering student. Take that hand! Information regarding Homewood Health is available on the Athabasca University site along with Athabasca career counselling, Career Cruising and Undergraduate Student Orientation. Furthermore, AUSU still offers support through forums, bursaries, and other essential services like discounts on dental and eyewear.

So, anxiety and stress in the way? Connect with Homewood or AUSU right on your computer or phone any time. Let nothing stand in the way of your academic success.

#### References

[http://counselling.athabascau.ca/student\\_support.php](http://counselling.athabascau.ca/student_support.php)

<https://news.athabascau.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Homewood-Health-Oct-2018.pdf>

<https://www.ausu.org/services/student-wellness/mentalhealth/>

## Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** FormSwift Scholarship Program

**Sponsored by:** FormSwift

**Deadline:** September 15, 2019

**Potential payout:** \$1000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be graduating high school, or be enrolled in a post-secondary institution as described in the [eligibility requirements](#).

**What's required:** An email with contact and school info, along with a business plan infographic on one of the suggested topics.

**Tips:** Check out FormSwift's [Business Plan](#) page for clues to what your infographic should cover.

**Where to get info:** [formswift.com/startup-scholarship](http://formswift.com/startup-scholarship)





## The Study Dude

### Seven Study Tips and Tricks

Marie Well



From worries to solving calculus, all students have issues. But, like owners of Pitbulls, we've got to manage those hounds. So, here are seven study tips and tricks to keep your study issues from gnarling your GPA:

**Tip 1: Snap your study schedule.** If you study at AU and a physical university, before “the first day of school, take a picture of your schedule and set it as your lock screen on your phone, so you always have it handy” (p. 8 of 295, 3%). Best idea ever! Plus, place photocopies of your schedules in every one of your textbooks. And why not make another photocopy for your wall?

But you might study strictly at AU and not combined with a physical university. If so, draft up your own schedule to lock screen on your phone. Lock it up to keep it from biting.

**Tip 2: Solve most anything with an app.** “If you're having trouble with a math problem, plug the equation into [www.WolframAlpha.com](http://www.WolframAlpha.com) and it will solve it for you” (p. 8 of 295, 3%). Best app on the planet. It has all kinds of subjects from which to make calculations. You can even find out how many pages equates to your word count. For instance, 70,000 words equals 140 pages single-spaced, takes nineteen hours to type, and four hours to silently read. It's all on the app.

**Tip 3: Google prior exams.** “Studying for an important test? Google ‘site:edu [subject] exam’”. You'll get a bunch of different college exams with problems similar to what may be on your test” (p. 10 of 295, 4%). Don't hesitate to do this for a calculus class. One search for ‘site:edu math exam’ brought up a site listing many calculus exams with fully worked out solutions. From my experience, to gain top student status in math, we need fully worked out solutions.

**Tip 4: Let scholarships pay your education.** “The iPhone app Scholly shows you thousands of potential scholarship opportunities that any student can apply for” (p. 14 of 295, 6%). I found many apps listing scholarships, including international scholarships (see *College Scholarships* app). But don't just apply for one; apply for them all. When I took on this strategy, I won \$24,000 in a SSHRC scholarship for grad studies. You'll be frothing when your first scholarship arrives in the mail. But make sure you have a prof critique your proposal before you submit.

**Tip 5: Get an online solutions manual.** “The site <http://www.Mathway.com> solves all kinds of math homework problems with step-by-step explanations” (p. 14 of 295, 6%). You can even upload a picture of a math problem, and this site will solve it. Technology makes learning easy.

**Tip 6: Don't fret when you misplace your bibliography.** “Need to cite a quote from a book? Don't bother looking through every page to find it! Simply type the quote into Google Books and it will tell you the page number automatically” (p. 20 of 295, 8%). The worst case scenario is having to drop a quote because you've lost the citation. Now, you can Google Book it. Keep those references from running wild.



**Tip 7: Watch your worries boost your GPA.** If an exam causes stress, take comfort, “writing down your worries before taking an exam has been proven to actually boost your test scores” (p. 36 of 295, 13%). Possibly, writing your worries reveals areas you need to study. And journaling lowers stress, too. The pen replaced anti-anxiety medication for me. And offered a half-a-decade cure. Now that’s keeping the hound at bay.

These seven tips and tricks can boost your grades—and help you manage the hounds. So, when the neighborhood Pitbull growls behind a two-foot fence, it may gnarl your boot, but never your GPA.



## The Not-So Starving Student

### Four Types of Bubble Tea

**Xin Xu**



One drink that has taken the world by storm is the iconic bubble tea. Often the first thing that comes to mind is a clear cup filled with milk tea with tapioca “bubbles” at the bottom of the cup. The tapioca and other toppings added give bubble tea a certain flare quite unlike any other drink. But did you know that there are in fact different categories and types of bubble tea that exist? Let’s take a look at 4 different types of bubble teas and what to expect.

#### **Milk bubble tea**

The milk bubble tea is a classic that first-timers oftentimes try. It is made from fresh milk or constituted milk that has been added to red or green tea. Sometimes customers can also decide on the level of sugar (0%, 25%, 50% and 100% sugar levels) and ice used in the drink. The milk bubble tea originated from Taiwan and has been a hit in Asia first before moving to North America and Europe. On my most recent trip to Shanghai, milk bubble tea or boba tea was so popular that a tea shop would be found at almost every street corner.

#### **Real fruit bubble tea**

Unlike the milk bubble tea, real fruit bubble tea is a not only a refreshing alternative but also helps eliminate the fat content of the tea. For customers on a diet or wishing to change up the flavor profile, real fruit bubble tea like its name uses freshly cut fruits mixed with tea for a healthy alternative (so long as sugar is kept to a minimum).

#### **Salted milk cap**

Salted milk cap is a variety of bubble tea that offers an unique twist to the traditional milk tea. While the body of the tea can be customized to either a milk-based boba tea or juice-based boba tea, the milk cap is a foamy, salty topping that sits on the surface of the tea. You might wonder, “Who would want to drink foam?” but in fact because of the saltiness of the topping, the milk cap changes the flavor of the traditional bubble tea entirely. Sweet and salty is a delicious combo that can be enjoyed in several ways. For those who like savory flavors more, there is a special opening on top of the bubble tea lid that allows customers to sip the milk cap while enjoying the tea. For those wanted a combination of sweet of salty at once, shaking the contents will mix the foam cap with the tea itself offering a blend with a pleasantly surprising flavor.



Left to right: milk bubble tea, salted milk cap, real fruit tea (grapefruit), another salted milk cap

### Smoothie bubble tea

While traditional bubble tea does not have ground up ice or ice shavings, Westernized varieties might choose to blend the tea, milk and ice in a blender. The content becomes a slushie like quality that is especially cooling drink that's perfect for the summer.

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



### Fly on the Wall

#### The Causes and Consequences of Inspiration, Part II



### Jason Sullivan

#### What's In This House, A Base and A Superstructure

We're trained, said Althusser, to think simultaneously on two levels—the first cultural, the second economic. This second level is actually the base of the first (as we know when we buy something our heart yearns to possess; it's our money that does the talking in the end) and, as such, prevails in terms of an ideology that speaks with a language of inspiration and fulfilment while masking the essentially alienating components of daily life and labour. When writing an

essay, the desire for a mark pleasing to our image of an ideal paper runs up against the fact that we are here not only to recount what our spongy minds have absorbed but also to demonstrate this new knowledge in action. Our economic minds, frugal and pragmatic, run up against the creative flow that true learning stimulates.

Althusser sees this metaphor of two levels as key to understanding how ideology is reproduced while its origins remain obscure. “This representation of the structure of every society as an edifice containing a base (infrastructure) on which are erected the two ‘floors’ of the superstructure, is a metaphor, to be quite precise, a spatial metaphor: the metaphor of a topography. Like every metaphor, this metaphor suggests something, makes some thing visible. Precisely this: that the upper floors could not ‘stay up’ (in the air), if they did not rest precisely on their base” (Althusser, online). That the economic base of our life supports the personal superstructure of our lifestyle is beyond question; we know we need to make money to live and buy things. However, this reality runs deeper into our subjectivity. When we seek inspiration, we are plumbing a well of experience and imagination that has been sunk, as it were, through a lifetime of immersion in our culture and its ideology. To think new new thoughts would be to realize the pastiche that has gone into our makeup to begin with, and, from there, to see our course material as a launching pad out of our typical responses to stimuli, including those that appear to gather steam out of nowhere. Ingenious approaches are made of seeing the stuff we’re made of and then imagining it all anew.

Realizing we’re in ideology—waist deep and wading in it—even in moments of whimsy, goes a long way to applying critical thinking skills when we write our assignments. Especially in the social sciences, the idea isn’t to regurgitate what we’re taught but to press the point further and elsewhere. After all, it’s the so-called real world that is built on illusions and pipe dreams, not our academic realms. Althusser illustrates that “Ideology, then, is for Marx an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream, empty and vain, constituted by the ‘day’s residues’ from the only full and positive reality, that of the concrete history of concrete material individuals materially producing their existence (Althusser, online).

To evade or rethink ideology is therefore to interrogate and reconsider the thoughts that come to us naturally, including inspirational thoughts. We make of life what we get in life; to transcend those mental bounds and be truly creative we have to think away from our comfort zone and even our intuition. So, if you’re proverbially stuck for assignment themes, or thinking the same paragraph topic sentences over and over, maybe try something new to knock loose new and better ideas. Maybe just a facial hose off, it can work like a cranial reset button I swear!

### **A Key Background Lynchpin**

Althusser noted that, rather than use a descriptive model to understand the beliefs that subtly dominate our lives in our historical epoch, we must look at understanding how these ideas reproduce themselves, how they make spores, and how these germinate to impregnate future generations and reproduce structural inequalities. Althusser’s approach was relatively new in the field of North American sociology; previously the staid structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons had held sway along with its belief that everything social happens for the reason of upholding stability for all. Instead, Althusser identified a number of what he termed Ideological State Apparatuses—including educational facilities.

Each ISA worked to uphold social stratification that benefited those who owned the means of production in society at the expense of the majority. As such, thinkers outside of this hegemonic framework were systematically excluded, and their potential pupils were streamed toward ideas preferred by those in power. Today this translates into young students aspiring to be on Dragon’s

Den rather than starting an art collective, or wishing to sing elegant karaoke rather than be their own songwriter. For us at AU, no matter the practical goals of our education, we might consider which elective we *really* want to take.

For Althusser, the question of ideology was clearly one of how it could be changed. That led inexorably to the question of how to hear the bell of inspiration and ask who was doing the ringing. For inspiration to look right or read right, it has to match expectations, and at AU we want to set the bar high not only to meet our tutor's expectations but also our own.

### **From Miracles to Materialism**

For some philosophers, all action was caused by a twinkle in a cosmic eye giving birth to our creative fruition here on terra firma. By Althusser's time, the all-too human social reality of ideas was calcified in terms of social stratification and business considerations. We can learn something from this as the bounds of our learning grow: nothing is just as it appears, not even our flashes of inspiration. We're the outcome of social and physiological processes and that extra magical bit that sets our fingers alight upon the keyboard has, at least in part, been forged by the same social sphere that leads us to more mundane pursuits.

Of course in schooling, as in life, we at AU know we can't just follow our willy-nilly pleasure if we want good grades. Much of a good assignment is still about painting inside the lines. Unlike certain brick and mortar settings, which shall remain nameless to protect the guilty, there are no easy A's at Athabasca. This in no small way is owing to the fact that we must actually read and study the course material on offer and demonstrate knowledge we've actually acquired, rather than simply bloviate discursively in class discussions. True inspiration involves an elegant mix of what we've learned with whatever new ideas spring forth, lavalike, from the subtlety of our mind's eye.

To be really creative it helps to bear in mind that, even while we are drifting down thoughtful tributaries, there remain the tidal forces of prevalent unspoken ideology thinking along with us just beneath the surface. Our minds are like estuaries of our vast unconscious ocean. Inspiration may not be divine but it sure is special. To reach new ground from these flashes of insights means to think over and over again about what we think we know, or what comes naturally to our fervent thoughts, and to think new ideas even against the grain of what feels right. To think critically is to question what we think we think; to think critically is nothing other than to consider multiple perspectives upon the same, seemingly-self evident, object of thought.

Academic success isn't about being forced to put lipstick on a pig, or on ourselves, but we do want to be academically aware that what seems clearly and distinctly true arose from elsewhere. We were inscribed with culture and language and ideology before we entered school and one of our greatest learnings at AU may be to realize and identify this fact.

Summer days may be a bit of a study struggle but if we give ourselves a break and think about why and wherefrom our moments of inspiration originate then good things can happen. At the very least, we'll be cooled to the core.

### *References*

Althusser, L. (1970). *La Pensee*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>.

*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.*



## The Fit Student

### The Secret to Winning at Collegiate Sports

Marie Well



Physical universities offer students sports teams and intramurals. But what if you study at AU and want to get serious about sports? I personally think sports offer the best extracurricular a student could choose. Sports make you healthier, fitter, mentally sharper, and better looking. And you might even go pro.

Talk about pros, author Sarah McMahon, on a typical day, practices running three hours, does one hour of weightlifting, spends three hours in class, and studies for three hours (n.d.). That level of rigor demands the winning

attitude. And, within us, we've all got a winning attitude.

To win at both sports *and* studies, we *must* have that winning attitude: "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude in life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do" (Charles Swindoll as cited in McMahon, location 51 of 673, 7%).

Simple tweaks to my attitude opened doors. Within a month of changing my attitude, I've secured happier relationships, fewer health issues, and a promising new career.

Weirdly, I used to think attitude didn't matter as much as good looks. My grandma looked like a 20-year-old supermodel when she was 50. Even in her 90's, Grandma had perfect hair and flawless fashion-sense. But even supermodels can endure low self-esteem and suffering. And a perfect 10 supermodel can have a 1-out-of-10 attitude; whereas, a 1-out-of-10 unattractive person can have a perfect 10 attitude. Grandma was a 10-out-of-10 on all scales, in my opinion. But when it comes to happiness, I'll take attitude over looks any day.

Talk about a great attitude—*and* good looks—a tall blonde barista I knew served as captain of her soccer team. In fact, she ended up in leadership roles wherever she went. She smiled all the time and rarely seemed out of sorts. She even donated her long blonde locks to charity. She had the right attitude: "maintaining positivity will enable you to: be open minded, inspire and lead your teammates, overcome difficult losses or circumstances, motivate people to want to help you, be happier" (location 51 of 673, 7%).

Her good looks came not just from her health and fitness—but mostly from her smile. She smiled at everyone. I'm no supermodel, but I try to make myself look upbeat. Not with makeup or expensive clothes. (I can't afford either.) But with good posture, tiptop health, a warm tone, and a love-filled smile.

The worst thing you can do for both attitude and appearance is complain. "I'm sure you know plenty of people, maybe even teammates of yours, who complain a lot. Even if the complaint is

as simple as ‘I’m so not feeling practice today,’ it indicates negativity, which can make everyone else negative too, or just really piss everyone off. Negativity is contagious, but so is positivity” (lesson 51 of 673, 7%).

I believe that, to be a winner, you need to be selfless. “When you start to give (advice, energy, love) without expecting anything in return, you are selfless” (location 117 of 673, 17%). And when you give, everyone wins. And what you give grows more powerful within you. That’s the beauty of selflessness.

But selflessness might leave us vulnerable, right? Not at all. If we practice selflessness, we flourish with self-confidence and self-love: “It takes considerable amount of self-confidence to be selfless .... Confidence, not arrogance, in oneself translates to confidence in other people” (location 133 of 673, 20%). That makes you a team player. And “student athletes need confidence to be successful athletically, but also to be successful academically” (location 148 of 673, 22%).

#### References

McMahon, Sarah. (n.d.). *Striking the Balance: 8 Tips for Student Athlete Success*. E-book.



#### Course Exam

#### Brittany Daigle

PSYC 435 (Abnormal Psychology) is a three-credit, upper-level psychology course that examines human behaviors and mental phenomena that diverge widely from the normal. This course has no prerequisites, however, PSYC 289 (Psychology as a Natural Science), PSYC 290 (General Psychology), and PSYC 356 (Introduction to Personality Theories and Issues) are strongly recommended.

If you are interested in learning more about Psychology as a Natural Science or General Psychology, read my PSYC 289 or PSYC 290 course exam articles.

Students should note that PSYC 435 cannot be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for PSYC 335. This course has a challenge for credit option if interested.

Abnormal Psychology is made up of seventeen units, with five quizzes weighing five percent each, a term paper worth thirty-five percent, and a final examination for forty percent. This course covers several interesting topics such as anxiety, personality disorders, schizophrenia, mental health, abuse, eating disorders, mood disorders, and neurocognitive disorders. To receive credit for PSYC 435, students must complete all of the course assignments and achieve a composite course grade of at least a “D” or fifty percent, and a grade of at least fifty percent on the final examination.

Heather Guerette is a forty-one-year-old living in Sarnia, Ontario with her three children and husband. She enrolled at AU in 2013 and plans to graduate in June of 2020. She is currently

enrolled in the three-year Bachelor of Arts program with a concentration in psychology and has taken PSYC 435.

She provides a bit about herself, stating “I have been married for nearly twenty-two years. I am from Sarnia, Ontario and have lived here all of my life except for the four years my husband was in school near Chicago, Illinois. My first attempt at college was an accounting diploma, but the school cancelled my program while I was on medical leave in my second year. I decided to stay home and raise my babies instead of starting a new program. Over the years, I have volunteered with several non-profits, and I am currently the treasurer of our local pregnancy center. I also work part-time doing accounting for my husband's business.”

When asked if she likes her program, she explains “I really like the structure of most of the courses, and the content is very interesting for the most part. I do not like some of the required courses. History of Psychology is probably the driest course I have ever endured. Research Methods seemed pretty redundant after taking several senior level psychology classes and the assignments should be more aligned with tutor expectations to prevent frustration and confusion. I'm not really a fan of required humanities courses either.”

She explains that PSYC 435's “focus is on what makes thoughts and behaviors normal or abnormal. It discusses mood disorders, anxiety disorders, deviant behaviors, diseases such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, and many others. It is a senior level course, so there is some assumption that you know basic psychology, however, you do not need a background in biology in order to understand the content.”

As for the overall structure of the course, she states “This course has five unit quizzes, a major research paper, and a final exam. The quizzes are timed and have fifteen multiple choice questions that you have access to beforehand, and then three to five short answer questions. The research topic is pretty open, and the paper needs to be between 3500 and 4500 words. The exam is fifty multiple choice, some definitions, short answer and long answer. The written questions all allow you to choose a certain number to answer which is helpful if you can't remember a topic. The textbook is necessary to complete the course; however, you don't necessarily have to read it word for word.”

Heather recommends PSYC 435, stating “The content was very interesting. I did find the textbook choice to be unfortunate. The editing was poor, and it used the DSM IV instead of version five even though version five was available two years before the text was published. It continually referred to possible changes to the DSM, which made the text bulky and difficult to follow. I do not think the course was difficult, but the textbook makes it more difficult than it had to be.”

As for any tips and tricks to completing this course, Heather explains that “It is helpful to not get lost in the text. Stick to the keywords, summaries, and look up psychology videos on YouTube. It took me half the course before I decided to switch study methods and it helped so much.”

When asked how communications with her tutor was, she states that “My tutor was very friendly and interactive. She frequently emailed just to see how things were going. We did not always see things the same, but I feel we had a productive and respectful relationship. She always marked things on time and feedback provided was always very thorough.”

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





Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

## Airing it Out

Dear Barb:

*I have just moved into a new neighbourhood and I think I may have picked a questionable area. I have noticed two of my neighbors walking around their house naked. Another person does their gardening naked, mind you, they do have a five foot fence around their yard. But from a certain angle I can see right into their backyard. It seems odd to have two neighbors on the same street who do this. These neighbors are fairly friendly with each other and visit often. I do have two children under the age of seven and I don't want them being exposed to this. Is there a law against doing yard work while naked? My husband doesn't see a problem with it, he says we should just ignore them and not look in their yard. Maybe I'm just a prude? What do you think? Thanks, Victoria.*

Hi Victoria:

Interesting neighbourhood! According to the Government of Canada the Criminal Code regarding nudity is as follows:

### Nudity

*Every one who, without lawful excuse, is nude in a public place, or is nude and exposed to public view while on private property, whether or not the property is his own, is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.*

It sounds to me like your neighbors are committing an offense, so you do have the right to report them and hopefully they will cover up. But there are some people who feel these laws violate their freedom of expression.

One man decided to go to a Tim Horton's buck naked to order his morning coffee. Employees commented that the sight of his genitals made them uncomfortable. Brian Coldin of Bracebridge Ontario ended up serving five months of house arrest followed by 12 months probation. Other parts of the world, like the Netherlands and Spain, are more relaxed about nudity laws. Something to keep in mind is "World Naked Gardening Day" which falls on the first Saturday of May. I'm not sure why they chose that day, as in some areas it can be very cold. According to NBC News Today, WNGD "has become an annual tradition that celebrates weeding, planting flowers and trimming hedges in the buff." It is meant to be a light hearted, fun day with no political implications. Here are some humorous dos and don'ts for World Naked Gardening Day: <https://youshouldgrow.com/world-naked-gardening-day/> I personally would not want my young children to be exposed to these neighbors, so no, I don't think you are a prude. Thanks for sharing your interesting dilemma.

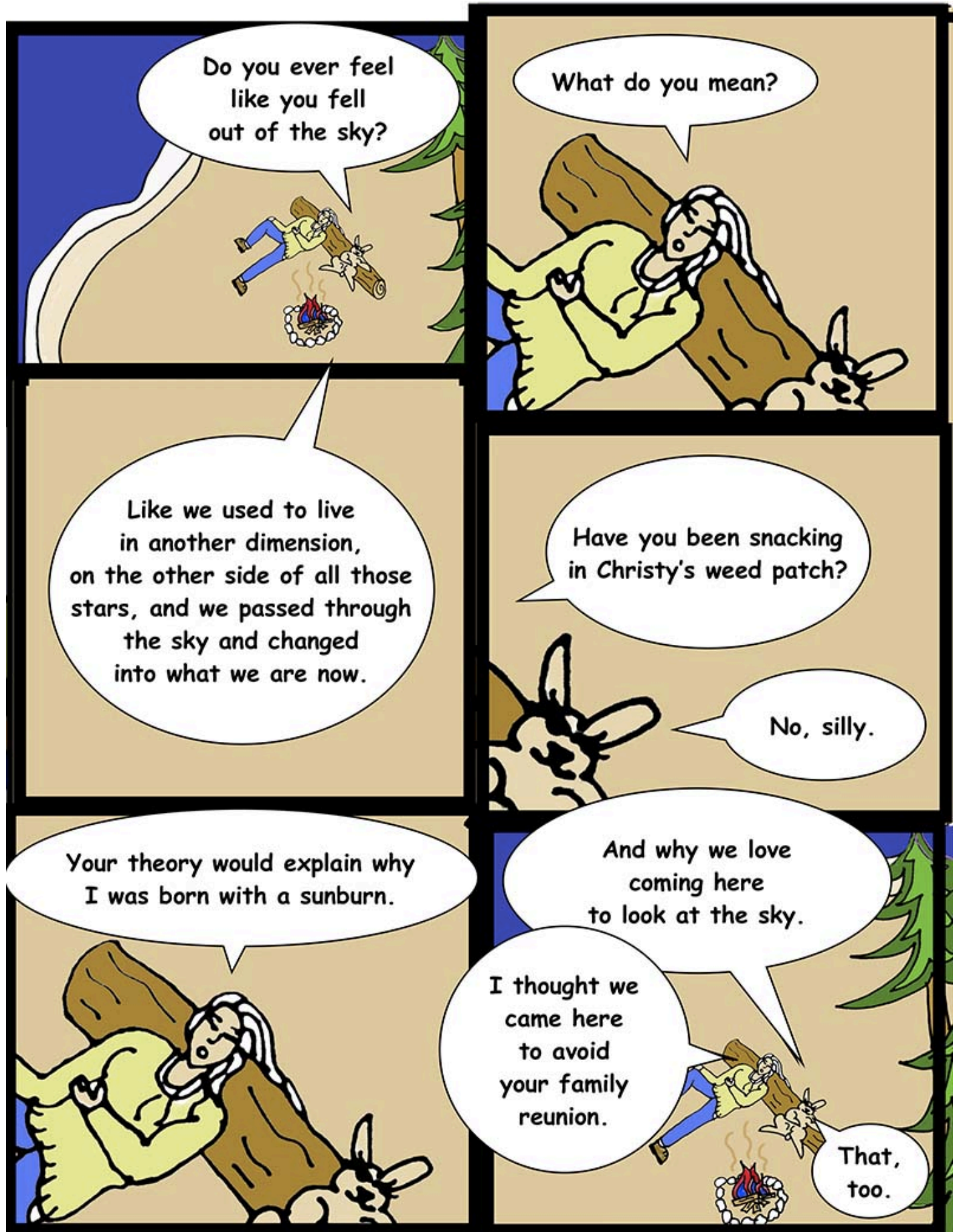
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Poet Maeve  
Mysterious Origins

Wanda Waterman



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## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Aug 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Oct](#)
- **Sep 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Oct 1](#)
- **Sep 12:** AUSU Council Meeting (tentative)
- **Sep 15:** AUSU Get out the Vote Campaign Launches!
- **Sep 15:** [Oct degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Aug 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Nov](#)

## AUSU Executive Blog

AUSU is ramping up to a Get out the Vote campaign in collaboration with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Our VPEx, Natasha Donahue, chats about the campaign and the importance of the student vote in our latest Executive Blog!

Check out the Executive Blog on our website [here](#).



## NEW AUSU Open Mic Episode

AUSU has posted a new Open Mic Podcast Episode!

**Episode 10:** Meet your VPFA, a Black Bear, & the Alberta Rockies.

We meet our new Vice President Finance and Administration, Brittany Daigle, as she shares her experiences as a new executive councillor, the by-election that put her in office, and her recent visit to Alberta's Rocky Mountains. Listen in [here](#)!

Check out all our Open Mic episodes online [here](#).

Also available for free on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and Pocket Casts (search "AUSU Podcast").



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## AUSU Career Resources

*Looking for a new job or career?*

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AUSU's [Career Resource Page](#) can help!



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<b>Publisher</b>	Athabasca University Students' Union
<b>Editor-In-Chief</b>	Jodi Campbell
<b>Managing Editor</b>	Karl Low

**Regular Columnists** Barb Godin, Carla Knipe, Barbara Lehtiniemi,  
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*The Voice* is published almost every Friday in HTML and PDF format.

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ISSN 2561-3634