



# THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 11 2020-03-13

## Alternative Forms of Education

Beyond Basic Brick & Mortar

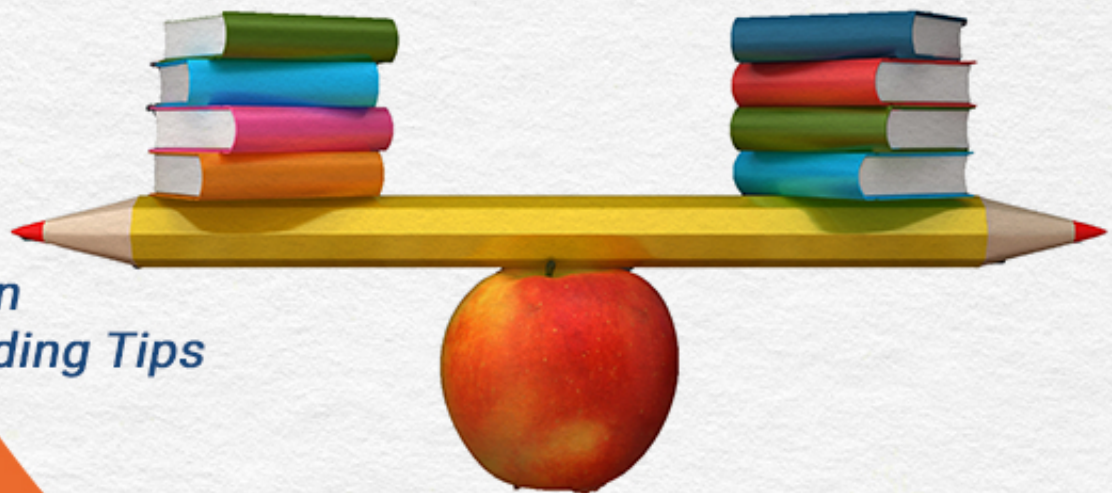
## Why Daylight Saving Time

What's Happening with the Time Change?

## COVID-19

Some Do's and Don'ts

*Plus:*  
*Council Connection*  
*Seven Critical Reading Tips*  
*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](http://voicemagazine.org),**  
**and please indicate if we may publish your letter!**

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## Editorial

Karl Low

### It Seems we Live in Interesting Times



To live in interesting times is something widely thought to be a Chinese curse (in reality, probably not, but it makes a good story) but, origin aside, it does remain a fair comment that the things felt to be most interesting in history are generally the things that cause the most misery.

In that respect, novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, is shaping up to be one of those things. On the bright side, most of us will live through it, and then have the dubious distinction of being able to tell our children or grand-children about that time we lived through a literal pandemic.

And while this may be taking a lighter-hearted view of it, we definitely shouldn't make light of this situation. I've seen a lot of comments about how the flu has killed far more people, or how measles can spread a lot faster, and while both of these things are true, they fail to note that this outbreak is less than three months old. This is serious stuff, folks.

So this week in *The Voice Magazine*, we bring you some of the latest information, including some "do"s and "don't"s when it comes to COVID-19. Don't panic, but do be careful, and do your best to ensure you're not inadvertently spreading it even further.

But our feature article this week is a look at Alternative Schooling Systems around the world. Athabasca University is, of course, a bit unusual in how it works, but there are other school systems, both post-secondary and otherwise, that also take an unusual tactic when it comes to educating kids. The most radical one, at least to me, is a school that runs in an entirely democratic fashion, with every student's vote having the same weight as any adults. That doesn't seem like something that would work out well in the long run, but the school has been closely examined, is still running, and seems to be performing fairly well for many of the students it turns out.

We also have an article that digs into daylight savings time. Just this week, you probably had to drag your butt out of bed earlier than you would have liked. Or to be more specific, even earlier than the time before. But have you ever wondered why? Francesca Carone did, and so she went looking for some answers for *The Voice Magazine*.

And don't forget to check out this week's Council Connection, where Natalia Inawek is reporting on the last meeting of AUSU Council to happen before the election. How is AUSU Council wrapping up the year, what's left on the plate and what's coming up for the new group? You'll find some of the answers here.

One last thing I want to point out is that now that the AUSU Election is complete, with the appeals deadline having past, I've put the Minds We Meet, where we interviewed student and former AUSU Council Candidate Alek Golijanin back up. On the website, I'll have it as a featured article, but in the PDFs, you'll have to go back and grab issue 2808. And I'm telling you this because it's worth the read. Sometimes seeing what other students are doing can give us a sense of pride to be AU students. This is one of them. (And don't forget our reviews, scholarships, events, and more!) Enjoy the read!

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



## Worldwide Alternative Education Options throughout History

Natalia Iwanek



For many students who do not fit the traditional educational mold, whether as a result of work commitments, family duties, or even identity, alternative schooling options offer a sense of hope. Although uncommon, over the years, innovative schools with unique philosophies have quietly educated generations of graduates worldwide. Notable examples include distance education options, such as Athabasca University, experiential based programs, and those focusing on certain communities.

### Athabasca University – Athabasca, Alberta

AU began as a traditional campus-based institution on June 25, 1970, before

testing the concept of an open, distance-based university in 1972. By the 1980s, AU incorporated computers to deliver online courses, a practice that continues to this day. Currently, AU provides distance education options for over 40,000 students across the globe.

### *Las Normales Rurales* – Rural Schools – Mexico

Throughout Mexico, these teachers' collages focus on educating teachers or *normalistas* in Mexico's rural communities. First created in 1917 during the Mexican Revolution as a result of Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa's dreams of education in rural areas, these rural education centres eventually became rural student teacher schools in 1938 under President General Lázaro Cárdenas. Unlike regular schools, education includes political activism, class and social consciousness, working on the land, and leftist viewpoints. Students are often from surrounding Indigenous communities, in Guerrero and Chiapas. *Normales* recently gained worldwide prominence, with the September 2014 kidnapping and disappearance of 43 students and death of two from Raul Isidro Burgos Rural Normal College of Ayotzinapa, after clashes with police. The students had travelled to an Iguala rally commemorating the 1968 massacre of students by police in Mexico City.

For many students, AU and *Las Normales Rurales* represent a break from the traditional educational system; for many others, the desire to continue at an innovative higher-education level often begins during the formative years, in both primary and secondary schools.

### Summerhill School – Leiston, England

Founded in 1921, Summerhill School, located in Leiston, England, is based on the revolutionary ideas of A.S. Neill. Focusing on flexibility in curriculum and teaching methods, free self-development of children in an educational setting, where attendance is optional, and both teachers and students self-govern. Today's Summerhill describes itself as “the oldest children's democracy in the world” and the “original alternative ‘free’ school.” In his monumental work, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Childrearing*, Neill states, “Summerhill began as an experimental school” (Neill, 4), but became “a demonstration school, for it demonstrate[d] that freedom works” (Neill, 4). The school gave children the freedom to be themselves, free of discipline, direction,

moral training, suggestion, and religious instruction. (Neill, 4). It remains in operation today with about 68 students enrolled, and graduates in all walks of life.

### **Modern Schools – Spain and the United States**

In 1901, anarchist Francisco Ferrer opened his first libertarian and secular-based *Escuela Moderna* or Modern School in Spain, with many more following in the United States than any other country. Most famous are the longest-running Modern School, which began from 1911 to 1915 in New York City and continued from 1915 to 1953 as the Modern School in the Ferrer Colony, Stelton, New Jersey. Ferrer was executed in 1909.

### **Freedom Schools – Highlander Folk School – Southern United States**

Freedom Schools developed in the Southern United States, as a response to the need for African American equality during the Civil Rights movement. One of the most well-known examples is the 1964 Mississippi Free School Movement, created as a way to provide alternative schooling than the traditional “sharecropper” education being offered. Freedom Schools were modeled on Tennessee’s Highlander Folk School. Founded by Myles Horton, Don West, and Jim Dombrowski in 1932, Highlander Folk School was inspired by Scandinavian folk schools. Originally, begun in Denmark by theologian N.F.S. Grundtvig, folk schools’ aim was to provide its populations with history, religion, and cultural heritage knowledge.

Located in Monteagle, Grundy County, Tennessee, Highlander initially focused on helping the impoverished Appalachian “highlander” populations. During the 1950s and until 1961, the school shifted its focus to civil rights and desegregating public schools. Highlander’s civil rights workshops included attendance by Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. In the late 1950s, under the guidance of Septima Poinsette Clark, Highlander created citizenship schools, which fought for political empowerment and literacy in the black community. Along with Bernice Robinson, Clark’s Citizenship Schools focused on the local community and included adult literacy, voter registration, social security, taxes, and political parties. These eventually spread all over the Southern US.

In 1961, amidst allegations of communism, the Tennessee Supreme Court revoked Highlander’s charter and seized its property. That same year, Highlander Research and Education Centre opened in Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1971, after moving to New Market, Tennessee, the school began interest in anti-globalization efforts, environmental issues, and international peace initiatives. Today, Highlander advocates for social, economic, and political equality.

### **Free Schools– United States**

1960s counterculture, the views of Summerhill’s Neill, as well as other educators, Freedom Schools, and Modern Schools all influenced the Free School Movement of the 1960s to early 1970s. No hierarchal leadership structure existed, students, teachers, and parents ran the schools, emphasis was placed on participatory democracy and strong political views, and the schools were typically small. Although they declined with the 1970s conservatism, Freedom Schools became known as “alternative schools,” and their influence can be seen worldwide, including Canada.

### **School of Experiential Education (SEE) – Toronto, Ontario**

Founded in 1971 by Barry Duncan, a Canadian media literary educator and co-founder of the Association for Media Literacy, School of Experiential Education’s (SEE) Manifesto includes self-discovery, open dialogue, conflict resolution, self-governance, and collaboration. Duncan, a former graduate student of Marshall McLuhan, believed in teaching the deconstruction of media from a young age. He went on to teach English in a variety of settings, including SEE, the University of Toronto, and York University.

“See School” as it is known to former alums, myself included, is nothing if not original. “See is Cool” the rearranged letters above the front entrance proudly greeted students. Our early exposure to diverse topics, such as Existentialism, political thought, Old-English epic poetry, and global history seen from decolonized perspectives. Innovative courses, such as Death and Dying, dealt with the complex process of death in compassionate and critical ways, including field trips to the morgue.

SEE functioned on the principle of egalitarianism; we called our teachers by their first names, our student council was a team effort, our community fridge functioned on an honour system, and we had community meetings on diverse social topics. Most importantly, we learned to think critically, to question everything, and to express empathy and principles of social justice.

### **Africentric Alternative School – Toronto, Ontario**

Africentric Alternative School, Canada’s only Africentric school’s aim is to address issues facing students of African descent from JK to Grade 8. Students learn about Black Canadian history, as well as African contributions to math and science. Principal Luther Brown hopes that students “become truly productive citizens who are proud of themselves, who know who they are, who are not afraid to meet the variety of injustices that will come their way”. The school celebrated its 10 anniversary on September 2019.

### **The Triangle Program – Toronto, Ontario**

As Canada’s only LGBTQ+ school, Toronto’s Triangle Program has continued to provide a safe space for generations of queer students facing bullying in regular high schools. Founded in 1995, the Grades 9 to 12 curriculum teaches students about the queer community’s contributions to literature, science, and history. In 1996, Triangle held the first Pride Prom for queer students and allies.

### **Kapapamahchakwew – Wandering Spirit School – Toronto, Ontario**

Similar to SEE, Africentric, and Triangle, Wandering Spirit School is part of the Toronto District School Board’s nineteen alternative programs. Founded during the 1970s by Pauline Shirt and Vern Harper, Wandering Spirit offers a traditional-based Anishinaabe curriculum from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 11, including Ojibway language courses, and aims to empower students with a strong sense of cultural identity, while being open to all students.

### **Present-Day Finland**

Finland is currently excelling in alternative forms of education. After their fall to the Russian Bolsheviks in 1917 resulted in years of struggle for independence, in 1963 the government invested in education as a form of economic recovery. By 1979, the government had subsidized teacher education and salaries were high. In 2000, results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized reading test for 15-year olds, revealed that Finnish students ranked first in the world. In 2003 and 2006, Finland was best in math and science, respectively.

In 2015, Finland introduced “teaching by topic,” or “phenomenon teaching,” as opposed to simply traditional “teaching by subject.” For example, “cafeteria services” includes communication, languages, and math. In addition, cross-topics often merge economics, with history, languages, and geography. In August 2016, phenomenon-based learning (PBL) became compulsory with a focus on a collaborative approach, as opposed to simply listening to the teacher. Teachers also have a great deal of flexibility about how they teach and are not graded on performance. Instead, annual development discussions with school leaders assess the teacher’s analyses of their own strengths and weakness.

Currently, Finland's schools have no standardized tests, apart from one final exam before graduation, no rankings, and no comparisons between students. Playtime and socializing are encouraged, homework is minimal, and classes are small — about nineteen students. In addition, the state funds most schools. Each school draws from a pool of university-trained teachers, allowing students in all parts of the country access to similar types of education. 93% of teens graduate and 66% continue on to higher level of education. In comparison, the US scores significantly lower, but spends 30% more on education. Marjo Kyllonen, Helsinki's former education manager stated, "There are schools that are teaching in the old fashioned way which was of benefit in the beginnings of the 1900s – but the needs are not the same and we need something fit for the 21st century."

### Choosing Alternative Forms of Education

Various life events and backgrounds often lead students down the path to non-traditional forms of education, including distance education. For many students, these alternative options are often a lifeline. After SEE, I transitioned back to the traditional educational system, attending York University, before health reasons derailed my dreams. Years later, I resumed my education online at Simon Fraser University, due to a grueling work schedule that involved a great deal of travel. When health struggles flared up once again, my enrollment at AU allowed me to continue my education. I appreciate all my years of non-traditional school; in particular, the time spent at SEE with Dave, Glenn, Gerry, Joe, Karl, and Val—teachers who became friends—continues to resonate so many years later. Endless possibilities exist for students whose have the option to learn in an innovative environment with educators who believe in their potential. Although these schools are not yet the norm, I remain incredibly grateful for the innovators who made today's alternative schools a reality.

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*Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>.*

## Scholarship of the Week

### Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

**Scholarship name:** Financial Future Scholarship

**Sponsored by:** InvestmentZen

**Deadline:** April 1, 2020, 11:59pm GMT

**Potential payout:** \$1000 USD

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be actively enrolled full-time in an accredited college/university (in any country.)

**What's required:** A completed online application form, along with a 500-1500 word essay on one of three given financial-related topics.

**Tips:** Read the Official Rules carefully.

**Where to get info:** [www.investmentzen.com/scholarship](http://www.investmentzen.com/scholarship)





## What's the Point of Daylight Savings?

Francesca Carone



On Sunday, March 8, 2020, clocks were turned forward one hour. Daylight saving time is the practice of moving clocks forward starting in spring so that daylight lasts longer into evening. In the winter, however, it is changed back. This further reduces the amount of daylight in the early morning from the already diminished amount because of later sunrises, especially in northern latitudes. The switch is done both here in North America, as well as in many European countries, but what is the point?

The first people to come up with this idea were “Benjamin Franklin, George Vernon Hudson, and William Willet”(Vpcalendar, online) around 1784. Many people believe that this practice was invented by or from farmers to give them more time to work the fields, but this turns out to not be historically verifiable. The more logical reason for daylight saving time involves using the extra sunlight to work and to conserve energy (less electricity will be used). According to some, it was implemented during World War II, when Germans and their allies wanted to conserve coal. Many nations seemed to think this was a good idea and adopted it. After World War II ended,

states and localities could start and end daylight saving time whenever they wanted; *Time* magazine called it “a chaos of clocks” (Klein, online) in 1963. But saving power doesn’t hold much water anymore. We all know people are going to stay up late no matter what—running electronics and other energy zapping devices all night long even if it is pitch dark outside.

There are some negative effects to this practice. Some studies show that changes in the time quickly increase “heart attacks and strokes, cause more car accidents, and reduce worker productivity” (Ax, online). This research seems to suggest that it is the disruption (even if minor) to sleep patterns that causes negative effects to humans. Data in that study found an increase of 25% in heart attacks on the Monday after the time changed. . Children and teens are also affected, showing signs of irritability and less energy. Yes, they can just go to bed earlier to avoid missing that one hour, but practically no one will do that (though I used to). The “social jet lag”, as they call it, affects people’s lives too much.

Some provinces and states want to opt out of daylight saving time changes, such as British Columbia who wants to cancel this practice of “shifting back and forth between daylight time and standard time, which could make it the first Canadian province to bring in permanent daylight time”(McKeen, online). In addition, Yukon announced at the beginning of this week that “Sunday’s spring forward would be the territory’s last.”(McKeen, online). In fact, many states (26 of them to be exact) and the European Union have already begun that process. Some people are reluctant to change, but that will always be, because change is sometimes scary. So, we may have to soon say goodbye to this old practice and embrace the new way to live.

But is it a good change? Well, according to many health experts, yes. There are other benefits as well, forgetting to change the time can be a horrible experience, imagine having to be at work or having to write an exam.

To those who cling to the old reasons for the practice (more daylight more energy savings), it won't be appreciated. I guess there are pros and cons to keeping it this way and to changing it, just like everything else in life. What really matters is that we adapt to the change and make good use of what we got.

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*Francesca is an AU student living in Nova Scotia, who enjoys animals, kids, and nature.*



## COVID-19

**Tamra Ross**

### What you Can Do and What You Should Not Do



This afternoon, WHO Director-General, Tedros Adhanom held a press briefing on the current situation and recommendations surrounding COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Following is a summary of the WHO recommendations, and information on what you should and should not be doing right now.

*An important fund has been established to collect funds from individuals around the world and provide much needed protective equipment and knowledge to affected countries. See below for the link and share it with everyone you know or go directly to the [World Health Organization](#) home page and click the orange donate button.*

Adhanom began with some context for the current WHO response. Europe is now the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a daily growth in cases that exceeds the growth in China during its peak expansion phase. The world death toll has exceeded 5,000 as of this morning and the

infection has spread to at least 123 countries. To date, the WHO has sent 1.5 million diagnostic tests to affected countries.

The WHO is now making firm requests to all countries of the world, urging a comprehensive approach. Adhanom notes that social distancing, alone, is not enough. Aggressive testing, alone, is not enough. Providing treatment is not enough. Countries must combine strategies and emphasize aggressive testing and aggressive preventative measures overall. In perhaps his most blunt directive to date, Adhanom warns that any country that thinks it will not happen to them is "making a deadly mistake."

#### **Current WHO directives for businesses and governments are:**

1. Prepare and be ready: know the symptoms. Make sure everyone in your department knows the symptoms. All health care workers should know what to do and all medical centres should have a strategy to deal with COVID-19.
2. Detect, protect, and treat: find it, isolate it, and test for it. Treat every single case of COVID-19 to limit its expansion.
3. Reduce transmission: quarantine all people who are in contact with those who are infected for two weeks. Cancel events where there will be large gatherings.
4. Innovate and learn: all countries must share the lessons they learn as they confront COVID-19 locally.

#### **The WHO also has requests for individuals (AKA, what you should do):**

- clean your hands regularly with soap or alcohol-based hand cleaner
- cover your mouth and nose when you cough
- stay home when you are sick
- avoid groups and unnecessary travel
- comply with your local health authority's instructions
- find and share reliable information
- and most importantly, please give to the new "COVID-19 Response Fund."

#### **The COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund**

This is newly created by The United Nations Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation to support WHO and partners in helping affected countries to prevent, detect, and manage the COVID-19. Funds will be distributed where they are most urgently needed. A key aim is to address the shortage of personal protective equipment endangering health workers worldwide. Funds will be provided to buy or locate mask, gowns and gloves, to distribute COVID-19 test kits, and to further research and training of medical personnel. Japan has reportedly given \$155 million to the fund, but donations from individuals are urgently needed.

*Everyone is urged to donate what they can using the orange link on the [who.int](#) site.*

Adhanom strongly emphasized voluntary social distancing as the most powerful weapon to flatten the curve of COVID-19 expansion.

#### **What You Should Not Do**

To address Tedros Adhanom's request to share credible information and limit the spread of misinformation, we note the following:

DO NOT believe the internet rumour that you can test for COVID-19 by taking a deep breath and holding it for more than 10 seconds, and if you can do this without coughing, discomfort, stuffiness or tightness it proves you do not have the infection.

This is bogus. First, COVID-19 starts in the throat and nose, and may be limited to muscle pain and fever, so a lung test in these cases is irrelevant. Also, a person who has poor lung health may cough when holding their breath even without a COVID-19 infection. When COVID does impact the lungs, it causes pneumonia, not the “fibrosis” some versions of this test say you are trying to detect. Relying on such bogus tests could prompt infected persons to go out and infect others. Only a medical test can determine if you have COVID-19.

DO NOT panic about running out of supplies. There are many reports on social media of people panic buying toilet paper and meat at local Costco and grocery stores. Some reports indicate people are aggressive or highly agitated. Alberta health has again clarified that people only need a few days of supplies and there are no expected supply shortages. The reason for the stocking up recommendation was to help people limit the amount of time that people need to spend outside of their homes, not to address supply shortages. I can personally attest that each time Costco has run out of toilet paper this month, the shelves have been fully stocked again the next day. Dr. Deena Hinshaw of Alberta Public Health notes that the panic buying behaviour itself is causing these shortages, thus this is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

DO NOT believe the bogus claim that drinking tons of water can prevent coronavirus transmission.

DO NOT turn to harsh chemicals to wash your hands, in the belief that the novel coronavirus is hard to kill. It's not. Simple soap and water can easily kill this virus if it is on your skin. The virus is harmful, but not overly resilient.

DO NOT panic. Coronavirus is worse than the flu. But the vast majority who get it will recover within a week or two. Home care is the same as for the flu: fluids, rest, a hot shower for some steam. This is not the plague.

DO call Alberta HealthLink at 811 to get tested if you have any symptoms, especially a fever or muscle pain. But don't panic. Prepare for a very long wait on the phone when you call 811. Healthcare workers are doing everything they can. Expect to be on hold a few hours, relax and watch some TV while you wait. And do not call 911 to complain about wait times for Alberta health. Only call 911 if you are urgently ill or reporting a crime. Abusing 911 puts others at risk because it delays help for those who are in urgent need. Alberta police have requested people be patient with HealthLink. Remember, having symptoms doesn't mean you will become severely ill.

### **On Toilet Paper**

The reason that many people are panic-buying toilet paper remains a mystery and is a hot topic for discussion, as is the reason that this behaviour has been noted as much more prevalent in Western Canada.

For many, dealing with people who are panicked is scarier than the virus. Try to reassure those around you, and stay safe, everyone!

*Writer, editor, programmer, designer, and perpetual student from Calgary, Tamra is working (slowly) toward a second AU degree.*





## Council Connection

### February 27, 2020 Meeting

**Natalia Iwanek**



The most recent AUSU Council Meeting took place on Thursday, February 27, 2020 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm MT.

In attendance were President Brandon Simmons (Meeting Chair), Vice President Finance and Administration (VPFA) Brittany Daigle, Councillor Sarah Blayney Lew, Councillor Darcie Fleming, Councillor Christine Hudder, Councillor Amanda Lipinski, Councillor Alice Namu, Councillor Lisa Oracheski, Councillor Josh Ryan, and Councillor Mark Teeninga.

Also in attendance were Executive Director Jodi Campbell, Governance and Advocacy Coordinator Duncan Wojtaszek, *The Voice's* Managing Editor Karl Low, Communications and Member Services Coordinator Donette Kingyens, Governance and Advocacy

Coordinator Duncan Wojtaszek, and *The Voice's* Council Meeting Reporter Natalia Iwanek.

Not in attendance were Vice President External and Student Affairs (VPEX) Natasha Donahue, Councillor Sarah Blayney Lew, and Councillor Melinda Goertz.

President Brandon Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm MT. Key items included Policy Revisions, AUSU Survey Results, Council Reports and the upcoming AUSU election.

The meeting started with President Brandon Simmons making a slight change to the agenda, adding a ninth point of new business, to discuss the Executive Role Documents. This was accepted unanimously. With no changes to the minutes, and no action items outstanding, Council moved quickly on to the new business and policy revisions.

### New Business

**Policy 2.17 Non-Partisanship** - VPFA Brittany Daigle discussed *Policy 2.17 Non-Partisanship DRAFT*, with the motion carried unanimously. The policy had prohibited council from "Suggesting and convincing people to support or oppose a candidate or political party". This was felt to be too restrictive as it even prevented councillors from speaking about their political choices to their families or friends, so the point was removed. In addition, the word "organization" in section 2.17.01 d) which states, "Serving as a director at any level of a political organization" was altered to "party" to clarify that it is acceptable to be involved with other organizations, including CASA.

**2019 AUSU Services Survey Results** - Executive Director Jodi Campbell continued with the AUSU Survey Results, stating that they had the "highest level of engagement." He revealed that the "Neutral" and "Not Applicable" options were implemented this year and having more options affected the results. Concern was expressed about the level of student confusion in differentiating between AUSU and AU services. A low rate of student dissatisfaction and several comments expressing appreciation revealed a positive endorsement of what the AUSU is doing. Cost of

education was the primary concern for Advocacy Priorities. The survey results will be published on the website in a reduced version.

Communications and Member Services Donette Kingyens continued, revealing that students are using social media more frequently, with increases in Facebook usage and decreases in Twitter. AUSU is correspondingly moving toward just using Facebook and Instagram, platforms students appear to use most frequently.

Councillor Alice Namu found the results fascinating and asked how advocacy could be leveraged to help students. She asked if the Advocacy Priorities referenced in the survey are something that AUSU can expand on and how these Advocacy Priorities will reflect in AUSU's actions. Brandon answered that AUSU had been looking into partnering with AU on developing career services, including discussing V-Mock, a tool to upload resumes and have the content and language analyzed, however, funding cuts stalled this. Jodi stated that AUSU is already focusing similar things that were seen as students' top five priorities in the survey.

Councillor Darcie Fleming wanted to know if anyone noticed any differences from the previous survey. Jodi mentioned that the changed options added more responses. Donette noted that there may have been some confusion about the "Not Applicable" option, while Brittany noted that it was interesting to see how many people were interested in the health and dental plan.

The 2019 AUSU Services Survey was sent to 27,023 members and received 1,531 responses. Highlights included a "relatively high rate of service usage and a lower rate of service dissatisfaction." Specifically, the survey revealed that 46.7% of student used AUSU services, as opposed to only 16% in 2018. In Advocacy Priorities, reducing the cost of attending AU was the highest priority, followed by improving the quality of education, improving AU customer service, increasing student financial aid, and providing more career services, practicums, and internships. Students from all provinces and the Territories were represented, with 51.1% from Alberta, 23.2% from Ontario, and 7.5% from British Columbia in the top three spots.

### **2019 – 2020 Executive Workplan**

**President** - Moving on, Brandon began with the Executive Committee Work Plan Update, stating that, although January was a busy month, he knew that February and March would be even busier.

While discussing the Internal Advocacy portion, including dealing with working with AU to implement an e-text solution that supports affordability and accessibility for students, he stated that he has no concrete information as to when or if this will happen because the university is still in limbo about it. The e-text discussion is on hold because of department revisions, and because currently new agreements are being set up with publishers. However, he is keeping an open dialogue with the university.

He also spoke about AUSU working with AU to help develop and implement a new learning management system that provides an exceptional digital experience, there may be a move away from Moodle to a more integrated learning environment, so that all components of the student experience will be connected, rather than having to go to different sites for different parts of a course as some courses require currently. This will be a longer-term project.

In working with AU to review the university's tuition and fees to allow for affordable and fair pricing for students, AUSU is looking at different tuition models from around the world. For example, Australia offers a payment-plan type of subscription model for tuition. This is a longer-term project with hopes for plan finalization in fall 2020.

Finally, the plan to work with AU to facilitate the move of the AUSU office into the main AU Edmonton location has been significantly delayed and will not occur at the end of the term. However, it is hoped to have a location at the end of summer or beginning of fall, at which point renovations can begin.

As to External Advocacy, the idea to invite all associations to a Facebook Group in September has been abandoned because students and advocacy groups have begun to meet directly.

But when it comes to supporting and developing CASA's Advocacy and governance including the GOTV campaign and review of operating procedures, AUSU is increasingly connecting with CASA, including the GOTV campaign and attempting to enter the graduate market.

He also noted the work with student leaders across Canada to strategically oppose Voluntary Student Unionism is underway, with research is being done into the effects of Voluntary Student Union Initiatives, but this has taken a back seat with provincial changes. When asked what Voluntary Student Unionism means, he explained that the Ontario government had recently made it up to students if they wanted to join student unions, rather than automatically joining when they register for courses.

Finally, in the Organizational Performance section, the plan to work with AU to develop a new university app has been delayed as the company has backed out, with September now being the potential launch date. In addition, the Council is working on finalizing the framework to hand off to the next group and work has been done to increase engagement with the council and promote the general election.

**VPEX** - Next Brandon presented VPEX Natasha Donahue's Executive Workplan in her absence. the Mental Health Committee/Homewood Health, AU recently lost their Mental Health Coordinator but a new one has been hired. Natasha has been involved and making sure that there is a mental health strategy at AU. It has also been confirmed that the government will continue mental health funding for this year. With regard to Indigenous student's supports and collaboration, work has been done with Nuksahtowin and with the Centre for Indigenous Studies developing a proposal to council for an Indigenous Student Advisory Group.

Meanwhile, the Let's Talk Science project has been put on hold because of budget considerations. Although the Dean of Science was on board, she is now retiring, so the project has taken a back seat compared to other priorities.

Also, the Social media strategy has been completed, but the collaboration with the student community and AU on clubs is taking a bit of a back seat while AU determines what the functionality of the new app will be. However, AUSU is looking at the possibility of student clubs and more engagement.

**VPFA** - Vice President Finance and Administration, Brittany Daigle stated that, in the Service Evaluation Campaign, the refining of the evaluation tool, the survey, has been completed. She has also been reviewing and further refining the VPFA role profile, and while no changes will be made now, this can change in the future.

She is currently working on a "month-in-the-life" to map out the activities that the role takes on throughout a one-year term for the transition. She also spoke about working on Career Advocacy with Natasha and looking for a date that works for everyone for discussing with the Provost and other AU stakeholders what career service offerings they may be able to support. Finally, in policy work, the Indigenous students policy has been completed, as has the Voluntary Student Union policy but that one has been put on hold for the moment until it becomes relevant in

Alberta. She is also working on a policy about AU student services that will be moving to the executive committee soon.

## Reports

**President's Report** - During his President's Report, Brandon mentioned the executive retreat held at Banff from January 22 – 23, 2020, which included conversations about the tuition increase, bringing in the new council, and the annual member survey. Reviews of multiple ongoing initiatives, such as the mobile app partnership, member engagement opportunities, new potential initiatives and other plans were reviewed.

**Vice President and External Student Affairs' Report** - He continued with Natasha's Vice President and External Student Affairs' Report updates. According to the report, in January, AUSU released two podcasts, with topics including Indigenous students' supports, and life on council. A podcast celebrating the one-year anniversary of AUSU podcasting was also recorded at the retreat. AUSU has also released a few YouTube videos since their Get Out the Vote Campaign, and has more videos forthcoming.

**Vice President Finance and Administration's Report** - Brittany left the Vice President Finance and Administration's Report as presented. Highlights included a January 16, 2020, meeting with the General Faculties Council (GFC), and it was noted that the GFC approved changes to the Bachelor of Commerce major in Business Technology Management degree. Also, on January 28, 2020, the Student Awards Committee approved the Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship's (AGES) description and criteria and revised the Alberta Graduate Students Travel Incentive's application criteria.

**Finance Committee Report** - She continued, stating that the Finance Committee did not meet in January, so there was little to report.

**Awards Committee Report** - Brittany left the Awards Committee Report as presented, noting that January was a slow month, with only one Computer Bursary application and one Emergency Bursary application, which were both approved. The next meeting will be held after the May award cycle.

**Member Engagement and Communication Committee Report** - The Member Engagement and Communication Committee Report was also light because the MEC Committee did not meet in December.

**Executive Director's Report** – During the Executive Director's Report, Jodi stated that he was impressed with this year's Council retreat; it being one of the top ones he had attended, as well as being pleased with how smoothly things are going with CRO Bailey Daines. The annual report is currently being worked on and will be available at the next council meeting.

Key points included in the report stated that 2020 is off to a great start, with many projects being initiated, with the Council Election at the forefront of everyone's mind. Twenty candidates had originally applied, with elections taking place from February 25 – March 2, 2020.

The executive retreat was a success, with topics such as Executive transition goals, review of AUSU survey results, future Mobile App planning, financial update, policy reviews, election planning, EC Workplans review, member engagement and communications, among others.

The report also revealed that *The Voice Magazine* experienced a growth spurt in January with 6,775 views by 3,330 unique viewers, 20% higher than the previous high. Top stories included The



## Reputation of Online – AU, Navigating Education with Chronic illness or Disability, and Distance Education – The New Norm for High School Students?

**Communication and Members Services Coordinator's Report** - Donette's Communication and Members Services Coordinator's Report revealed that hard work has been done on the election, with a fantastic CRO, as well as the development of a New Student Bursary for students with three to eleven credits, designed for newer students who have not completed the twelve credits required by most AUSU awards.

The report also states that results from Google Analytics revealed readers are accessing *The Voice Magazine* articles from previous months and years. The top performing article continues to be March 2019's The Reputation of Online – Athabasca University, with top growing article views for January 2020's Alberta's Budget Cuts – Affecting So Many.

### **Next Meeting and Adjournment**

The meeting was officially adjourned at 7:45 pm MT. The next meeting will take place on March 19, 2020 at 6:30 pm MT. As AUSU members, AU students are encouraged to attend council meetings via teleconference. Details can be found on the AUSU website.

*Natalia Iwanek is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts in English at Athabasca University and is also a freelance editor and writer. She can be contacted at <https://www.nataliaiwanekediting.com>.*

## **Fly on the Wall** **A Learned Licence to Judge?**

**Jason Sullivan**



### **Then our Education's Been for nAUght!**

Judge not lest ye be judged. It's an aphorism as old as time, humming a song as old as rhyme. Yet negative judgements of others flow to the surface of our mind as natural as ducks taking to water. Avoiding toxic thoughts of superiority isn't merely a matter of consciously and calmly pressing some mental refresh button in a given time and at a given place. Often, we fall into the clutches of vicious condescension at a moment's notice and without even realizing it.

Just the other day a local and reputable janitorial service van passed me as I was taking my afternoon constitutional stroll to my rural route mailbox. Must be 3:30, I thought, the van being about as well-calibrated as are my scholarly jaunts down the slope to collect my snail mail. And, sure enough it was 3:30 on the nose. Isn't it great when things are punctual?

Pausing to read the markings on the side of the van I noted one calligraphed phrase in particular: "Fully Licenced" it read. And wham-o, unbeknownst to the executive faculties in my egg noodle (egghead?) brain, I thought to myself "Son of a Juniper, how can they be licensed and spell the word license wrong!? What is going on in this world?!" It'd be like misspelling the name of your hometown when one's hometown is Kitimat. I've seen that happen. Or like the local community

college installing receptacles for recyclables complete with a sign indicating “recycleables”. I’ve seen that too and last I checked the misspelled sign was approaching its one-decade mark uncorrected. It is what it is. And was.

But what is being correct, really? Acting with appropriate dignity, with metaphoric curtsy or bow and with nicely pleated trou? Grammar Nazis can be incorrigible, insufferable, and downright anal. And often they can be wrong or only partly right. Lo and behold, upon returning to my desk and opening my Canadian English dictionary, I learned that in Canada ‘licenced’ is the correct spelling with ‘licensed’ primarily used in the US. So I’d been hornswoggled by my own judgmental nature. And possibly by more than a couple elementary school teachers in Langley who were fond of saying that, seeing as how we were only a few clicks from the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel compared to thousands of miles from Mother England, we could, in the rare instance of spelling disagreements, use whichever spelling (colour vs color) that caught our fancy. Who says school has to feel like a straitjacket! Maybe they did it to give us a sense of liberation or maybe as a favour to that very Canadian trait of politeness, if not permissibility. Or perhaps all of the above will suffice.

### **The Ego Has Landed**

So, I’d succumbed to one of the nastier afflictions of being educated: judging others for their shortcomings in literacy. At least I felt humbler upon correcting my own wrongness. But where does this all originate, this need to be right in the face of scanty evidence that being correct will affect one’s existence at a primal or heartfelt level. Ram Dass, that recently-departed counter-culture theorist and saintly figure of hippie enlightenment, famously said “I’d rather be happy than right.” (Ram Dass, 106). (The fact that the Zen book bearing this quotation was published in Charlottesville, of recent race riot fame, is an anal detail meriting scrutiny but beyond the scope of this article). We want to beware, as AU students, that, as the tide comes in on our education and we bathe in the virtue of knowledge hard won, we best retain a humble demeanor in the face of all that we don’t know or understand. Likewise we may realize that many questions are unanswerable in terms of dichotomous finalities. If we need a cautionary tail, the internet is full of netizens nipping at one another’s cyber-rumps for no reason save that they each feel that they must prove their righteousness and superiority. Ego trumps engagement all too often.

When thoughts of superiority bubble to the surface of our minds, we may become adept at recognizing them and rewarding their kinder, more tolerant, cousins. But where do these judgmental and cantankerous elements of our psyche originate? Let’s humour ourselves for a moment. Ol’ Sigmund Freud, concerned as he was with the sexual nature of our psychological condition as human animals (based on dogmas of scientism not out of place in a Bill Nye episode or an Anthony Dawkins diatribe), concluded that, thanks to evolution, we are each of us mammals first and foremost. So, with that philosophy in mind, Freud concluded that traits such as conscientiousness (such as obsessive concern with “the performance of petty duties” and obstinacy (which “may amount to defiance, with which irascibility and vindictiveness may easily be associated”) add up to, well, a person being a bit anal. And what can be more anal than being a grammar Nazi and spelling stickler?

Sure there is a time and place, namely our academic studies, to mind our p’s and q’s, but when this mentality seeps into our daily realms then it’s as though, for Freud, we’ve become accustomed to, er, holding on for too long to our #2s.

Before we blow this idea off as so much hot air let’s give Freud a hearing. He claimed of adults tending toward an anal type that as “infants they seem to have been among those who refuse to empty the bowels when placed on the chamber, because they derive incidental pleasure from the

act of defecation they assert that even in later years they have found a pleasure in holding back their stools.” (Freud 8). Clinging to the need to be right in the face of the calming effects of being happy, and relieved of the white-knuckle need for control, certainly fits the character of a person who wishes to be nitpicky about details. But as my encounter with the dictionary attests, even simple things like spelling can be relative to geographical and cultural discourse. Rarely is being right really being right anyway!

Finally, there is the possibility that judging others is more about being or forming an authoritative consensus than about any universal or transcendental righteousness that will absolve ourselves from the viscidities of an ever-flowing reality. The Swiss sociologist Georg Simmel, in writing about the patterns of fashion and adherence to its fascistic codes, said that “the principle of adherence to a given formula, of being and of acting like others, is irreconcilably opposed to striving to advance to ever new and individual forms of life” (Simmel G, 1904).

While there’s no doubting the pragmatism of spelling signage correctly, which the janitorial van had done in fine Canadian fashion, we would also be best served to focus ourselves on our own self-improvement. After all, no one ever wrote a scholarly essay by being an expert at Scrabble! It’s with all this in mind that I happily turn off the autocorrect on my cell phone, the better for randomized spellings and neologisms to emerge. If there’s one thing AU can teach us, regardless of our discipline, it’s that our license to learn is about becoming open-minded to the polysemic chorus of the world all around us.

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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.



#### Course Exam

**COMP 466** (Advanced Technologies for Web-Based Systems) is a three-credit, senior-level computer science course that is designed for students to learn some of the advanced Web technologies that are widely used by IT professionals in developing web-based systems and applications. It extends the student's knowledge and skills in computing; network programming; web design; and in system analysis, design, and development. COMP 466 requires students to have completed **COMP 306** (C++ for Programmers), **COMP 308** (Java for Programmers), or an equivalent. This course also has a challenge for credit option available, if there are any students that are interested in taking that route.

#### Brittany Daigle

AU courses, up close

Registration in this course includes an electronic textbook. A print version of the electronic textbook may be available for purchase from the publisher through a direct-to-student link provided on the course website; you can also acquire the textbook on your own if you wish.

Students should be familiar with at least one of the programming languages of C, C++, C#, Visual Basic, or Java, and have some good programming skills in one of these languages. In addition, students are also expected to have completed at least three senior CS courses and have some good knowledge of database, SQL, system analysis and design, and computer networks. Students who are concerned about not meeting the prerequisites for this course are encouraged to contact the course coordinator before registering.

Advanced Technologies for Web-Based Systems is made up of eight units, two assignments worth twenty percent each, one assignment weighing thirty percent, and a final exam weighing thirty percent. The eight units within this course cover senior-level computer science topics, such as databases for the web, XML, Ajax, web-based system development with PHP, HTML5, and CSS. Although the course has eight units, students will need to study only six units to pass the course: all of units one to five, and then either Unit 6, Unit 7, or Unit 8. Students will need to make their choice clear when doing the third assignment. To receive credit for COMP 466, students must achieve a course composite grade of at least a “D” or fifty percent, including a grade of a “D” or fifty percent on each assignment, and at least fifty percent on the final invigilated examination.

The final examination for this course must be taken online with an AU-approved exam invigilator at an approved invigilation center. It is your responsibility to ensure your chosen invigilation center can accommodate online exams.

Will Kiiskila is a full-time, fourth year student in the Bachelor of Science program, majoring in Computing and Information Systems at Athabasca University. Will provides an introduction, stating “I started as a Computer Science major at UNBC (University of Northern British Columbia), and transferred to Computing Science at TRU (Thompson Rivers University) before ending up at Athabasca University. I’m not working now but have been at different times throughout my degree.”

When asked to explain COMP 466 to other students, he states “COMP 466 – Advanced Technologies for Web-Based Systems expands on Web Development topics you would have covered in COMP 266 (Introduction to Web Programming). I took an equivalent course at another university and was just fine in the course. The course covers how a lot of the behind the scenes functionality in websites is achieved. The textbook is good for the first half of the course. In the last few chapters it briefly covers the topics and mainly relies on outside tutorials.”

As for the structure of the course, Will explains that “There are three assignments and a final exam in this course. Each assignment is very large and time consuming. The assignments aren’t particularly difficult but require you to create complete web systems including database functionality, and design documentation. Each assignment took me a couple of weeks to complete, but you end up with a fully functional website to show off. I have not completed the final exam yet, but the practice exams are fairly straight forward, with a lot of multiple choice on syntax and definitions, with a few small programming problems.”

Will would recommend this course to students, stating “It is worth taking if you are interested in web development and understanding how modern websites are made. I found the content of the course to be very easy but when you try to put it all together in the assignments it can become very difficult very quickly.”



As for tips and tricks to completing the course, Will states “For each assignment you need to write detailed documentation on how everything works and how you implemented it. It’s a lot easier to write the documentation as you create the web systems, otherwise you will spend countless hours trying to remember how you may have done something weeks ago!”

As for communications with his tutor, Will explains that “The tutor has marked all my assignments in around two weeks and provided large amounts of feedback.”

Whether COMP 466 is a degree or program requirement of yours, or the topics discussed above are of interest to you, this could have you learning a lot of interesting material surrounding the topic of advanced technologies for web-based systems.

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



## The Fit Student How to Become a Superstar

**Marie Well**



Know your values, strengths, and personality. I mean really know these things. They can guide your choice of academic discipline and career. They can turn you into a star at a young age: a star employee, a star student, a media star, any kind of star. A superstar.

Seek your lucky stars as early as possible. Stand out from the crowd right away. The Open University says, “Your personality, combined with your values, strengths, knowledge and experience, is what gives you your unique

personal brand. No-one else will be able to offer the same combination of factors” (35%).

So, how do you figure out what your values, strengths, and personality are? We’ll explore that soon, but first let me tell you a story that might hit home:

I greeted the young barista, a new employee, I guessed. She had glasses and a straight-faced expression—like a scientist. I asked her, “Are you a student?”

“No,” she said, “I’m taking a year off to figure out what I want to study.”

“So, how are you figuring it out?” I asked.

She shrugged her shoulders. “Just, you know, working as a barista and hanging out with friends.”

So, I seized the moment, “You should take career and personality tests. There are some free ones online.”

She shrugged my advice off.

So, I pushed further, “I wish I had taken career tests thirty years ago. I could’ve been a master in marketing by now. Instead, I’m a newbie.”

Her eyes suddenly widened, her pupils skirted upward in thought, and I knew I had reached her.

I’d love to pass the advice onto you, my sizzling star. But you may already know the ins and outs of your values, strengths, and personality. Just in case a little more insight could free your inner stardom, please stay with me.

The Open University e-book called *Personal Branding* talks about personality, values, and strengths as part of your brand. Celebrities have brands, but you may be an even bigger superstar.

Let's explore:

### **Know your personality type—and aptitudes.**

To become a star, you should know what stardom to strive for, right?

Oh, how I wish I knew thirty years ago. Please let me help you seize your lucky star today.

Tap into your personality type with a Myers Briggs personality test. Once you know your personality type, find e-books and articles that go in depth. You can also discover your aptitudes with this free career test.

### **Dig deeper by discovering your values.**

Here's why: “The more closely you can align your values with the way you live and work, the more satisfied you are likely to be” (33%). And I want your life to bubble over with joy. You deserve the stars!

To discover your values, The Open University says, “Spend a few minutes thinking about times when you felt happiest, proudest, most fulfilled, or as Gayle [Johnson, a freelance copywriter and coach] puts it – ‘alive’, ‘on fire’ and ‘working at my best’. You can include examples from both your home and work life” (33%).

I feel most alive praying for others and sending them unconditional love. Nothing feels more delicious than that to me—not the high I felt after my first studio recorded song, not the rush of winning the silver medallion in my undergrad program, not the thrill of winning a \$24,000 scholarship. Just prayer and unconditional love. Mmm! A celestial star.

But what makes you tick might be just as delicious, but unique to you. Ask yourself what makes beautiful energy sear through your soul? What gets you in giddy hysterics every minute as you fall asleep? What pumps you like Christmas or Diwali did when you were a tot? Hidden inside those thrills await your values.

Gayle Johnson says that knowing your values “stops you comparing yourself to others, because it doesn't matter if your values are, let's say, growth and ambition and wealth. That might be what you're really all about. And then someone else's values might be around harmony and community, those sorts of things. And they could be doing the same sorts of work, but their vibe will be very different” (95%).

Yes, values can be about goals and dollars, too. But I believe the values from the heart are the best kinds to nourish.

All of us are superstars when following our values: the chef serving the hungry, the parent homeschooling a family, the student forging a future, and the child sharing her toys.

But to truly shine, we need more than values; we need strengths and skills, too.

### Stars know their strengths and skills.

But what's the difference between strengths and skills? Well, “strengths are innate, whereas skills can be learned and developed” (34%).

So, how do you know which skills are strengths? Which skills tug at the heart of your stardom? The Open University says, “Think about the things you do, in work or outside, that really energise and enthuse you. Now choose one of those activities and analyse the skills you are using when you do it, for example, communicating with others, organising something, being creative, etc. Of the skills you have just listed, which are the ones that make you feel energised when you use them?” (36%). Those skills are your strengths, claims The Open University. Those skills are the shimmer on your lucky star.

I urge you to seek your stardom young. Learn your values, strengths, and personality type as soon as you can. And do take a year off, if you need time to reflect—but take career and personality tests to discover what truly thrills you. After all, your destiny is to shine, you lucky star.

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## Porkpie Hat The True Wheel of Fortune

Darjeeling Jones



Today's column will take more of a scholarly slant, exploring recent “scientific” studies conducted in several ivy league universities that prefer to remain anonymous. According to cutting edge research funded by KarmaPharma Holistic Antipsychotics, most of what we thought we knew about the development of individual personality is totally incorrect. Darwinism, nature / nurture, and the map of the human genome are fundamentally whack. Likewise, horoscopes, zodiacs, magic 8-balls, midway fortune-telling machines, psychology, and genetics are all completely bogus. What we are now just beginning to understand, by means of rigorous anecdotal sampling, and quadruple blind clinical studies, is that preferences, personality, and even destiny are all at least 100% determined by the insidious influence of certain colours on what is being dubbed by very credible scientific types as ‘The Cosmic Colour Wheel,’ or in French, “Pamplermousse.”

Today, we begin with some leaked information related to the colours Pink, and Red.

## Pink

Apparently, if you were born under the influence of pink, you enjoy frothy tropical cocktails and elaborate layer cakes. Either in this or some other lifetime you have wagered large sums of money in Monte Carlo. You have an extensive collection of rare sequins or rococo bone china, possibly both, and the concept of tulle is by no means unknown to you. You have considered a strict diet of fortune cookies. Some of you are approval whores, and prone to using random social media hashtags and experimental fashion statements to get attention. You yearn for the days of extra-long cigarette holders, and perhaps for you those days have never ended. (How are we doing so far?)

## Red

Those born under the influence of red (you know who you are) are irresistibly drawn towards neon signs and gypsy violins. You enjoy bloody sunsets, blood oranges, bloody steaks, bloody marys, and probably blood. (Fun fact: Countess Yvette-Marie Varennes, heiress to the Li Quan mahjong fortune - and the quintessential Red - bribed a corrupt Paris mortuary assistant to procure a jar of Oscar Wilde's blood, mixing a single drop of it in each glass of her beloved cognac). You have an intense thirst for poetry, raw experience, and revenge. You are, let's face it, a naughty and saucy type, probably not to be trusted with an expense account. Obviously, you have attended multiple seances, barbecues, and black masses. Probably this week.

From what I have been able to discern, further research is targeting the colours green, blue, indigo, and chartreuse.

Of course, this column, due to its revelatory nature, will soon be going viral, generating no end of excitement and debate. I certainly plan on personally profiting from being the first to bring it to your attention, and am pleased to announce (subject to the fruition of certain recently-placed wagers) that the Cosmic Colour Wheel will soon be the subject of a major independent motion picture documentary (working title: 'Something Something Colour Wheel'), to be co-produced by Cheap Marketing Ploy and Desperate for Attention Productions.

Following is a sample of several likely-to-be-forthcoming critical reviews:

"A real freaking eye-opener! The place where sex, fashion, glamour, artistic stuff, and horror all meet to mingle in a responsible way, and to perform awkward dance moves." Anticipated review, *New York Times*

"I laughed! I cried! I felt slightly violated." Anticipated review, *Wall Street Journal*

"I can't believe we paid ... for that column. Frankly, it's ... gibberish" Anticipated review, *The Voice Magazine*

Furthermore, following the inevitable success of this column and film, plans are already taking shape for a diverse (yet synergistic) line of spin-off products, including fashion accessories, children's toys, swimwear, and over-the-counter medications.

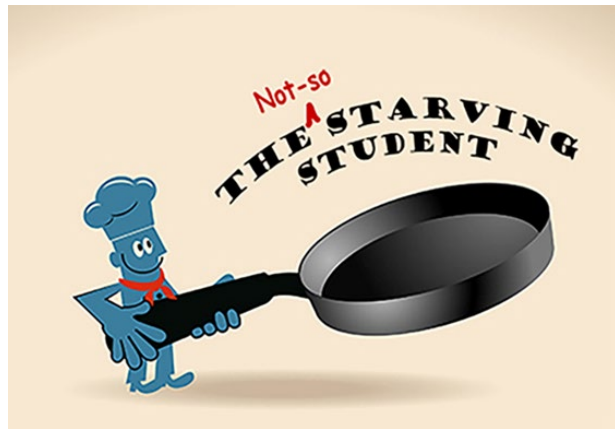
Please, just remember that you heard it here first!

*[Editor's note: A truly sagacious bit of satire, neatly eviscerating both the modern trends of Facebook personality tests, and the media fascination with viral-qua-viral postings. I can't believe we paid so little for that column. Frankly, it's about time someone pointed out how it's all gibberish.]*



## The Not-So Starving Student First Fruit Picking Experience

Xin Xu



There is something deeply therapeutic about picking your own fruits and vegetables. Arguably, there is even a greater sense of gratitude and humbleness when you grow the fruit or vegetables yourself and harvest them at the very end. Recently, I had the opportunity to visit a public fruit garden on the outskirts of Los Angeles. The Stoneview Nature Center was a small and neighborhood-friendly park of only 5 acres. In the dry and sunny climate, there were a variety of fruits that I had the opportunity to harvest. Particularly, some of the Californian favorites including oranges, lemons, limes and avocados.

Walking into the garden alone was already a calming experience. Like any regular outdoor garden, it had a curved pebbly path but also a visitor centre nearby. The visitor centre helps educate the public about the various flora and fauna in the region but also hosts programs for all ages such as cooking and meditation events. While I was deeply tempted to pick everything in the garden, there were particular rules in place. Specifically, guests were expected to pick any fruit that was ripe and were given pamphlets that informed them of what a ripe fruit would look and feel like.

A unique stop during our walk was this vertical farming model that featured some baby lettuce and kale. A small pump transported the water from a small reservoir to the top of the structure which then flowed downward to all the plants. It's a fascinating concept that has helped reduce water usage in the dry, desert-like climate of Southern California.

Further along in the garden, we encountered some clementine and orange trees. These trees are so common here that nearly every Californian homeowner has a tree on their property. Often, because of the ubiquity of these plants, many golden orbs are left unpicked by the owners. However, here at the nature centre, guests have the opportunity to harvest as many ripe fruits as possible.



And further yet were avocado trees as well, but unfortunately the only fruit we saw was unripe, not ready for the picking. Seeing avocado outside of the supermarket aisle was eye-opening. For example, I would never have known how thick the avocado tree stems were to be able to hold the weight of the fruit.

Luckily there were many lemons and limes available in the garden and we collected a basket of lemons for our home-made fish taco dinner that night. The best part about picking naturally harvested fruits is getting to see the range of variation and imperfections that the fruits have. For example, the lemon we harvested had odd shapes or bruises and markings that may never have made the cut for the supermarket. However, it was still perfectly edible.

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



*Vertical Farming Concept*



## The Study Dude

### Seven Tips on How to Read Critically

Marie Well



Do you want to develop a graduate student mindset as an undergraduate? If so, you're reading the right stuff. Let me show you how to read critically so that you can get published in academic journals.

In graduate school, I took a methodology course in Communications. A methodology acts as a tool that frames how you collect and analyze data. Interviews, focus groups, surveys, even Feminist theory, and so much more act as methodologies for your research.

During the first week of graduate school, we graduate students huddled around the professor to learn about critical reading. The first lesson we learned was how to note bias in research. Bias can come in many forms, including funding biases. As an example, the sugar industry might fund research to convince us that the quantity of calories matter more than the quality of calories. *Just cut back on the donuts. One donut won't hurt. We all deserve a treat, right? Moderation ....* That way, rather than eat healthier, we get the message to eat the junk, as long as we lower our daily calories. That's one way the sugar industry can safeguard its bottom line.

As another example, tobacco industries may seek to cast doubt on research that opposes the dangers of vaping or second-hand smoke. When I was born, not that long ago (um, half a century ago), doctors smoked in their offices. It took a shake-up in the research before smoking became prohibited in indoor establishments.

Now here's the catch: go back and critically read what I just wrote. It's got issues from a critical perspective. But first, you might be wondering, how *do* you critically read a passage?

The Open University gives several clues as to how to read critically in its book excerpt of the course titled *How to Be a Critical Reader*. Here are seven tips on how to read critically, as cited from this book excerpt from The Open University:

#### Tip one: Be wary of hedging language.

In my passage above, I use words such as "might," "can," and "may": all hedging words. According to the Open University, hedging arises when "using language to signal that you are not absolutely certain about what you say or write. You do not present what you are saying as a fact. This may be because you do not know everything about the topic so are not sure or you are aware that other people have different views, so you are respecting their viewpoint, or because you are speaking/writing to someone who may take offence if you are too direct in what you say" (66%).

In my passage above, I use hedging language. That's because I couldn't recall the name of the documentary about the evil of the sugar industry, and I don't remember if the documentary cited any research manipulation. I do recall a documentary solely on the research manipulations of the food industry, but, again, I can't remember the documentary's name. I also read three books by authors that claim government and big business muzzled their research: one author



researched bio-solids; the other, chronic fatigue syndrome; and another, breast implants. Two of these authors claim they were threatened with imprisonment or thrown into prison for holding unpopular views. On top of that, I read about various research manipulations by big business that were exposed on the Website U.S. Right to Know. Thus, I had a reasonable case, at least in my own mind, to use the sugar and tobacco industries as examples of funding bias. But I did not have solid citations, hence the hedging language.

The Open University writes that “hedgers such as *seems* and *appear* to are more cautious than *probably*. Yet again, *probably* is more cautious than *undoubtedly*. Words such as *undoubtedly* signal to the reader that the writer is quite sure of their opinion – but it is still opinion and not fact” (74%).

#### **Tip two: Watch for sweeping generalizations.**

The Open University says, “The expression ‘to make sweeping generalizations’ means to make general statements about a whole group of things or people without sufficient evidence” (69%).

Yes, I watch documentaries and read books that frame big industry as evil-doers. Big industry is claimed to manipulate research for corporate gain and discredit opposing views. But this is a sweeping generalization. After all, big industry such as pharmaceutical companies have saved or prolonged many lives. How evil is that?

“At university it is considered that writers should not make sweeping generalizations, but should express their opinions more cautiously” (69%).

#### **Tip three: Ask yourself, “Is the argument well-structured and -supported?”**

The Open University says an argument is well-structured if “the argument is organized logically, moving from definitions to explanations and then to arguments against and for [the subject]. This is a common pattern in argument texts” (83%).

But what counts as arguments?

“Academic writers commonly use opinions and facts from other sources to support their arguments” (32%). It's interesting to me that opinion can serve as support if the opinion gets published. Critics of psychological theory argue that a chunk of psychology is founded

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

### **Three-Minute Thesis Competition**

Tue, Mar 17, 9:30am to 4:00 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by FGS

[news.athabasca.ca/events/three-minute-thesis-competition](https://news.athabasca.ca/events/three-minute-thesis-competition)

Access online through above link

### **BMgmt/CPHR Info Session**

Wed, Mar 18, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[news.athabasca.ca/events/bmgmt-cphr-information-session-20200318](https://news.athabasca.ca/events/bmgmt-cphr-information-session-20200318)

Register through above link

### **BComm/CPA Info Session**

Thur, Mar 19, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[news.athabasca.ca/events/bcomm-cpa-information-session-20200319](https://news.athabasca.ca/events/bcomm-cpa-information-session-20200319)

Register through above link

### **AUSU Council Meeting**

Thur, Mar 19, 6:30 to 8:30 pm MDT  
Online

Hosted by AUSU

[www.ausu.org/event/march-council-meeting-4/](https://www.ausu.org/event/march-council-meeting-4/)

No pre-registration required; e-mail [governance@ausu.org](mailto:governance@ausu.org) for meeting package

### **Science Outreach—Athabasca**

#### **Fossils: Behind the Scenes**

Thur, Mar 19, 7:00 to 8:30 pm MDT  
Athabasca University, Governing Council Chambers, 1 University Drive, Athabasca AB

In person

Hosted by AU

[news.athabasca.ca/events/science-outreach-athabasca-speaker-series-2](https://news.athabasca.ca/events/science-outreach-athabasca-speaker-series-2)

No pre-registration necessary

*All events are free unless otherwise noted.*

on opinion rather than scientific fact. It's a soft-science, yes. But, in short, if your opinion gets published and mine gets shunted, you're more factual than I, from an academic lens, however right or wrong either of us may be.

**Tip four: Keep alert for both sides of the story.**

The Open University writes, "In academic texts it is considered important that writers support their claims with evidence, but it is also considered important that they present balanced arguments by looking at alternative views" (71%).

While plastic produces harm to the environment and human health, there exists another side to the story: dead trees. Cutting down trees for use as straws takes away natural habitats and food sources for squirrels, rabbits, birds, and many other creatures. Killing trees harms the environment, just like producing plastics does. Thus, we should strive to look at both sides of any narrative.

**Tip five: Be wary of facts.**

"Establishing what is 'fact' is not as easy as it might seem. Even well accepted facts can turn out to be opinions. It was once thought that the Earth was the centre of the universe, and immobile; Galileo was imprisoned for suggesting this was not a fact. [Yes, Galileo was muzzled, too.] Once you start questioning texts, more 'facts' may turn out to be opinions. However, it is usually possible to tell that some texts are more fact-based than others" (100%).

The view on climate change has morphed into what can be considered an incontrovertible truth. (Note my hedging language.) But the view that climate change is a human-made phenomenon may not be a fact. It might be opinion.

"Some texts will be more factual than others and some will attempt to influence your opinions" (5%). Where you stand on the political spectrum may influence your views on climate change, meat consumption, and plastic use. Are they hoaxes, partial truths, or facts? And who has the power to decide? And can you tell which side of the political spectrum I sit?

Ah, yes, that's the gist of critical reading. But there's more ...

**Tip six: Shake your head when reading anecdotes.**

By "'anecdotal' [it is meant] that the author draws on examples from his own experiences. This type of supporting detail is not objective. It would not be considered generally valid because the author has selected from his experience. You need to read it with caution" (75%).

I view the tobacco industry as insincere. But I base this partly on a personal experience. I went to a job interview with a tobacco company that promised a smoke-free future. Smoke free, huh? I told the interviewers that I'd use their vape-like tobacco product to wean people off smoking—and that I'd create a meet-up group to get smokers healthier. The interviewer said that they didn't care about health, as he rubbed his big belly and laughter erupted in the room. *So, why aim for a smoke-free future?* I wondered.

But this personal account may not be an objective take on the smoking industry. Perhaps the tobacco industry sincerely wishes to create a smoke-free future. Despite how ridiculous that claim may sound, my personal account—or any personal account, for that matter—should be read with caution.

**Tip seven: Pay attention to your own bias.**

"Having opinions can influence the way you read. If you disagree with a writer you might find you are tempted to reject what they say without following their argument. On the other hand, if



you have strong opinions in favor of what a writer says, you might accept what you read as the truth. For these reasons it is important to be aware of your own opinions as you read and to consider whether the writer's opinions are supported by evidence" (94%).

So, why should students be wary of using opinion as the basis for their papers? Well, if "it is about education and is written by an academic, but it is an opinion piece [, it] would not be published in an academic journal" (80%). And all graduate students aim to get published, right?

As I end on that sweeping generalization mixed with hedging language, I urge you to critically read others' works—and your own essays, too. The less biased, and the more factual, your essays, the more likely you'll get published in academic journals.

That is, unless you get asked to submit an opinion piece.

But in the meantime, I challenge you to apply the above tips. Amaze everyone with your first publication in an academic journal.

And why not you? You've got an academic publication within you ready to burst free. Now that's an opinion worth publishing, wouldn't you agree?

#### References

Open Learn: Free Learning from the Open University. (2016). *How to Be a Critical Reader*. The Open University. E-book.



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

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

### AthaU Facebook Group

Gayle seeks guidance on how to deal with a required course that is currently suspended; one responder who experienced the same issue suggests contacting Academic Advising as there may be a list of alternate courses. Anita is hoping to arrange a ride-share for the March 17 BIOL 325 lab. Razanne wonders what her exam options are while she's out of the country in an area with uncertain power and internet connections.

Other posts include navigating myAU, course registration timing, transfer credits, and courses CMIS 351, GEOG 200, HERM 301, PSYC 340, and SOCI 301.

### Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "We live in a period of rapid technological change. Learn more about three disruptive [#technologies](#) that are transforming the way we do business. <https://bit.ly/3bDnWTY> [#PowerUpFridays](#) [#BlockChain](#) [#CryptoCurrency](#) [#CrowdSourcing](#)."

@austudentsunion tweets: "The Athabasca University Press has a new website! Did you know they were the first open-access scholarly press in Canada? Check out their new site, get their latest publication, or check out the Spring 2020 Catalogue at <https://aupress.ca>. Congrats [@au\\_press](#)!"

### Youtube

Athabasca U posts several short videos of students relating their AU experiences, including [Athabasca University makes the impossible possible](#).



## Pound Problems



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

*Dear Barb:*

*Hi, I read your column often and finally decided to send in a question. I am a mother of two teenage boys. My husband and I are in our forties and both work full time, and I also take a few courses a year through AU. We are very busy and find it difficult to do much besides living everyday life and taking care of our family. I also have a widowed mother who does pretty well on her own, but needs support sometimes.*

*Over the last few years my husband and I have both put on weight. We eat out a lot and I know that's not a good choice, but we just don't have the time to prepare healthy meals. We would rather spend time with our kids watching a movie, than preparing a big meal. I'm wondering if the weight gain has something to do with our age. I have heard that it's harder to lose weight over 40, but I have friends over forty and they are not all over weight, so there must be a way to accomplish this. Do you have any suggestions that won't require a huge commitment? Thanks, Nicole.*

Hi Nicole:

Most things in life that are worthwhile require a huge commitment. This is your health and if you don't take care of yourself you will not be able to take care of anyone. There are health issues directly related to lifestyle choices. High blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, type two diabetes and some types of arthritis can result from a sedentary lifestyle and bad food choices. After age forty many women's hormones become unstable. This is something you should discuss with your doctor.

As well your body doesn't process sugar as well as it did in your twenties and thirties—the insulin imbalance may make you feel hungry, therefore leading to weight gain. Increasing protein and carbohydrates can help with this. Also, the metabolism begins to slow down in your forties, also resulting in weight gain. All of these things can be controlled with a lifestyle change. Become more active. Going for a 30-minute walk daily can help with the weight gain and also with heart health. Perhaps arrange some hikes with your kids, make it a family outing, rather than sitting and watching a movie. Try to make meal prep a family affair. Give each person a veggie to chop up, and prepare enough for a few stir fries, that way when you don't have time the veggies will be done and you can quickly include them with some meat and rice and have an easy and delicious meal. When you are preparing meals, such as chili or lasagna, make an extra serving and freeze it for those days when you don't have time to cook. These changes definitely require commitment, but you will find it is well worth it in the long run.

Good luck Nicole.

*Email your questions to [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto: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  
Them That See

Wanda Waterman







## Changes to AU Course Materials

In the fall of 2013 AU began the process of replacing hard-copy textbooks for all undergraduate courses with e-text versions. Implementation has been staged in

The results will be shared with members in an upcoming newsletter.

## A New Era at AU - A New AU president

After two terms in the Office of President, Dr. Frits Pannekoek is retiring. Last week, in recognition of his contributions to distance education, the University of South Africa (Unisa) granted him an honorary Doctor of Literature and Philosophy award. AUSU congratulates Dr. Pannekoek on this great honour, and the recognition it brings to AU as a world leader in distance and open learning. We wish him all the best over his final weeks in the role of president, and in all his future endeavours!



We had hoped by now to be able to announce the selection of the presidential search committee for a new, full-term president; however, as a suitable candidate has not yet been found, AU has instead appointed an interim president: Dr. Peter MacKinnon, formerly of the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. MacKinnon has also served as chair of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and on the Science, Technology and Innovation Council of Canada. We look forward to working with him over the coming year! **Convocation travel information**

AUSU wants to make sure this year's graduating class has a fantastic convocation. To make this happen, we're providing free transportation via bus or limo service to take people from Edmonton to the Athabasca Multiplex each day of convocation 2014. This applies to those graduating from AU undergraduate programs, and their guests (some limits may apply).

We've also arranged hotel discounts in Edmonton.



The information on this page is provided by the AU Students' Union. The Voice does not create this content. Contact AUSU at [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) with any questions about this article.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Feb 29:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Apr](#)
- **Mar 5:** [AUSU Election Candidates Announced](#)
- **Mar 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Apr 1](#)
- **Mar 15:** [Apr degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Mar 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)

## Student Council Election Results!

Thank you to all AUSU members who voted and ran in the AUSU 2020 Student Council Election!

The new 2020-2022 AUSU student council members are:  
(in alphabetical order by last name)

### Name

Brittany Daigle  
Natasha Donahue  
Monique Durette  
Darcie Fleming  
Kathryn Hadden  
Jasmine Hernandez Banda  
Stacey Hutchings  
Regan Johnson  
Amanda Lipinski  
Katy (Catherine) Lowe  
Devon Romanick  
Joshua Ryan  
Ian Stewart

### Location

Kitchener, ON  
Barrhead, AB  
Okotoks, AB  
Lethbridge, AB  
Williams Lake, BC  
Calgary, AB  
Calgary, AB  
Sylvan Lake, AB  
Prince George, BC  
Calgary, AB  
St. Jacobs, ON  
Orleans, ON  
Edmonton, AB

You can access the complete vote tally online [here](#).

**Welcome aboard to all our new councillors - we look forward to working with you!**

## Questions or Appeals

The appeals period runs from March 5 to March 12, 2020. Contact the Chief Returning Officer, Bailey Daines, at [cro@ausu.org](mailto:cro@ausu.org) with any questions or concerns.

**Find out more on the AUSU website [here](#).**

## Executive Blog – Advocacy Wins!

In February 2020, our AUSU president, Brandon Simmons, and VP External and Student Affairs, Natasha Donahue attended the annual Advocacy Week with the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.



This year, our Advocacy Week was a huge win for post-secondary students in Canada as the **federal government announced its commitment to 4 specific asks that we brought forward to Parliament!**

Our VP EX Natasha Donahue talks about this year's amazing Advocacy Week in our latest Executive Blog!

**Check out the full story and photo gallery on the AUSU website [here](#)!**



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# CLASSIFIEDS

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Classifieds are free for AU students!  
Contact [voice@voicemagazine.org](mailto:voice@voicemagazine.org) for more information.

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## THE VOICE

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