



THE VOICE

Vol 28 Issue 33 2020-08-21

Eight for Eight

Interviewing By-Election Candidates

Has the Pandemic Changed You?

The New Normal

Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You



Plus:

Women Of Interest - Kamala Harris

Stovetop Popcorn

and much more!

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The Voice Magazine

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

Email

voice@voicemagazine.org

Publisher

AU Students' Union

Editor-In-Chief

Jodi Campbell

Managing Editor

Karl Low

Regular Contributors

Barb Godin, Natalia Iwanek,
Barbara Lehtiniemi, Angela
Pappas, Jason Sullivan,
Wanda Waterman, Xin Xu,
and others

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We love to hear from you!
Send your questions and comments to voicemagazine.org,
and please indicate if we may publish your letter!

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

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

Editorial

Bite the Ballot

Karl Low



Although just elected in March, AUSU Council has lost four of its 13 members since the 2020 full council election. In response, a by-election has been scheduled and the voting starts on August 25th. All members should keep an eye on their email boxes for their ballot.

Eight students have chosen to run for the four seats available and various campaign opportunities, such as the AUSU Forums, some campaigning on social media, and others have sprung up. To help students decide who they want to sit on AUSU Council this term (a term that I maintain will be a very important one given the various challenges that will be coming forward over the next two years) we've provided eight questions to give you a little bit of background on the candidates, who they are, and what they think the real issues facing students and AUSU, and maybe even a bit about how they'd deal with them.

Their responses are our feature article this week, so be sure to read "Eight Questions for Eight Candidates" and be sure to send in your vote when you receive the ballot this coming Tuesday.

But also this week, we were lucky enough to get an interview with the current Vice-President of Student and External Affairs, Stacey Hutchings. This isn't an interview about AUSU at all, but a personal look at who Stacey Hutchings is, in our latest "Minds We Meet" column. As a quick note, we're looking for more student to interview for the Minds We Meet column, and while I can't promise you fame or fortune for doing it, I can promise you a bit of swag – so if you're looking for some branded merchandise to prove you were at AU, why not contact me at karl@voicemagazine.org and let me know you're interested in having a chat.

Now, if I featured this editorial on the front page, that'd make it a hat trick for me, but that's probably pushing things right? Instead, we've got Adrienne Braithewaite's look at how the Pandemic has changed how people, and particularly herself, now live. She compares it to past pandemics in history and notes that even if things do eventually get back to "normal", just what that is may be considerably different from what came before.

As a side note, today is the last day that ballots can be submitted for the leadership of the Conservative Party. If you're a conservative party member and don't have your ballot mailed already, you may well have to drive it over to your nearest constituency office before 5pm. Results will be in in a few days and I'll admit I'm quite curious about what the outcome will be. I have yet to do a deep dive into any of the candidates running for the party leadership, but whoever is chosen has an uphill battle ahead of themselves. Whoever it is will have to, if they hope to get elected, find a way to create a policy document that can appeal to a Canada that is primarily progressive in nature but that will be accepted by the social conservatives that make up a large portion of the party membership.

I couldn't do it. But then again, I don't have to. Enjoy the read!

Eight Questions for Eight Candidates

The Voice



Voting for the AUSU By-election will start in just a few days (August 25th, watch your e-mail), and with four seats open on Council, this could have a noticable effect on AUSU's priorities. So to help you decide who's going to best represent you, we sent a few questions to each of them. Candidates were sent the questions later on Wednesday, August 12, and asked to have their responses in by just before midnight this morning, August 21—it's that fresh! They were also asked to keep their answers fairly short so that you can quickly decide what you like and don't. We'll let you judge for yourself how well they did on that front.

Of the eight candidates, six submitted answers. Their answers are printed in the order that we received the responses, with no editing at all other than making the formatting work. If there's no answer for a candidate under a question, it's because that candidate decided not to answer that question.

So, without further ado, let's see what the candidates had to say!

What faculty are you in, if any, and how much longer do you expect to be studying at AU?

Karen Julia Fletcher

I'm in the Faculty of Science and Technology, studying Math, and expect to be at AU another 2-3 years.

Natalia Iwanek

I am currently in my third year of my Bachelor of Arts in English. I plan to continue at AU for my MA.

Amber McDuffe

I am in the Bachelor of Science program as a human science major and psychology minor. I will be studying for another 2.5 to 3 years.

Jennifer Bouley

I am in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Undergraduate Program Student. I expect to be studying at AU until June 2021. I am also a graduate of the Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations Program.

Hannah Olsen

I am in the Faculty of Business working on my BComm in Accounting, which I will be finishing in approximately 2-3 years.

Mark Teeninga

I'm currently enrolled in the faculty of Science & Technology, part-time, and expect to be studying at AU for at least 3-4 more years.

Aside from tuition, what do you think is the most important issue AUSU needs to address for students?**Karen Julia Fletcher**

Keeping tutors and markers accountable! AU has marking standards but when they're not met it's left to the student to follow up, but many are concerned that will annoy their tutors and affect their grades. I want to advocate for systems to put in place to keep tutors accountable to AU's standards so students can focus on their studies.

Natalia Iwanek

Aside from the 7% tuition increase, I think AUSU needs to continue advocating for students during this lingering COVID-19 pandemic. Despite AU's online infrastructure, problems have become increasingly apparent, including issues with student services, tutor marking times, and digital accessibility, such as ProctorU exams and the newly implemented e-texts. In addition, increased support for underrepresented students, including those using ASD services and those facing financial difficulties, needs to be continued.

Amber McDuffe

Communication and transparency, AU in general whether it is tutors or administration are incredibly difficult to get an answer out of on a good day, never mind when you are on a time crunch. This needs to change as it contributes to the stress of students and causes problems for our mental health.

Jennifer Bouley

I feel that addressing student life balance and wellness are very important.

Hannah Olsen

I think that some of the most important issues that AUSU needs to be addressing for students outside of tuition includes student mental health support. The unpredictable times we are in have impacted every student in one way or another, and I believe it's very important to support our student body to continue to set them up for success despite the changes we have encountered due to the pandemic.

Mark Teeninga

I think one of the biggest challenges for students is around prompt response for Student Services, both from the Tutors, and AU Staff, such as Exam Services and the Financial Aid office. AUSU needs to be pushing for transparency and accountability from both AU staff and faculty.

What's the hardest thing about an average day for you?**Karen Julia Fletcher**

At the moment, dealing with being home all the time. Being unable to physically get away from my work and from where I do my school work makes it hard for me to ever step

away from that, I feel like I should be working on something if I'm home. I'm trying to get better at actually taking time off!

Natalia Iwanek

As a freelancer and online student, my days are so varied; every new day brings a new challenge. I try to balance the stress, the current state of the world, and the rare moments away from never-ending assignments, by getting outside of the city and just relaxing.

Amber McDuffe

I am currently working full time as a paramedic, run my own first aid training business, am enrolled in full time studies and an active volunteer in my community which can make finding time for self care difficult. There are so many contributing factors that can make my days hard depending on what I experience. Finding a healthy balance in life and remembering to put my own needs first can be the hardest part of an average day for me as I am the type of person who regularly wants to do whatever I can to help others.

Jennifer Bouley

My biggest struggle on an average given day for me would be keeping on schedule when studying sometimes! For effective studying, it is all about creating a productive environment.

Hannah Olsen

For myself, the hardest thing in an average day is setting realistic expectations on how much I can achieve while still protecting my mental well-being and health amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mark Teeninga

The time between waking up, and when my coffee is ready!

If there was a new service, program, activity, or degree you could convince AU (not AUSU) to offer to students, what would it be?

Karen Julia Fletcher

A minor in data science, with courses in Python, Tableau, and other technology that's in high demand, to provide grads with marketable skills and improve job prospects after graduation.

Natalia Iwanek

In speaking with students, I have noticed recurring themes of not feeling acknowledged and needs not being understood. Increased options for ASD students are required, especially since most exams have transitioned to ProctorU services, as well as alternative assignments and increased mental health services for all students, in these unprecedented times. Many students also seem keen on expanding departments, such as communications, marketing, and management. I have also noticed that many wish more language options were available in addition to French, Cree, and Spanish, as well as journalism and art courses.

Amber McDuffe

A health benefits plan for all students. This is something most major universities provide; Homewood health is a nice resource to have provided by AUSU, but we need a comprehensive plan that is provided by AU. Unforeseen medical costs can cause a student to no longer be able to afford their education, no one should have to choose between their health and their educational future.

Jennifer Bouley

I think that a new service that AU could offer its students would be health and dental insurance at a discounted rate. These are very important especially for part-time and freelance workers.

Hannah Olsen

If there was a new service that AU could offer to students it would be a tutorial program and video series where students explain their experiences and challenges with online learning. In my experience, the transition from conventional in-class schooling to online schooling was a massive learning curve and I think that students would benefit with more support during that transition time.

Mark Teeninga

I would like to see enhancement in AU's Digital systems, specifically a clear, student focused portal that provides visibility and timelines to any and all requests the student has open with the university. This would include items like assignments, exam requests, registrar requests, Financial Aid packages, and Credit transfer requests. Each item would have the submission date, stages in the process, which employee / Faculty Member / Group has ownership of the request, and what the service standards are for each type of request, with a clear process for communication and escalation when standards have not been met.

What's going to be the biggest challenge for you should you get elected?**Karen Julia Fletcher**

I think when people ask "what's the biggest challenge" we often mean "what will be the hard part," but being challenged is such a great feeling (it's why I went back to university, I was bored). I love being in situations where I have to learn new things and new ways of doing things, and I think being elected would be challenging in lots of fantastic ways.

Natalia Iwanek

I do not foresee too many challenges; apart from stopping myself from dreaming too big, which is not necessarily a bad thing. No change has ever come from complacency.

Amber McDuffe

My reason for seeking a position in this election is to help alleviate the stress of my fellow students; the biggest challenge for me will be ensuring I am able to meet that goal in a timely fashion since it is contingent on the responses received from what will be my fellow council members, AU and the government. I am very much a "do it right or don't do it at all" type of person and want to make sure I "do it right" for all of you because not doing it at all isn't an option.

Jennifer Bouley**Hannah Olsen**

I believe that the biggest challenge in being elected would be jumping into the AUSU while it is in full swing, however the members I have had the pleasure to interact with already are incredibly supportive and welcoming so I'm excited for the potential to work alongside them!

Mark Teeninga

Since I already participated as a council member in the 2018-2020 council term, my biggest challenge will be catching up with the Staff and Council members. It's only been a few months but it seems like a lot more time has past.

Is there a program or activity AUSU does now that you think it should expand?

Karen Julia Fletcher

I love the AU app because of how it creates a community amongst distance learners, it's so nice to hear from other people who are also studying. I would love to have a weekly discussion question that's posted to foster more discussion and help people connect with each other.

Natalia Iwanek

I think that new initiatives, such as the Indigenous Representation Committee and the initiatives for students with disabilities are an amazing start to creating increased inclusivity and systemic change on a post-secondary level. I would like to see this further expanded for new and immigrant students, students with financial difficulties, and all BIPOC, as well as queer students. I would also like to see more social events on Zoom as well to create a stronger community. AU students often feel isolated; expanding current initiatives, such as social and networking opportunities, would be a great start.

Amber McDuffe

AUSU states "One of AUSU's key goals is to ensure that our members receive a quality education that is respected and transferable to institutions within Canada and abroad," I feel that goal is not being met. Majority of the classes I have taken are using grossly outdated textbooks and haven't been updated in years, over a decade sometimes. This isn't acceptable and we need to make sure AU is doing their part to provide up to date, quality education. Expanding our focus on this area is very important.

Jennifer Bouley

I think that AU should expand its knowledge about how exams are written and the guidelines. There seems to be a lot of concerns among students regarding this. Also, since it is an online university, I think that student knowledge about the school's counseling services should be expanded. There are also great programs that the school offers that students can utilize.

Hannah Olsen

I am a huge proponent for mental health and well-being, so the program that I believe could always be expanded on further is Student Wellness.

Mark Teeninga

I'd like to see more opportunities for online social interaction with our membership... I know some "Game Nights" have been facilitated, and I believe the opportunity to connect and network, while having fun, is an important element of higher education.

Is there a program or activity AUSU does now that you think it could cut back?

Karen Julia Fletcher**Natalia Iwanek**

The current AUSU initiatives, including bursaries and awards, the Indigenous Representation Committee, initiatives for students with disabilities, and programs such as the AU app, LinkedIn, V-Mock, and Peer Reviewed Courses greatly benefit students. I would not cut support from anything.

Amber McDuffe

Eliminate the current mediocre health supports such as Homewood health and eyewear discounts; instead push AU to provide their students with a comprehensive group benefits plan.

Jennifer Bouley**Hannah Olsen**

I truly believe that all of the programs that AUSU offers to the student body are valuable in improving the student experience at AU, so I do not believe that any should be cut back.

Mark Teeninga

In my previous term on council, all programs and activities were reviewed for their relevance and overall impact. In each case, members were found to be using the services, and the benefits outweighed the costs/efforts for each program/activity.

What are you most hoping to gain personally from this experience if you're elected?

Karen Julia Fletcher

I'm an introvert that loves people, I care deeply about people and love being able to be a part of making things better from others (especially in situations where a lot of it can be done remotely!) and I'm passionate about administration done well. It's really personally satisfying to be able to serve others in a way that lines up with my abilities and passions, which is why I hope people will vote for me.

Natalia Iwanek

I advocate for issues that I feel strongly about on a daily basis. A position on AUSU Council would allow me to put my words into practice, and hopefully, make some sort of lasting change.

Amber McDuffe

Personal gain isn't the reason why I am hoping to get into this position, nor do I think anyone should enter a student support or advocacy position with those intentions. I am instead going to re-phrase the question and let you know what I am hoping will come from this experience is a reduction in student stress, an increase in quality education and to ensure I can help every student from every background and situation to feel they are heard while addressing concerns in a timely manner.

Jennifer Bouley

The main thing that I am looking to gain from this experience is to get more involved with the student experience and help students the maximum benefit out of what the school has to offer. It is also exciting to get to know other students.

Hannah Olsen

While I was a student at Lakeland College I was elected as the President of the Students' Association, so I am hoping to further my professional experience, student leadership skills, and knowledge in student government should I be one of the elected councillors.

Mark Teeninga

I thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of advocating on behalf of AUSU members in 2018-2020. I formed friendships and found that my AUSU experience enriched my overall learning experience at AU. I hope to gain that opportunity again for 2020-2022.



Scholarship of the Week

Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.

Scholarship name: Syncrude/Athabasca University Aboriginal Scholarship

Sponsored by: AU and Syncrude Canada Ltd.

Deadline: September 30, 2020

Potential payout: \$2000

Eligibility restriction: Applicants must be Alberta residents, of Aboriginal ancestry, and be a current full-time student in one three specified AU undergrad programs (Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Management, or Bachelor of Science.) See [application form](#) for full eligibility requirements.

What's required: A completed application form including personal and academic information, proof of Aboriginal ancestry, and a description of your career objectives and Aboriginal community extracurricular activities.

Tips: Read the Conditions of Eligibility carefully.

Where to get info: registrar.athabascau.ca/studentawards/undergraduate.php#128



MINDS

WE

MEET



From Vancouver Island, Stacey Hutchings, the newest AUSU Vice President of External and Student affairs, has lived in Calgary for the last five years. Born to military parents, she's been as far east as Shawville, Quebec but has spent most of her life between Vancouver Island and Fort St. John, where she worked as a land administrator processing applications on behalf of oil and gas corporations to the BC Oil and Gas Commission, and also as a court clerk for a year before having her first child. Raising her child became her full-time job for several years, but the break made it difficult to go back to work once it was time for her child to start school. That's when she decided it was time to pursue her university degree.

Her goal was to attain her law degree, as working at a court clerk in Fort St. John brought her into contact with a variety of judges. "We get a lot of judges from

all over the province coming up because lawyers who get promoted to judges can't judge former clients," and in a smaller town that only has a few lawyers, that means a significant portion of the population. She found herself impressed by how she "saw how much judges cared. How much they really want to help people go on a better path."

She continued, "Being a stay-at-home mom I didn't feel like I was making an impact on society, so I think that's part of what my motivation has been. I want to leave the world a better place than when I came into it. I'm a big picture person, so there's not one specific cause that gets me going, it's all interconnected, I look at this big system we have, and see it's not working it's not benefitting"

Right now, she's taking her Bachelor of Professional Arts, specializing in Governance, Law, and Management from AU, but she started at the University of Calgary with a goal to get into law school. But, at a "brick and mortar school, you're on campus full time, there's labs and other things that are just not something that you can do as a mature learner with other obligations." She noted that being a parent made attending in person too difficult, "the courses I had to take I had to take. I couldn't pick and choose, so it meant if wanted to stay at U of C I'd be at school from 9am to 9pm."

While law school is considered a challenge under most circumstances, Stacey has the additional complication of dyslexia factoring into her decision. “It’s fine outside an educational setting,” she notes, “but the school system really breaks you.

“I can’t do multiple choice exams”, she explains, “I interpret the question differently, so, if I can answer as an essay, I can explain and get it right, but because multiple choice is standardized, I get it wrong.”

“That’s why I like AU. The U of C was all multiple-choice exams, whereas here most of my exams are essays. I know some people don’t like writing their answers, but I prefer it because I can just sit there and keep going and hopefully get something. But trying to read what I write is a nightmare as I can easily fill several pages with a single question,” she laughs.

Still to take the LSAT, lately she’s found herself re-evaluating her goal and considering perhaps attending graduate school or moving into the workforce when she’s completed her degree. With only eight courses left, she notes that she’d hoped that she’d have firmed up her decision by now.

I asked whether the dyslexia makes it harder to read her materials, and she notes “Basically I listen to everything. When I first started, I got a grant for software—it was like \$2,000 for the software to convert text to audio—but now it’s just included as standard on PC and Macs, so it’s getting easier and easier.”

As to her experience with online learning, she notes “It’s been good. Compared to brick and mortar it’s more work, but my GPA has gone up because I’m able to do more work. Brick and mortar is more like high school, so I was able to coast. Here there’s no professor telling you what you need to know, you actually have to know the stuff.”

Her favorite course at AU so far has been Criminal Justice 377: Issues in Access to Information and Privacy Protection. “I always think this type of stuff would be boring, but I took this course and liked it because it

AU-thentic Events Upcoming AU Related Events

Bannock and a Movie August Edition - First Nation Stories

Aug 1 to Aug 31

Online

Hosted by AU Nuksahtowin
news.athabascau.ca/events/bannock-and-a-movie-first-nation-stories

Access through above link

2020 AUSU By-election Voting Period

Aug 25 to 31

www.ausu.org/governance/elections/

Visit above link for more

information

Talk to a Librarian Drop-in Session

Tues, Aug 25, 9:00 to 9:30 am MDT

Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU Library

www.facebook.com/events/516644619062702/

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

General Q&A about AU

Tues, Aug 25, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT

Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU

www.athabascau.ca/online-learning/how-au-works/open-house/

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Facebook Live Q&A with AUSU Executives

Tues, Aug 25, 1:00 to 1:30 pm MDT

Online via Facebook Live

Hosted by AUSU

www.ausu.org/event/facebook-live-qa-with-ausu-executives/

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link or AUSU

Facebook page

reminded me of the book *1984*. I really like that book. It's pretty relevant for today too, with the pandemic and how much our privacy has shifted with that. I liked the course because I never really thought about those issues before."

Of course, with that, I had to ask her about the ABTraceTogether App, and she responded, "I wouldn't use the app; I don't see the point in it yet because each province has their own. If there was one app that Canada owned, that would make sense. It's kind of weird they need to go through an app, considering Google already tracks our movement, that's how they know who's in what store and what time. The problem is that not enough people have bought into it."

Having been to both brick and mortar and now Athabasca University, I asked how she found the communication with course tutors as opposed to her previous experience. "Hit and miss," she responded, "it's weird to me, when you're at a brick and mortar institution, even in the bigger classes, you can still get some face time with your professors. It's not the same at AU. I hope that they will maybe shift in future. I wish that there was more interaction, because as a student it's hard to know what to do to reach out if you don't have questions but you want to get to know your tutor."

"To get into law school," she noted, "you need to have references from professors. How do you do that at AU? AU courses have mostly taken the course boxes you used to get mailed to you in the 90s and just put them online—for the courses I've had, at least—they haven't gone into online or interaction with peers very much. I'd love to see that integrated into the AU space, though I don't know if it happens in other programs."

On a more personal note, she points out that the most valuable lesson she's learned in life has been "To reach out for help when you need it, something I still struggle with. I'm dyslexic, so my first exam—first midterm in university—I got an F. And then I had professors at the same time saying they were banning laptops in

More AU-thentic Events

You Can't Get a Degree from "Google University" - Critically Evaluating Internet Sources

Wed, Aug 26, 9:00 to 11:00 am MDT
Online

Hosted by AU Library
library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ Training Webinar

Wed, Aug 26, 11:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by PowerED™ and the Rick Hansen Foundation

news.athabasca.ca/events/rick-hansen-foundation-accessibility-certification-training-webinar

Register through above link

Talk to a Librarian Drop-in Session

Thurs, Aug 27, 3:00 to 3:30 pm MDT
Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU Library
www.facebook.com/events/516644635729367/

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

The Grad Lounge

Fri, Aug 28, 1:00 to 2:00 pm MDT
Online via Microsoft Teams

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

news.athabasca.ca/events/the-grad-lounge-aug-28

No pre-registration necessary; access through above link

All events are free unless otherwise noted.

classrooms, and so I reached out to the university's accessibility centre and they gave me all these tools to help me with my education, and I'd never had that before.

I think being dyslexic kind of made me aware that sometimes the system sucks, and I don't even have a visible difference. It has always been something I'm able to hide."

As a final note, she's also binging *Schitt's Creek*. "I know, I'm so behind, right when it ends, I discover it."



Has the Pandemic Changed You

Adrienne Braithewaite



In anthropology, the term cultural relativism refers to how we find identity and value through our culture, a culture which is not immune to rapid transformation. When looking back at history we see formative events triggering cultural adaptations, but is it possible to analyze these changes while they are happening? If we look back to the beginning of 2020 can we see adjustments made to our daily routines, and will some changes be permanent?

Pandemics can influence our everyday lives and change how we interact with the world around us. COVID-19 has rushed in, forcing people to adjust their way of life and their social behaviours. History provides us with plenty of examples of social change during the aftermath of pandemics. With millions of people dying during the Black Death (or Bubonic Plague), feudalism (a hierarchical social structure) was replaced with capitalism as a response to the labour shortage. In 1918, the Spanish Flu pioneered a path for public health care as European governments were forced to implement "socialized medicine—healthcare for all, delivered free at the point of delivery". Some people say "we will not

come out of this pandemic unchanged," and history has provided us with evidence to support these concerns. There will be societal changes we won't be able to observe until after this crisis is over, but other smaller changes to the culture of everyday life are more discernable.

Education and social stratification are two areas of our society where I believe we are seeing a direct response to the pandemic. Many parents across Canada are struggling with making the right education choices for their children this fall. On August 14, 2020, over 7,000 people participated in a free online webinar with child psychologist, Dr. Jody Carrington, offering advice for parents and educators on how to support children emotionally as we prepare for back to school. Should they send their children back to in-person classes provincial governments are recommending, or should they choose online learning or homeschooling? The conflict puts

parents in a difficult situation, forcing them to feel they must choose between their children's health and emotional needs or their academic needs.

As for the children, when confronted with rapid instructional changes, they were able to utilize their online literacy skills and families were forced to adapt their work and daily routines to accommodate at-home learning. This pandemic could bring permanent changes to the way education is delivered; a demand for online education for children and youth could persist even after a vaccine is developed.

Our society is experiencing more awareness and respect for socio-cultural diversity, particularly in Western societies. Modern scientific advancements have paved the way for rapid vaccine developments, but globally, we have yet to abolish racism and marginalization. UNESCO recently published an article, "The socio-cultural implications of COVID-19," affirming how the pandemic has necessitated global solidarity and intercultural engagement, a need that was previously unacknowledged. As individuals, we are adjusting our everyday lives so that we can thrive amidst the pandemic while as a society we are learning to advocate for inclusion, diversity, and respect for all people. The evidence of these changes can be seen just by opening social media and observing how large corporations are taking responsibility for their role in promoting an equitable society.

The biggest changes in my own life are in my fitness routines, eating habits, and preferences for social activities. My family and I have modified our everyday lifestyle to coincide with a new collective reality in Canada. In January I spent hours every week at our local recreation center for both my own physical health and for sports programs my children participated in. With fitness centers being closed or running with limited capacity, I now must make a conscious effort to include outdoor activities like biking, walking, or swimming into my daily routine. A typical day in January would have meant school lunches for my children and a stop at Tim Hortons for coffee while commuting to university. With government mandated orders to stay at home, I find myself restocking the pantry non-stop and have doubled my daily coffee intake. My motivation and creativity in the kitchen is being fueled by an abundance of recipes and meal plan ideas posted online with the hashtag #HomemadeTastesBetter. My friendship and social networks have become smaller but even more important to me as I try to hang onto feeling like a valued member of my local community. I am also more aware of social inequalities and actively considering ways I can engage in conversations about diversity with my future students.

It has been said that "If we want to begin to transform our everyday lives for the better, perhaps we need to consider more closely how we think, talk about and represent them: to see the everyday not as the eternally tedious or bathetically comic residue of contemporary life, or simply as a sphere of overlooked ordinariness, but as the real space in which we lead our actual lives." Moran (2005)

When thinking about the small changes we have all made to our everyday lives, I am hopeful for the future and how even small adjustments might have a lasting impact on our society in the future.

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Adrienne Braithwaite is completing her After-Degree in Secondary Education at AU. She has a passion for literacy and cultural studies and hopes to pass on her enthusiasm to secondary students in the future.



The Hadza – Modern Hunter-Gather People of Tanzania



In the world of anthropology, the term “Indigenous” encapsulates much more than the traditional meaning of earliest known inhabitants of an area. It explores the earliest ways of group life, the methods of survival across areas and the interactions with those environments. Mankind’s history is cruel; in the past 150 years we have seen many Indigenous groups around the world cease to exist or struggling to regain equal footing in a today’s world. Most of it has to do with colonization and the non-stop regional wars that have been fought—a conquer with no mercy mindset. Of the few remaining Indigenous groups, The Hadza of Tanzania have provided scientists key insights as to how hunter-gather societies had survived since the dawn of man.

Hadza Way of Life

The Hadza are a hunter-gather society that has survived without growing or storing their own

food, nor domesticating livestock. They survived entirely by crafting weapons to hunt animals—bows and arrows made from their immediate environment—and by scavenging for plants. So their diet primarily consists of plant-based foods and various meats, but it also occasionally includes honey. They did not build and live in traditional villages like most, instead they would create temporary shelters as they travelled, and they carried only a few possessions. The expansion of contemporary settlements and farming, along with the over-hunting of animals for sport, has made the traditional way of life nearly impossible for the Hadza. David Choe shared a story on Joe Rogan’s podcast of how a Hadza elder explained to him how life was 50 years ago. The elder described the African Plains as a buffet, full of elephants, lions, hippos and so much more, and how in his lifetime it has all but disappeared.

What Makes the Hadza So Unique

One of the most unique things about the Hadza people is their symbiotic relationship with the Honeyguide bird. The bird uses a distinct call to communicate with the Hadza, who have learned to communicate with the birds through distinct whistles, and the birds have even been known to seek out groups of Hadza. The Honeyguide bird then leads them to a beehive and when they are taking out the honey, the bird takes the leftovers that are left on the ground. What makes this so special is that relationship is with an untamed animal. Richard Wrangham, a renowned anthropologist, called it the most developed, co-evolved, mutually helpful relationship between any mammal and any bird.

Another unique aspect of the Hadza people is that they have very distinct gut microbes and an intriguingly strong immune response to poisonous stings and bites. When scientists visit the Hadza people to conduct research, they sleep in zipped up tents that keep scorpions, snakes, and other poisonous animals away, while the Hadza people sleep in the open and on the ground. The immune response may be attributed to their million-year-old diet. When Hadza members had their health examined by scientists the results seemed to indicate that this group of people

appeared to exist without diabetes, intestinal diseases such as colitis, and obesity (Schnorr, 2018). Their all-natural lifestyle, the seasonal diet and always being on the go, is what nutritionists recommend and what science backs up as the best approach (Smits, 2017). While they may lack some vitamins and nutrients, they are Indigenous to that area and over time they have evolved to thrive in those conditions.

A Different Perspective

When the topic of historical Indigenous groups comes up or other remote communities, there is often a quick association with a primitive way of life. By today's standards, I would argue that all civilizations have been primitive throughout history. When nations decided to conquer or colonize other groups of people, that too was a primitive way of thought and many of those "dominant" nations had primitive ways of group life themselves. I see the past 20 years as a modern age of enlightenment, where we are just beginning to understand the ramifications of historical wrongdoings, and how it is still a battle for survival for many Indigenous groups.

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The Creative Spark

Marie Well

Nine Stages of Character Changes: For Good or Evil



Fear holds us down. So, when fear strikes, we must rise above. If not, we could tumble down the darker side of human nature. We could slide into despair. We could lose grasp of how to cope, and we could spin toward a tragic ending.

But heroes, shoved down, eventually rise, right? "We need heroes: to teach us about ourselves, and how to survive in this world" (Wisehart, 2015, 17%). And that hero is your story character. But ultimately, dear reader, that hero is you.

When faced with fear, you have three choices: to rise above, to sink down, or to stay the same. But in fiction, "to achieve their goal in the story, the character must change. To change, they must overcome their fear" (Wisehart, 2015, 32%).

Author David Wisehart shares a model of character change that consists of nine-stages: three virtuous, three neutral, and three villainous. No matter where you are in your current stage of life, you could end up at any of these nine levels that Wisehart describes, but I also want to share the goal, which, whether in fiction or in real life, is for the hero to rise above.

Three Virtuous: Can You Improve Your Character?

“1. Liberated: The character has overcome their fear and achieved their desire. They are free, transcendent, and self-actualized. A paragon of virtue” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

Perhaps this characterizes the state of truly enlightened individuals; for example, the Buddhist who invites the robber to ransack his home for the umpteenth time, while pouring the robber a welcoming cup of tea. (I read about such a scenario in a Buddhist book written by Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche.) Or an enlightened individual could see a living, breathing entity in all dead matter, including in the sky and the ocean. (See Gopi Krishna’s writings for this tale of enlightenment.)

These enlightened beings have overcome slavery to unsavory emotions. They no longer fall victim to overwhelming fear.

“2. Capable: The character is psychologically healthy, but their dominant fear is present. So is their unmet desire. To deal with anxiety, the character uses defense mechanisms that shape their style of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

The best defense mechanism is no defense mechanism, in my opinion. Instead of defensiveness, find ways to make yourself happy. In other words, instead of getting angry, get empathic; instead of crying, seek a growth opportunity; instead of arguing, sing a love song.

The more we work on ourselves and not on others, the more we annihilate our deepest fears.

“3. Valuable: The character is a constructive member of society, and relatively healthy. But they have secondary fears and desires that complicate their character. They are within reach of liberation. If only they can overcome their dominant fear. And take virtuous action to achieve their desire” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

In another article, I wrote that our goals, desires, and means of achieving those goals all need to be positive. But I believe this need for positivity applies not just to our actions, but also to our thoughts.

To grow more liberated, the ultimate goal, I believe, is to free ourselves of all negative emotions. For instance, don't just control anger; instead, have zero anger. Don't just control jealousy; have zero jealousy. Don't just control guilt; leave all guilt in the past.

Turning away from unhealthy thoughts leads to our better angels.

Three Neutral: What is an unhealthy false self?

“4. Imbalanced: The character has given in to an unhealthy temptation that now pulls them toward their dark side. Nevertheless, their actions fall well within the morality of their culture. Their flaws are easily overlooked, because they are so common. But the character has violated their best interests. They have sinned against themselves. Because they are resisting the better angels of their nature, their positive moral development is in jeopardy” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

I had a dream that a trance-like party felt heavenly, but was actually demonic. When I woke up from the dream, I tried to make sense of it. I came to the conclusion that we live our lives in trances. We often go from one thought to the next, overlooking those thoughts that aren't in line with our higher self. I've come to believe that we need to weed out on any dark thought and dwell, instead, on its opposite-positive. In a healthy mind, there's no room for anger, jealousy, self-pity, guilt, and any other vices.

“5. Controlling: The character attempts to control their world by presenting a false self. They wear the mask of their character type. Defense mechanisms, which were created to control their

own fear, now keep the character in conflict with other people, and with the world. The character is morally and psychologically average, in a world of the walking wounded” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

One lesson I learned is to never entertain a thought that leaves us feeling jaded. The minute we blame someone or feel wronged is the minute we need to let go, to forgive, to drum up compassion, and to grow from our own mistakes.

“6. Overcompensating: The character’s defense mechanisms aren’t working properly. Other people begin to sense that something about this character is wrong. The character overcompensates by giving even more power to their false self. They become self-centered in a manner that matches their character type, and they act out in unhealthy and inappropriate ways” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

The minute ego creeps in marks the minute we have fallen a notch. A self-centered state blocks us from seeing the errors in our way; when ego-focused, we only want to see our good sides. But when we can’t see our errors, how can we possibly grow?

Three Traits of the Villainous: Can a Bad Character Change?

“7. Violating: Because of some outside stress, the character’s normal defense mechanisms have failed. The character is now in survival mode. They must protect themselves, while still trying to save face. But the face they are trying to save is a mask of their own making. The character is unbalanced. Depending on their character type, they will either violate others or themselves. They are still redeemable, but they have crossed a moral bridge and joined forces with the dark side” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

People suffering in these villainous stages can benefit greatly from a mentor. That mentor might teach them how to live a healthy lifestyle through exercise, meditation, raw foods, and spiritual readings. Or the mentor might lead the suffering soul to a religious belief. Or the mentor might teach self-esteem or social skills.

“8. Delusional: The character’s perception of reality is completely distorted. They are compulsive in their thinking, feeling, and actions. They’ve lost control of themselves and their reality. Depending on their character type, various pathologies begin to emerge. The false self is falling apart. Beneath the crumbling mask is naked fear” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

This stage often requires psychiatric care, medications, or psychological care. Examples of psychological care include tactics such as cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness meditation, and dialectical behaviour therapy.

“9. Pathological: The character is extremely violent and destructive. They are capable of destroying themselves and/or others. They may even destroy their world. Depleted of all moral and psychological resources, they finally conquer their fear through annihilation” (Wisehart, 2015, 51%).

In the movies, often the destructive character gets taken out: shot, imprisoned, wounded. But there’s hope if the pathological soul finds a guide who teaches healthy coping strategies. Or perhaps the system, such as correctional services or mental health services, gives the pathological soul a hand up.

But whether in fiction or in real life, the goal is for the hero to climb the highest rung of virtue. And, remember, that hero is you.

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Women of Interest

Kamala Harris

Barb Godin



Kamala Devi Harris has been front and center in the media since August 11, 2020 when Presidential Candidate, former Vice-President Joe Biden, chose her as his running mate in the 2020 election. She is the first African American and Asian American female to be selected as the running mate of a major presidential candidate. Biden explained that he chose Kamala Harris because he felt that she was the strongest choice for the job and was prepared for the demands of running a national campaign as she had recently conducted her own campaign for president of the United States.

Kamala Harris was born October 20, 1964 in Oakland, California. Her father emigrated from Jamaica in 1961 and her mother emigrated from India in 1960. Both parents were highly educated. Her father taught at Stanford University, while her mother was a breast cancer scientist. She has one younger sister, Maya Harris. Kamala went to a predominantly black Baptist Church while growing up, as well as a Hindu temple. She identifies as African American. Kamala's parents divorced when she was seven and Kamala and her sister stayed with

their mother and visited their father regularly. While visiting their father in Palo Alto, California, on the weekends, the neighbourhood children were not allowed to play with Kamala and her sister because they were black. Kamala graduated from Westmount High School, Quebec, in Montreal Canada where her mother had accepted a teaching position at McGill University.

Kamala studied political science and economics, and she received her B.A in 1986. She then earned a law degree from Hastings College in 1989. Kamala began her career working as a deputy district attorney in Oakland progressing to district attorney in 2004. She prosecuted homicides and drug trafficking cases as well as gang violence and sexual abuse. Throughout her political career Kamala gained a reputation for her "tough on crime" policies.

In 2009, Kamala, along with Joan O'C. Hamilton, wrote a book, *Smart on Crime*, which became a model for dealing with criminal recidivism. In 2016 she became California's third female senator, the second African American woman, and the first South Asian American to serve in the United States Senate. She gained national recognition after her powerful questioning of Jeff Sessions and Brett Kavanaugh of the Trump administration during the Senate hearings. Harris' Memoir, *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey* was published in January 2019.

Kamala met her husband, Douglas Emhoff, an entertainment lawyer, on a blind date. Emhoff was divorced with two children. They connected and were married shortly after. Emhoff was a strong supporter of his wife as she ran for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States in the 2020 election. She ended her campaign in 2019 due to lack of funding.

Barbara Godin is a graduate of AU and writes the "Dear Barb" column. She lives in London, Ontario with her husband, and two dogs. She can be reached on twitter @BarbGod



Fly on the Wall

Reasons Hidden By Reasons

Jason Sullivan



Happy Science on a Summer's Day

Few joys match the peaceful feeling of laying back and watching languid clouds drift across a summer sky. Science and intrigue are even then a possibility, however. If you have a kiddie pool or a lake or a pond on hand just notice how the sky's reflection refracts onto the water's surface and reflects an image of that same placid sky. As above, so below—literally! We know that what we're seeing on the water's surface is derivative of the sky's natural visage, but why are we so sure that we know what we know? Faith in our senses underlies the

wisdom of our existence; the origins of our AU motivations may be equally murky.

Origins are as tricky as a hall of mirrors; even if a first image exists, its viewing depends upon perspective. The blueness of the sky and the clouds drifting by depend upon our particular optic physiology as humans. What's more, enjoyment of sights and sounds depends on our instinctive tendency to drift into daydreams on, for instance, a hot summer day. In a sense, we hunt for pleasure with our cave-person essence; after all, 97% of human evolution occurred in gatherer and hunter settings with a lot of unstructured foraging (<https://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/human-fossils/species/homo-sapiens>)

So to look back at our human selves in a cosmic sense is a bit like asking whether we know, *really* know, why we've arrived here at AU. We were all born yesterday in terms of deep time, and it's easy to lose the perspective our past selves held on our motivations as they recede over our memory horizon. Perhaps looking back into ourselves is a lot like looking out into space; the view depends upon the angle we take. As one guest on CBC's *Quirks and Quarks* noted about gazing out into the atmosphere, "the farther you look, the hazier things will get".

Study Caves and Starry Skies

To enjoy inquiry thus can include allowing our minds to drift back into the cave-like recesses of our being. Resistance is implied, to be sure. Factions of our inner self might feign to complain about our supposed sloth and indolence as we wile away a summer afternoon. We might wonder if we ought to be getting back to our AU studies, yet I'd argue that it's precisely these sultry moments of pondering that allow us to delve into key questions about our mature student motivations. We probably have a clear idea about why we're an AU student and what our goals are and yet it's possible that our conscious intentions hide deeper unconscious motivations.

But, But ...

The desire to relax and enjoy appears to flow naturally from a summer's day. Yet something brought us to this place of repose and calm just as our inner drives led us to embark on distance education in the first place. As thinking beings, we sometimes strive so much toward our goals that we don't investigate what set us in motion and how that impetus has evolved. Blaise Pascal famously noted that the "heart has its reasons that reason cannot know" Chief among our noble drives for success is the need to improve ourselves. But improvement is a broad category, and

one that elides the fact that all thought and all action can appear to be an attempt to bring order and meaning to our world.

How do we talk about the pleasures of life, and is our enjoyment (hopefully) of AU reducible to our stated life goals? The truth is in there, somewhere, right? Even the phrase “the clouds are lovely today” encloses meaning within a Hallmark-y scene of sublime enjoyment. Witness how calm pleasure can degenerate, or expand delightfully depending upon social context, into mere conversation *about* something (thus at a distance) rather than verbal illustrations that embody our sense of being *in* the moment. It’s as though the purpose of meaning as a desire for absolution from ambiguity comes to derail our original impetus to enjoy and benefit from our environment.

Friedrich Nietzsche stated that “we do not yet know whence the drive to truth stems ... the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd in a style binding for all” (Nietzsche, l). It seems that we bipeds can’t help but interpret and seek understanding, even as that same drive precludes a true openness to the boundlessness of existence. To forget what brought us to our current state of mind is perhaps to risk losing our primal motivation as thinking, creating, devouring (mentally, that is) beings. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her inimitably expository way, provides a delightful aphorism: “the joyous affirmative act of forgetfulness is also a deliberate repression” (Spivak., li). As we unspool our thoughts we actively forget their pre-symbolic origins. Likewise, as our AU career unfolds we may slowly erase knowledge of our original drive for learning that brought us back to school as adults.

Learning and Understanding as Essential Humanization

Maybe the desire to understand ourselves is the essence of what being human entails. Nietzsche must have stroked his moustache in consternation even as he revelled in this quandary: “what indeed does man know about himself?...Nature threw away the keys and woe to the fateful curiosity which might be able for a moment to look out and down through a crevice in the chamber of consciousness, and discover that man indifferent to his own ignorance, is resting on the pitiless, the greedy, the insatiable, the murderous, and, as it were, hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger. Whence, in the wide world, with this constellation, arises the drive of truth?” (Nietzsche., xvli)

Meaning, in evolutionary terms, that meaning is basically the desire for sustenance (to update in paraphrase the famous Jesus quote: “woman nor man can live on bread alone”). To achieve a sense of a meaningful life is part of our AU journey; if meaning were simply about money many of us would become accountants or pipe-fitters (both noble professions in their own ways, the Stoic Marcus Aurelius would surely say were he here today). For Nietzsche, however, the creation of meaning is not only about pure discovery, the sort of culinary enterprise a young *Fly on the Wall* experienced at Vancouver’s Science World in 1987 when he tasted ‘astronaut ice cream’. No, meaning for Nietzsche is essentially a classificatory and repressive enterprise. He wrote that “the so-called drive to knowledge can be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer...‘Thinking’ in primitive conditions is the pushing through of forms as in crystals. In our thought, the essential is to classify new material into old schemas, making equal what is new”. (Nietzsche, xli) In other words, we tame all but the meanings we seek and thus, often, to ask a question is to always-already have tautologically answered it.

Can we live without the finality provided by meaning-making and would meaningful thought without a desire for a conclusion, like being a lifelong learner, be permissible within our minds? Of course! That’s what childhood was like, remember? Life includes capacities for joyous play and delightful whimsy free of absolute timelines and the rigours of a helicopter-self schedule. We are our own models of excellence thanks to AU’s flexibility, and a summer’s dalliance on a

checked blanket under the clouds or stars is just the moment to remember who we are. Friedrich Nietzsche asked “whether existence without interpretation, without ‘sense’, does not become ‘nonsense’; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially an interpreting existence” (Nietzsche, xlvii). In the end, though, “we cannot look around our own corner”, and yet it’s precisely the pleasure of looking out into the great beyond of a blue sky that provides a window into the depths of our own thinking souls (Nietzsche, xlvii). Sometimes to just ponder a summer sky is to ask and answer questions that have neither beginning nor end. It’s also that foundational essence, our glorious inner curiosity, that makes AU worthwhile throughout the year.

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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.

Student Sizzle — AU's Hot Social Media Topics

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

AthaU Facebook Group

Kelsey expresses concern that no arrangements have been made for an alternative assessment for a course that ended back in May; the student union prez jumps in with an offer to help. Monica inquires about AU's exam-rescheduling fee and is relieved to learn it is currently being waived. Rabiea wonders why there's no option to submit an assignment; turns out the course start date isn't until September 1 so there's limited access until then.

Other posts include how to select program courses, AUSU student advisory committee, AU's email response time, and tracking parcels of textbooks.

reddit

A new-student question about student-tutor interaction reveals some common misperceptions about AU's study model. Meanwhile, a student only ten courses from graduating looks for an easy slide of no-exam courses to wrap that parchment up by March 2021.

Twitter

@AthabascaU tweets: "A friend in need, is a friend in need. TalkCampus is an app that gives you a safe place to talk about your struggles with other learners. <https://bit.ly/2XXr2Mj> #AthabascaU."

@austudentsunion tweets: "Want to learn more about your AUSU by-election candidates? Ask them questions in our By-Election Forum (and see their responses to fellow student questions!). What do YOU think is important for your student council to focus on? <https://ausu.org/forums/#AUSU2020>."



Homemade is Better Stovetop Popcorn

Chef Corey



What a great snack popcorn can be, it's universal. It's at the movie theatre, hockey games, county fairs, community events, and more. I'll bet most of you still cook up a bowl of popcorn before you watch a movie at home or a zoom call. It's also a healthy snack: 100g of popped popcorn contains 13g of fibre and 375 calories that come with Iron, vitamin B -6, and magnesium. Add a little salt and butter and you're on your way to "Flavor town!" I'd eat it plain if its stovetop popped though, maybe a little salt just for taste.

In my last article about corn, I discussed the history of corn and popcorn is no different. According to Wikipedia, Historians have found evidence of popcorn as long ago as 3600BC in Mexico. In the USA, street vendors used to sell popcorn, and during the great depression, a bag of popcorn was between 5 and 10 cents! Can you imagine paying that little for popcorn? These days going to the movies is so expensive! I keep expecting someone

to come up to me with a needle and a 30L bucket for me to give my blood! A film historian, Stuart Hanson, tells of a joke that popcorn profit is like that of cocaine or heroin! Perhaps a poignant jest toward the film industry. Tom Cruise might be sitting at home making deals in popcorn profit along with ticket sales on his next action film. But I digress.

This method of cooking popcorn is one of my favourites. It produces a unique taste in our popcorn, and my kids can't get enough of it. I may start using it for positive reinforcement. "Kids, put the dishes away!" "Great job, here is some popcorn." "Kids! Clean your rooms!" "Looks great, have some popcorn!" "Kids, Daddy's car needs washing!" "Have some popcorn!"

My secret is patience and time, but not a lot of it. Once the oil is in, I add a couple of kernels just until they pop. Then I remove them and add the rest. Shake, shake, shake. Pop, pop, pop. A minute or two later, we are done! The best part is, you can change out the oil for other oils. Bacon grease? You bet! Duck fat? Yes! Coconut oil? Let's do it! The one thing I'll add is that you are going to want an oil that has a decent smoke point, not because you're going to cook it until it burns, but the not burning is what you want. If you're not sure if your oil has a decent smoke point, then combine 2:1 with vegetable or canola oil. The addition of vegetable OR canola oil increases the smoke point so you won't be tasting burnt oil on your popcorn.

Stovetop Popcorn

Ingredients:

1/3 cup – Canola oil

¾ cup – Popcorn

2 tsp – table salt

Directions:

- 1) Pull out your largest pot, it should be at least 5 – 6L, otherwise adjust this recipe as needed.
- 2) Turn your burner on high and add enough oil to cover the bottom of the pot, and maybe slightly above it. It might be more than 1/3 cup of oil. By the way, bacon grease will add that salty bacon flavour (hint hint).
- 3) Add 2-3 kernels to the pot. No more than that, you are waiting for them to pop.



4) When they pop, remove them, and allow them to cool a few seconds before you eat them.

5) Now that your oil is hot enough, add the rest of your popcorn and put on the lid. Let it sit for about 15 seconds. You should hear some popping.

6) Using some oven mitts, pick up the pot and hold the top on firmly. Shake it back and forth for 5 seconds, then put in back on your stovetop. Repeat this every 45 seconds.

7) The popcorn has finished when there is a 1-2 second gap between pops. You can turn off the heat at this point, though. The popcorn will keep popping, so do not remove the lid, but move the pot to a cool burner.

8) Once it has stopped popping, it's ready. Transfer it to a large vessel from which you will add some table salt for flavour, or don't, that's ok too.

- 9) Toss it a little bit, maybe use your salad forks or a pair of tongs or another bowl of the same size. The popcorn is going to be hot, so don't burn yourself.
- 10) Turn on Hamilton, and chill!



Chef Corey is a student in business management who first graduated from NAIT's Culinary Arts Program in 2007



Scholars, Start Your Business

A Marketing Process Worthy of Champagne

Marie Well



When starting a new business, do you feel like celebrating? Or maybe you're young and have never faced the work-life grind. Either way, when starting up a company or entering the workforce, shoot for a quick win. A quick win is as fun as a party.

I heard a quote that said something like “Think big. Start small. Scale fast.” Breaking things down into small bits can catapult you to success—if you measure your wins. But to measure wins, whether quick or big, you need a process.

The following five-stage process is designed for marketers, but applies to most other roles. And if you're a business owner, the five-stage process applies to your bottom line. They're five stages worthy of champagne.

So, let's party.

First, crack the champagne for your initial assessment.

Stage 1: INITIAL ASSESSMENT: “defining a clear game plan. At this stage, an initial assessment of the current state is useful. Ask what metrics do you currently use. How do you use data for decision making?” (Jeffery, 2010, 20%).

Mull over a game plan. It's best to have access to all the corporate analytics, but sometimes, starting out, you don't have data. So, what do you do?

Start off by putting Google Analytics on your website. If you're a brick and mortar store, get a digitized point of sale system. Even just measuring your end-of day sales and costs can start you off nicely.

Second, blow up the balloons for your diagnosis.

Stage 2: DIAGNOSIS: “where the idea is to take the current state assessment to the next level Ask what are the gaps and opportunities? ... This is where we need to think about risk and return: of all the options, what are the easy wins that will give the highest impact at the lowest effort and cost?” (Jeffery, 2010, 20%)

Lay out several options. To collect options in the first place, consider turning to Facebook groups. I heard on a social media podcast that once you find your group (typically a large group), you'll grow enamored. Facebook groups are much better than the Internet at getting your questions answered. You might stumble on all kinds of marketing ideas from these groups. Ideas range from how to snap a great product shoot to guerilla Marketing tactics.

Anything you ask will likely be answered—fast. And there's an ideal group waiting for you, whatever your vocation.

Third, dance to every quick win.

Stage 3: OPPORTUNITIES: QUICK WINS: “Once the opportunities are identified, go after the easiest to get the quick win.” (Jeffery, 2010, 20%).

Pick the quickest wins first but keep long-term ones in mind. If you want to tackle a website makeover, a new menu for your business, and a product photo shoot, go with the quickest win, likely a photoshoot.

An even quicker fix might be a copywriting makeover of your website. Copywriting is writing meant to sell. Just changing the words on your website so they focus more on the word “you” than “we” can boost sales.

Fourth, chomp the hors d'oeuvres while prepping your tools.

Stage 4: TOOLS: “The Stage 4 focus is on Tools: ... define metrics and scorecards for success and develop capabilities to support ongoing marketing activities The quick wins are often one-time proof of concepts The idea of Stage 4 is to put in place the infrastructure for repeatability” (Jeffery, 2010, 20%).

Measuring your success can be done on your website if you have Google Analytics—or better yet, Google Tag Manager. Google Tag Manager brings together—in one hub—all your Website love from Facebook, LinkedIn, Google Ads, Google Tag Manager, and so much more. You can retarget visitors who submit your online order forms, who watch your videos, who scroll a page to the bottom, and so much more.

So, you’ve set up your measurement tools, and hopefully isolated metrics you want to calculate. These metrics will tell you whether your quick win campaign is progressing successfully. Now what?

Fifth, set off fireworks with each review, test, or tweak.

Stage 5: PROCESS: “The last step, Stage 5, is Process— frequent reviews to evaluate performance and change course where necessary ... Again you don’t need millions of dollars of infrastructure to get started I advocate using 3” × 5” index cards for scorecards and Excel for tracking and initial dashboards Automate the process once you show repeatability and results” (Jeffery, 2010, 20%).

Make sure you don't go down a path without evaluation. In other words, don't be the captain who refuses to see the iceberg. Change course when necessary.

You might do a customer loyalty program using, say, one free coffee after every seventh sale. Track the number of cards stamped plus revenue earned. I'm certain I'll come across even better metrics, but those are two measurements you can track easily in a Mom and Pop shop.

But if you lose money, tweak the campaign. Maybe offer a free coffee after every tenth sale. Or make the stamp dependent on purchase of a higher priced item. But don't rush. Loyalty programs are harder to measure. They often pay off over the long-term. Monitor your progress, and adjust wisely.

I even found app to measure loyalty stamped cards: an app called “Stamp Me.” The app comes with online instructions on how to measure its return on investment. (If you ever need to measure your cell-phone-based marketing, seek out an app.)

Now that you know the basics of the marketing process try not to be one of those people who resist issuing coupons, loyalty programs, and incentives for surveys and contests. Instead, be one of those people who uses these tactics, but measures for success. And with each quick win, celebrate with fireworks, hors d'oeuvres, dancing, and champagne.

Reference

Jeffery, Mark. (2010). *Data-driven marketing : the 15 metrics everyone in marketing should know*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. [Amazon Kindle]. Retrieved from amazon.ca.





Dear
Barb

Barbara Godin

The Big C for Children

Dear Barb:

Hi, I am the mother of two children aged eight and ten. Recently our family received some devastating news; my father has been diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. He was referred to the cancer clinic and his oncologist confirmed that the type of cancer he has is not curable, although with treatment dad could survive up to a year. Since I am a single mother my parents have both been a big part of my children's lives. My Dad has also stepped in and carried out the role of father to my children. We are all devastated by dad's diagnosis, especially mom, as dad has always been her rock.

I have not told my kids yet, although they have been noticing grandpa has been coughing a lot and have asked me if he is sick. Mom and I do not know how to tell the kids, or even what to say to them. While I was in the clinic with my mom I noticed there was a post about a program for kids who are dealing with cancer, I was thinking of looking into something like that. Do you have any recommendations on how would be the best way to prepare my children for such a devastating event? Thanks, Ashley.

Hello Ashley:

I am so sorry to hear about your unfortunate news. You are obviously a very caring and loving mother and I am sure your support will get your children through this sad event in their lives. Along with preparing your children, you also must care

for yourself, as well as your mother. It will no doubt be a difficult situation, but one that we all face one day.

There are many ways that you can prepare your children for the loss of their grandfather, but right now that does not have to be the predominant thought in their minds. They can still enjoy their time with grandpa. As your father begins to decline, be open to talking to your children about how they are feeling. Grandpa's failing health may scare them, so you need to reassure them that grandpa appreciates their visits. Talk to the children about their concerns for the future and reassure them that the doctors are managing any pain that grandpa is experiencing. If the children are feeling angry, talk to them about their feelings, encourage them to express their fears and anger. Share with the children that you are also feeling these same feelings and that you will get through this together.

Most cancer clinic offer programs to help children deal with the death of a close family member, and often include a visit through the clinic to prepare them for what they may see as their loved one approaches death. I would suggest you discuss your concerns with a social worker, who can direct you to these programs. Again so sorry your family is going through this, but I am confident you will all pull together and get through this. Thanks for writing in Ashley.

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



Chazz Bravado
Make it Match

Wanda Waterman



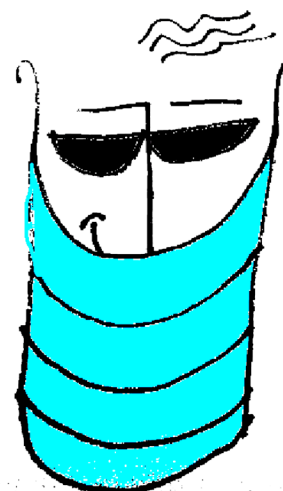
A face covering
isn't just a form
of disease prevention.



It's also a fashion
statement.
I'm serious!



You chicky-poops
outghta make sure
the mask matches
the unmentionables,
know'm sayin'?



Whether the pattern
is leopard, black lace,
playboy bunnies,
or, dare I say...edible.

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 with any questions about this article.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Aug 12-31:** [AUSU By-election Campaign Period](#)
- **Aug 25:** [AUSU Facebook Live Q&A](#)
- **Aug 25:** [AUSU By-election](#)
- **Aug 31:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for Sep](#)
- **Sep 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting Oct 1](#)
- **Aug 15:** [Sept degree requirements deadline](#)

Join us on Facebook Live on Aug 25

Join the AUSU executive team for a Facebook Live Q&A on August 25! Ask questions, find out how the AU Students' Union has been advocating for AU students, and get the latest updates from AUSU!

Join us at [@AUSUStudentsUnion](#) on August 25 at 1:00pm Mountain Time (3pm EDT / 12pm PDT).

Join us on



**August 25
1pm MT**

@austudentsunion



President
Natasha Donahue



VPEX
Stacey Hutchings



VPFA
Monique Durette

Get ready to VOTE on August 25

The voting period for AUSU's by-election is August 25 – 31. All AUSU members will be emailed a ballot on August 25. We have 8 candidates running for 4 vacant council seats.

Why should you Vote?

AUSU impacts your experience as a distance education student at Athabasca University – no matter where you live.

AUSU council guides and directs your students' union in its mandate to provide services, support, and advocacy for AU students and is part of creating an online AU student community. The students YOU elect to council represent AU students at the institutional, provincial, and federal levels, and provide a voice to students when important decisions regarding your education are being made.

Apply to sit on an AUSU Committee!

Would you like to provide invaluable student feedback to AUSU, and gain experience in the process?

Apply to join our AUSU Student Advisory Committee!

The committee will be asked to provide feedback on varying student topics throughout the year to help inform the AUSU council and stakeholders.

You can sit on this committee no matter where you live. Committee work is done entirely by email and teleconference.

Visit our [website](#) for info. Deadline August 23.



Find out more about the candidates:

- Check out candidate biographies [HERE](#).
- Ask candidates questions (and see their responses) in the [FORUMS](#).
- Check out [the interviews in The Voice!](#)

On August 25-31, make sure to VOTE!

VOTE on AUG 25!



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THE VOICE

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

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

Regular Columnists Barb Godin, Natalia Iwanek, Barbara Lehtiniemi,
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