

# ***THE VOICE***

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## **A Bug In Your Ear...**

Dear Editor:

I am replying to a letter sent to you by Pam Patten (Letter from the President's Office in the 14 April, 2001 edition of the *Voice*) regarding the tuition fee increases. She seems to give the impression that I somehow misunderstood what I was told by Halah. The impression that I was given from Halah was that she did not know if she could share the information, whether or not Pam Patten wishes to believe this.

As for the 8% mark, any person can plainly see that it was a rhetorical question designed to elicit comments from the student body. Before I wrote the article, some officials at AU Central asked I if AUSU would support an 8% increase in tuition. Given these facts, my statements are not that far out of line, especially considering the fact that my question was rhetorical.

In any case, what is AU going to be doing with the 4.9% increase? Will all of it go toward student services and educational endeavours, or will it be used for yet more renovations? Students need more than brick and mortar and workstations at AU Central. Students need frontline staff that will support their educational experiences at AU. Staff, be they academic or support, are strained as it is...will more workspaces answer this problem? I highly doubt it.

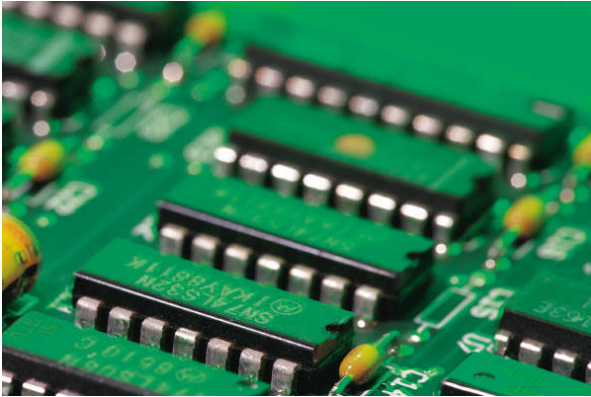
As for the budget consultations, AU administration seemed to want to select times that only suited their schedule. My former colleagues and I have lives too, and we cannot simply rearrange them on a whim. The lack of budget consultations is something that AU administration needs to take the blame for, because they did not supply us with reasonable notice to make time available.

I think that before AU starts pointing the finger of blame at others, it should look in the mirror first to see who really causes the problems. I should point out that I am no longer a member of AUSU executive and Council due to some rather intricate problems that I cannot go into now. It is on this basis, then, that this letter is only indicative of my opinions, and does not reflect the opinions or beliefs of AUSU Council in any way.

Darren L. Kereluk  
(from my office in my basement)

# Computer Shopping

By: Patricia Bjornson



In our world today, a computer is a necessity, especially if you are in school. With the invention and widespread usage of the Internet, a computer can offer a wide range of useful information to students.

There are a lot of different types of machines out there and the information can be overwhelming. Here are a few simple steps to follow if you are thinking about purchasing a computer in the near future.

**1. *Don't bother looking more than one month in advance.***

Computer prices change rapidly, as does the technology. Pricing something out six months in advance is of no use in the computer industry. The prices of technology can go down, or something newer and better may be available.

**2. *Know what you need it for.***

The configuration of a machine used for playing games, doing graphics and doing basic tasks are very different. Know what you need before you go into the store; it is the salesperson's job to talk you into buying more than you need. Don't be swayed into buying more than you need once you have made your decision.

**3. *Shop around.***

Local stores sometimes have much higher prices than the larger companies. You won't get the personal touch that you will from a smaller dealer, but you will get a better price - both have their advantages and disadvantages.

**4. *Know what kind of software packages you want on it.***

Most computers come with software included. Know what you need and if you are buying second hand make sure that it is a legitimate copy.

**5. *Decide on how much money you have to spend before you look.***

There are a lot of toys out there, and it's easy to spend 10000.00 on things you don't need to type up a simple essay. Know your limits, and spend within that. Stay away from proprietary business credit cards, the interest is outrageous. If you must do it this way, be very sure to read all of the fine print.



## Movie Review: TRAFFIC

By Chris Frey

It seems fitting in a way, that a motion picture about the American war on drugs, one that walked away with no fewer than four Oscars, shows a losing battle.

Few things have caused as much stir in the American psyche as drug abuse. The fact that they have a tab of four to five trillion dollars fighting it is testament enough to the seriousness of their intentions.

Director Steven Soderberg weaves a the tales of drug users, dealers, suppliers and all levels of enforcement right up to the drug tsar of the US of A. The film is very grainy, grey almost as if he were hinting at the uncertainty of the US fight on drugs.

Certainly seems complicated doesn't it? Well it is, but aside from that the film is actually very easy to understand. The film cuts in between Mexican soldiers torturing a cartel assassin and the drug tsar's daughter freebasing cocaine. Not really a kids film but you get the idea.

But surprisingly this isn't a film that is even remotely close to supporting the American war on drugs. "You guys are fighting a losing battle," taunted a drug dealer to the DEA narcs. How refreshing to finally witness some truth in Hollywood.

Soderberg's success was definitely at blatantly identifying the hypocrisy in the war on drugs. The movie tells of how barely ten per-cent of all drugs imported to the US, are found and confiscated. Not a good at bat record for the Americans.

The movie really centres on the border of the US and Mexico near Tijuana and how a good portion of the cocaine California and the surrounding states consumes comes from Mexico.

The performance of Benicio Del Toro was commendable. He plays a lowly Mexican State policeman who is thrust into the drug trade through the Mexican equivalent of the drug tsar. He is honest, kind and looks out for his partner. The role was played to a very deserved best supporting actor Oscar.

Traffic explained to me the other side of the issue. I've seen many movies about cops busting the dealers and making the difference but now I see that as poorly placed messages. The war on drugs will not be won arresting drug dealers but making sure your public doesn't want it. As long as people want it there will be those to find it and turn profit on it.

The movie also noted that the American war on drugs has turned itself into a war on family and friends. The situation in the US is abysmal, at best in their effort to control the problem. The drug tsar's own daughter is using cocaine in her bedroom at his house. How ironic.

## **Study shows most Alberta students believe post-secondary education is a good investment**

**May 4, 2001 from Alberta Learning**

**Edmonton...** Most students believe paying the costs of a post-secondary education is like making an investment in the future. That's the finding the Post Secondary Accessibility Study recently conducted by Ipsos Reid on behalf of Alberta Learning. Although most of the study's respondents over estimated the cost of post secondary education in Alberta the majority still felt it was a good investment that increased their employability and earning power.

Working with students, Alberta's Minister of Learning, Dr. Lyle Oberg, commissioned the study to gain further insight into the reasons why some students do not pursue further education. "Understandably there are many personal reasons for pursuing or not pursuing post-secondary education," said Dr. Oberg speaking in response to the report. "However we want to ensure that a lack of complete information is not a barrier in making the decision to continue formal learning after high school. Clearly there's a need to improve awareness of scholarships, loan programs and other financial options. Students and parents also need to have a real understanding of the costs involved. I am committed to working with student groups on developing a campaign to help make good information more readily available."

### **Findings of the report include:**

- The vast majority of respondents, or 94 percent, cited improved job opportunities as the key reason for pursuing further learning. 78 percent of graduates agreed that paying for post-secondary education is making an investment in their future and 76 percent believed the benefits of a post-secondary education outweigh the drawbacks. At the same time, only half believe post-secondary learning is financially accessible to everyone who is qualified to attend.
- The survey showed that key factors affecting enrolment include academic achievement, parental influence, and perceived benefits of post-secondary education, personal motivation and costs. Academic achievement in high school was the strongest predictor of post-secondary attendance. 85 percent of those with a grade 12 average of 80 percent or higher enrolled in post-secondary learning, compared to only 28 percent of those with average grades between 50 percent and 64 percent.
- Comparing survey respondents' estimates and actual costs, high-school graduates consistently over-estimated the costs of attending post-secondary learning. For example, respondents estimated the average tuition (including other mandatory fees) for one year of full-time attendance in a university undergraduate program is \$5,788 (*the actual average is \$3,833*) and overestimated the costs of in-school technical training for an apprenticeship program by over 200 percent.
- Of graduates who were defined as being eligible to attend university, 80 percent of those from lower-income backgrounds were enrolled in a post-secondary institution compared to 83 percent of those from higher-income backgrounds
- Most respondents are unaware the Alberta government primarily finances post-secondary expenditures. 41percent believe the student is primarily responsible and 32 percent believe government is primarily responsible.
- Although costs may be perceived as the greatest barrier to pursuing further education, the study found the two primary reasons for not enrolling immediately after high school are indecision about what field of study to pursue and wanting a break from school.

Alberta Learning has a number of programs currently underway to ensure cost is not a barrier for accessing post-secondary education. In addition to scholarships and bursaries, a student loan program is in place. In 2001/2002, more than \$428 million in loans, grants and scholarships will be provided to assist the province's post-secondary learners. A new student loan relief program will help student loan recipients reduce their debt load.

The study, initiated in 1999 by Alberta Learning was conducted by Ipsos-Reid in conjunction with the Steering Committee. Members of the steering committee include student representatives from the Council of Alberta University Students (CAUS), the Alberta College and Technical Institute Student Executive Council (ACTISEC) and the Alberta Graduate Council, as well as a senior academic officer from an Alberta post-secondary institution, a high school counsellor and a post-secondary financial aid administrator.

The main goal of the study was to identify factors that influence decisions to pursue or not pursue post-secondary learning, and to gather perceptions of non-financial and financial barriers to further education. The study results are based on a random telephone survey of over 1800 Alberta high school graduates conducted last fall. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within +/- 2.25 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

"This study provides valuable analysis of the factors that can influence a student's decision making process," said Oberg. "We are already taking steps to address the barriers that have been identified and we will continue to work towards breaking them down. For example, we recently announced a new, more student-friendly, automatic student loan relief program and we'll be working with student groups and other partners to develop communication tools and strategies to increase awareness of the costs of post secondary education and the supports that are available."

## **American university's online push leads to concerns in Canada** **By Katie Meyer, Ontario Bureau**

**GUELPH, Ont. (CUP)** -- The pressure for Canadian universities to embrace online education increased on Wednesday when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) announced that it will be putting most of its course materials on-line for free, costing the university over \$100 million over the next 10 years.

This announcement follows a trend of recent reports from a federal committee and the Council of Ontario Universities that recommend universities, colleges and governments aggressively pursue online post-secondary education.

"I think there is a good chance that we may go in the direction that MIT wants to go -- to view public university education as a public good, open to all the public with unrestricted access," says Henry Jacek, president of the Ontario Confederation of Faculty Associations (OCUFA).

At the University of Toronto discussions are also underway to open the online gates to free academic materials. "We've been in discussions around offering similar online education access since the likely the same time MIT began talking about it," said Sheldon Levy, vice-president for government and institutional relations.

Levy was on the federal government's Advisory Committee for Online Learning, which released the report, "The E-Learning E-Volution in Colleges and Universities" on Feb. 8, which promoted the use of on-line courses.

Those recommendations have come under heavy criticism though from faculty and student associations who have concerns about the make-up of the committee and their motivations.

"Not one single student was on the panel who wrote that report. It was primarily comprised of CEOs of corporations that are pushing to market their hardware and their software to Canadian universities and colleges," said Erin George, Ontario chair of the Canadian Federation of Students.

The advisory committee included senior representatives from IBM, the Bank of Montreal, AT&T, Lucent Technologies, and Bell Canada Enterprises, and was chaired by David Johnston, president of the University of Waterloo. "Obviously they are going to be pushing an agenda of on-line learning," said George.

Concern has also been raised over intellectual property rights because professors fear they would be losing ownership and control of the courses and research they have developed.

"We have set up a parallel committee to deal with those concerns and formulate policy," says Levy. But Jacek sees all post-secondary material as public domain.

"In a corporate way...the knowledge then does not belong to the university or the faculty members who teach these courses because they're doing it being paid out of the public purse," said Jacek.

Discrepancy exists over whether government and universities will follow the recommendations and put funding into online education. George thinks this is an area where the provincial government will invest. "They have been funding in targeted ways for things like technology," she said.

The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is non-committal around any targeted funding and instead said that it is up to universities themselves whether or not they will focus on online education.

"It's entirely up to them. Universities are autonomous organizations that make their own decisions about how they are going to offer their education," said David Booth of the ministry's communications branch.

Booth is concerned that an emphasis on online education will pull money and resources out of public education.

"If you start to put a lot of money into online education it could affect research quality and the quality of instruction." He also cited problems with accessibility, since not all students have access to computers.

There is consensus from all groups however, that effective online teaching has not been found to be a cost-saving device and that the price of developing and implementing online courses is high.

"While some people hope that one could reduce costs by using modern technology, it hasn't turned out that way," said Clark.

The Council of Ontario Universities created a task force on learning technologies that also released the report, "Time To Sow." It called for "significant investment" by government, the private sector and institutions through partnerships.

That committee was also chaired by David Johnston and similar senior representatives from industry. "There are a lot of good initiatives in Canada for providing the hardware connections but what we need is content. That's where the MIT providing access to its content is a terrific move in that direction," said Ian Clark, president of the Council of Ontario Universities.

The Canadian Federation of Students is more critical of MIT's decision to offer free online material. "They're not really providing people with education. It's a way to get free advertising for MIT today," said George.

## A Popstar's life

By T.C. Brautigam, Arts Bureau Chief, Administrators



**TORONTO (CUP)** – With the double scoop of media attention sprinkled upon members of Sugar Jones lately, it's a wonder how they have each managed to glaze any possible sour side. Since they were revealed two weeks ago, Canada's Popstars have maintained their cheek-to-cheek smiles in the face of minor scandal and harsh criticism.

For Andrea Henry, the fifth member of the band, this is an even larger accomplishment.

Initially, Henry was not supposed to be a Popstar. She really should be back in her hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, chillin' with her friends and family. In one of the final episodes of Global's reality-TV show, she was cast aside in favour of Marla Berman, a 21-year-old Popstar-to-be from Toronto. Then, through an incredible change of fortune, Henry's seemingly shattered dream of becoming a music star crystallized.

Berman was caught pilfering a contestant's purse and credit card, an act that led to her expulsion from the group. Henry was chosen to replace Berman, and despite this odd twist of fate, she believes she was always supposed to be in the band.

"I feel like I was meant to be here anyway," says Henry, 22. "It was destiny."

Whatever it was, Henry does have the necessary ingredients to be a Sugar Jones singer. The 5'11" diva-in-waiting has the looks – she has experience in modeling, and in 1996 was a top finalist for Miss Black Ontario. She boasts superb vocal skills, having performed at numerous high school and talent shows. And for years she has sang and danced in Hamilton's 'It's Your Festival', where Alannah Miles and Kim Mitchell have previously been showcased.

Aside from appearance and experience, Henry adds a laid-back approach to the occasionally hyperactive group. This spills into her singing.

"I bring a very calm, nice flavour to the group," she says, her dialogue oozing of metaphors to sweetness and taste.

Critics have not been as syrupy with their assessments of Sugar Jones. The assembly of the band through tryouts, callbacks and ultimately boot camp has prompted some to doubt the authenticity of their talent.

"Some people think we can't sing, that we don't have input," Henry says. "They think we're not involved."

That's partially right. You could say they're immersed rather than being merely involved. They take vocal and dance lessons, and adhere to a weekly training regimen complete with cardio to stay fit. And though the pop star lifestyle may seem glamorous, this has taken its toll on the girls.

"Sometimes I am homesick," says Henry, adding that her bandmates feel similarly. When she first got word that she scored a spot in the group, she remembers having to keep that from her friends, and so she would not hang with them as much.

Their single *Days Like That*, perhaps an appropriate debut for a band whose last vestige of routine daily life goes back nearly a year, hit airwaves this week. Their album is expected to drop in late June.



**Canadian Co-operative Association  
CCA RECRUITS YOUTH FOR THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE  
OF A LIFETIME**

**Are you looking for an exciting opportunity to gain valuable work experience in an international setting?** *The Youth Experience International (YEI)* program, offered by the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), is recruiting 10 young people with University degrees or College program certificates who are currently unemployed or under-employed. We have recently been approved funding for 10 additional interns in the **Philippines, Indonesia, Ghana, South Africa, Kenya and Costa Rica**. Recruitment for these 10 internships will be commencing very soon. This year, internship opportunities include: Gender and Development, Organic Farming, Youth Programming, Resource Centre Development, Business Development and Co-operative Research.

The objective of the program, currently entering its fifth year, is to help young professionals make the transition from post-secondary education to long-term employment. The program provides young Canadians a unique opportunity to acquire invaluable professional and personal experience within the co-operative movement. CCA will assist participants in securing long-term employment upon their return to Canada.

CCA will place trainees in its international field offices or with CCA's international partner organizations for a six-month period. These exciting placements are designed to enhance skills, provide meaningful experience, and broaden participants' understanding of the global economy. In short, the YEI program will better prepare participants for long-term and fulfilling employment.

Applicants must be available for placement overseas between August 2001 and January 2002, as well as the necessary preparation and evaluation time.

### Interested?

For more information on CCA's Youth Experience International (YEI) program, or to obtain an application package, please contact:

Preet Segaric, Program Officer, CCA  
Phone: (613) 238-6711 ext. 218, Toll Free: 1-866-266-7677  
or send an e-mail to [interns@coopcca.com](mailto:interns@coopcca.com)

Detailed Program Information and Application Forms available at: [www.coopcca.com/youth/yei.htm](http://www.coopcca.com/youth/yei.htm)

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 9, 2001**

Funding and support for the Youth Experience International program is made available from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as part of the Government of Canada's *Youth Employment Strategy*.

## Advise the PM, Win Cash Too!

### Magna Scholarship Contest Offers Cash Prizes and Internships



Canadian auto parts manufacturer, Magna International Inc., is inviting Canadian students to participate in its 7th annual "As Prime Minister" scholarship competition. Open to full-time students currently enrolled in undergraduate or graduate studies at an accredited college, university or CEGEP, the contest asks participants to submit a 2500-word essay responding to the question: "If you were the Prime Minister of Canada, what political vision would you offer to improve our living standards?" Winning submissions will be selected on the basis of practical, solution-driven and innovative proposals that demonstrate defensible, realistic visions for a stronger Canada.

Fifty semi-finalists will be flown to Toronto to present their essays to a panel of judges. The 10 best entries will then go on to the finals, to be announced at an awards dinner in Ottawa in November. All 50 semi-finalists will receive a \$500 award and a certificate recognizing their participation in the program, while the 10 finalists will receive \$10,000 and a four-month internship at Magna International, valued at \$12,000. The national winner will receive an additional \$10,000 and a one-year internship at Magna, valued at \$36,000.

While in Ottawa, finalists will formally submit their essays and be on hand while a complete summary of the 2001 As Prime Minister awards is presented to the Prime Minister and Canadian government. All program finalists will also be featured in the book @stake, "As Prime Minister I would." and be invited to take part in the national launch which will involve an opportunity for debate and discussion with the finalists and national winner. For more information, check out the As Prime Minister Awards Program website at [www.asprimeminister.com](http://www.asprimeminister.com). Entries are due by June 4th, 2001. Good luck and good writing!

## ENLIGHTENING INFORMATION:



### **APPLY TO JOIN THE STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE OF AUSU**

The Student Services Committee of the Athabasca University Students' Union is currently accepting applications for four Committee Member positions. For further information, or to submit your application, please contact the Student Services Committee Chairperson, Mark Gueffroy, at [mark@ausu.org](mailto:mark@ausu.org), or fax Christine Lynch at (780) 497-7003. You may also contact Mark by phone at (780) 623-9488 or Christine at (800) 788-9041 EXT. 3413.

### **GOT PROBLEMS? NEED ADVICE? LOOKING FOR AN HONEST OPINION?**

Send your comment, question, or concern to The Voice's Advice Columnist at [advice75@hotmail.com](mailto:advice75@hotmail.com)

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Fill on our online application at [www.ausu.org/voice/write.html](http://www.ausu.org/voice/write.html) or contact Tammy Moore at 1-800-788-9041 ext 2905 on Fridays between 8:30 and 4:30 MST. You can also email [voice@ausu.org](mailto:voice@ausu.org).