

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

March 10, 2004
Volume 12 Issue 10



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Philosophy of the Environment

PHIL 375 course review

Death of an activist

Environmental activism takes a hit

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THE VOICE

March 10, 2004

Volume 12, Issue 10

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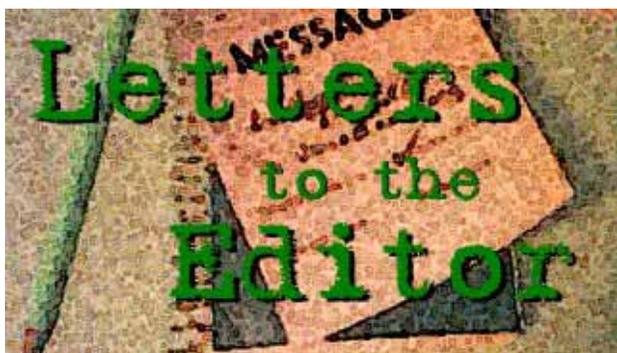
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CLASSIFIEDS!



We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter in the Voice.

THE VOICE

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Publisher Athabasca University Students' Union

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THE VOICE ONLINE:
WWW.AUSU.ORG/VOICE

The Voice is published every Wednesday in html and pdf format

Contact *The Voice* at:
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To subscribe for weekly email reminders as each issue is posted, see the 'subscribe' link on *The Voice* front page
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Special thanks to Athabasca University's *The Insider* for its frequent contributions

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EDITORIAL PAGES

THIS WEEK

AUSU ELECTION COVERAGE

This week, the final interviews with candidates for the next AUSU council! Don't forget to vote this week, March 16-22, 2004.

Athabasca University Office of the Registrar

Attention: POTENTIAL GRADUATES

Subject: Graduation and Convocation Ceremonies June 11 & 12, 2004

The Office of the Registrar is pleased to advise that this year Athabasca University will offer eligible graduates the opportunity to graduate on Friday, June 11, 2004 (Undergraduate Degrees) or Saturday, June 12, 2004 (Graduate Degrees). Please note that only correspondence initiated by the Office of the Registrar constitutes official notice of eligibility status.

In order to graduate on June 11th or June 12th, 2004, the following conditions must be met:

1. The Office of the Registrar must receive all final grades, including grades for courses completed through other institutions on Letters of Permission, no later than **May 5, 2004**. Athabasca University final exams should be written four to six weeks prior to this date to allow sufficient time for mailing and marking.
2. **Students must apply to graduate.** An Application for Graduation form is available at <http://www.athabascau.ca/html/depts/registry/formspage.htm>
Please mail or FAX the completed form to the Office of the Registrar no later than **April 15, 2004**.
3. Students must begin all final credential requirements (including credit courses, challenge examinations, writing competency tests, etc.) no later than **March 3, 2004**.
4. Students must make arrangements to settle all outstanding accounts with the university (ie. monies owing, return of library materials, etc.).

Note: Graduation applications will not be carried forward into the next academic year. Therefore, if you do not convocate in June of 2004, you must re-apply to graduate in December 2004.

If you have any questions or if we can be of any further assistance, please contact (780) 675-6100 or 1-800-788-9041 ext. 6258.

December 2003 graduates will be invited to attend and participate in the Convocation ceremonies of June 2004. Details for the Convocation ceremonies in the Town of Athabasca will be forwarded to you as they become available in April of 2004.



Election 2004

VOICE CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

AUSU COUNCIL CANDIDATE - Mac McInnis

See <http://www.ausu.org/election/candidates.php> for a list of all of the candidates.

How did you first become aware of AUSU Council, and why do you want to be a part of council in 2004?

I first became aware of AUSU Council when I sat in on a council meeting in the winter of February 2002. At that meeting I volunteered to help with the website. I decided to volunteer because I felt that I could make a positive contribution to the organization. About two months of volunteering for the website committee and still wet under the ears I ran for student council and was elected.

Tell me a little about your experience with distance education: How many AU or distance Ed courses have you completed, and what have you found hardest, or most rewarding, about distance study.

I have completed one degree from AU and I am currently working on a second degree from AU. The most rewarding aspect of distance education is the flexibility it allows in my schedule to continue to work. It is also rewarding when I complete a course and even more so when I complete a degree. The part I find most difficult is the lack of peer support and peer interaction. My overall experience has been very enjoyable and most rewarding. Further, AU has taught me time management skills to balance my role as a councillor, student and dad and to develop self-discipline to meet the needs of my courses.

What role, if any, has AUSU played in your AU experience so far? If AUSU has not played a role, what could it have done to facilitate your learning?

As a council member, AUSU has taught me about the wide range of needs of distance education students. AUSU has shown me that it is important and fundamental to have a union represent the students to the university community. AUSU has made me aware of the diverse nature of our student population. Further, AUSU has been instrumental in helping me appreciate issues affecting the student population. In general, AUSU has exposed me to the variety of needs and demands that distance education students face and this has been an important and rewarding experience.

What work or life experience(s) have you had that you feel will be particularly valuable to you in working with council?

In the past I have worked with a volunteer board of directors. This experience gave me the ability to work in a group environment and work with external stakeholders. As a general manager, I gained managerial skills, accounting skills, and skills for dealing with people. Further, as a graduate from the University of Calgary, Mount Royal College, and AU, I have become familiar with the needs, wants and services that students expect from their council. I feel these skills, aptitudes and experiences will be an asset to council.

If someone were to ask you why they should choose to attend AU, over other universities, what would you tell them?

I have had several friends ask this question and the answer is always the same. AU provides exceptional quality of learning. AU uses the mastery learning theory to teach students their course material. This

method of learning leads to greater understanding and retention of course material. In fact, when I explain to potential students that I have graduated from U of C and MRC and that I find the AU learning model to exceed those of other institutions, they are quite surprised. I then tell them they do not need to be in class by 8:00 am every day. This comment always gets nods of happiness from potential students. I then explain to potential students and friends that AU courses give students flexibility in doing their course work because it is done at home at your own speed, time, and leisure.

Speaking generally, what do you feel is the primary role of a students' union (i, student advocacy, services, financial support, etc)?

The primary role of a student union is student representation. Council represents the students in all matters of student life including advocacy, services, financial support, and external/political representation. Therefore, a students' union role is guided by the students. If students want more services then it is the union's role to ensure that these needs are met. If students feel slighted by the University, it is the union's job to represent the best interest of students. The union exists for the students.

Is there one, most important thing that you want to do for AU students as a member of council?

The most important issue for me is to see a move towards a more balanced and equitable distribution of scholarships for students. The current scholarship structure is geared towards academic merit. It truly important to reward students who do well in their courses. There is also a need for scholarships based on needs. Providing scholarships for students with financial need will make for a more equitable and balanced scholarship program than is current. One of the most important things that I would do for AU students is examine the current scholarship program administered by council. In addition, it is equally important that a degree granted by AU is perceived as equitable to a degree granted by a non distance education university in both the eyes of other universities and by future employers.

Working with AUSU council means working with a group. What do you see as the benefits and/or disadvantages of working as a part of a large group or board, rather than as an individual.

For me the greatest benefit of working in a group is the feeling of camaraderie and team work. Team work leads to dynamic discussion on topics of importance to both the students and the union. Working on a board like AUSU, means input from all members are valid and important in reaching decisions that will affect students. Further, working with a group provides more ideas to be brought to the table which may not been raised in an individual setting.

AUSU COUNCIL CANDIDATE - Karl Low

See <http://www.ausu.org/election/candidates.php> for a list of all of the candidates.

How did you first become aware of AUSU Council, and why do you want to be a part of council in 2004?

I became aware of Council after I started working for The Voice in 2001. Since then, a lot of groundwork has been laid, and the next Council will have some great opportunities to capitalize on that for the students. I want to be there to help make those opportunities into realities.

Tell me a little about your experience with distance education: How many AU or distance ed courses have you completed, and what have you found hardest, or most rewarding, about distance study.

I have completed most of my degree from AU, and am in the home-stretch before finally graduating. The hardest part about distance study, for me, is simply sitting down to do it. There always seem to be so many other things that need the time.

The most rewarding part is knowing that when I have finished a course, it is because I found the motivation and had the ability to do it on my own. That is something that simply cannot be taken away from a person.

What role, if any, has AUSU played in your AU experience so far? If AUSU has not played a role, what could it have done to facilitate your learning?

A rather significant one, as I've been heavily involved with The Voice and AUSU for about half of my AU career. I find I look at courses through the eyes of AUSU rather than myself and wind up asking questions like "What about this course would make it easier for all students? What doesn't work well?"

What work or life experience(s) have you had that you feel will be particularly valuable to you in working with council?

My previous work with Council is of course valuable as it means I already have gone through a lot of the learning curve that comes when joining an organization. However, beyond that, my experience working with AU as a member of the Virtual Help Desk and assisting COMP students with day-to-day computing difficulties keeps me grounded.

Sometimes a danger of being on AUSU Council is you start to think that all the students are interested and involved in what is happening with Council. Working on the Virtual Help Desk serves to remind me that most students are really just here for an education. That helps me to keep my focus on the idea that Council should always be focussed on helping students to have the best educational experience they can.

Finally, my work as a legal receptionist/secretary has given me an eye to detail that I've found invaluable when working with Council, as sooner or later, everything comes down to the details.

If someone were to ask you why they should choose to attend AU, over other universities, what would you tell them?

I'd tell them about the one-on-one instructor support; it's an advantage AU has but does not publicize enough.

Another benefit of an AU education that you don't hear talked about much is that by learning at a distance, AU students are probably the best prepared to succeed no matter what situation they get placed into. We've learned how to do it on our own.

Speaking generally, what do you feel is the primary role of a students' union (ie, student advocacy, services, financial support, etc)?

The primary role of the Students' Union is to make things better for all of the students. So to some degree this includes all of the above. To some degree it includes helping AU to provide the best educational experience they can. To some degree it includes fighting AU when they choose directions or actions that make life more difficult for the students.

However, as I mentioned before, the primary role of AUSU Council is working to ensure that students are getting the best educational experience they can have. After all, even if a student never uses any of AUSU's services, they're still trying to get an education. So it makes sense that Council always works to benefit those students too.

Is there one, most important thing that you want to do for AU students as a member of council?

It's always been value for the money. Every AU student puts their money toward this organization. It's our job to ensure that they get value for their dollars - that they're being leveraged in the best way possible to make the AU experience a better one for all AUSU members.

So the one, most important thing that I want to do is to make sure that any decision Council makes, we're making with an eye toward the value received for the money spent.

Working with AUSU council means working with a group. What do you see as the benefits and/or disadvantages of working as a part of a large group or board, rather than as an individual.

One of the best and worst things about working with a group is that decisions are not your own. This means that when you come up with a good idea, it will take time to get that idea through the group and start to act on it. On the other hand, it also means that if that good idea had some flaws in it, there is more chance they'll be spotted and fixed before they become real problems.

Another advantage of working with a group is specialization. Each member will have their areas of expertise, and that lets the entire group be more effective, as a single person could never be an expert in everything.

But for Council, the biggest advantage of working in a group is that a group can reflect the wide diversity of AU students - something that would otherwise be lost on a single individual.

AUSU COUNCIL CANDIDATE - Lisa Priebe

See <http://www.ausu.org/election/candidates.php> for a list of all of the candidates.

How did you first become aware of AUSU Council, and why do you want to be a part of council in 2004?

I became more aware and involved in Council activities in Fall 2002 after the new website was brought online. Near the end of 2003 I began volunteering on both the Legislative committee and the new Mentor program committee and together with a fellow science student created the AU Science Students Society. Around this time I began to consider running for council since I had more free time on my hands and I wanted to contribute to the student environment over the next couple years.

Tell me a little about your experience with distance education: How many AU or distance ed courses have you completed, and what have you found hardest, or most rewarding, about distance study.

I recently completed a BA in Psychology through AU. During my Psych studies I completed 21 AU courses and the remainder were transfer credit from the University of Calgary. Currently I'm a full time student in the BSc in Human Science program through AU and I am registered in another 6 science courses. To date I've found the science courses to be the most challenging and this is due in large part to the laboratory travel requirements. Thankfully I live in Calgary, AB and this has helped to minimize the cost and travel time required for these courses. I also thoroughly enjoyed my Psychology courses through AU, the Centre for Psychology has a wonderful website with excellent learning tools and the courses are very well designed.

What role, if any, has AUSU played in your AU experience so far? If AUSU has not played a role, what could it have done to facilitate your learning?

Once the improved website and message forums were brought online in 2002, AUSU started to play a larger role for me. It became easier to become informed on AUSU news and events as well as communicate with Council and fellow students. I think the tremendous growth in AU's student population has helped to increase the student interactions in the past couple years and AUSU has worked hard to create a student environment. As the website and discussion forum continues to improve I think student involvement will also continue to increase.

What work or life experience(s) have you had that you feel will be particularly valuable to you in working with council?

Prior to attending AU full time, I worked in the IT industry for a number of years. I think this is an asset since I am comfortable using and communicating over the internet and through email which is the primarily

means of communication for AUSU. I also love working with and helping others, which is why I completed a Psychology major. Recently I started volunteering with ARBI (Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured) in Calgary, AB. So far it's been a wonderful experience and has enabled me to work hands on with brain injured clients and to help them regain various motor or cognitive functions.

If someone were to ask you why they should choose to attend AU, over other universities, what would you tell them?

I would definitely recommend to anyone that they should complete courses through AU. First and foremost is the convenience, AU is so flexible in regards to course start dates, pre-requisites and completion/exam dates that you can fit courses into just about any lifestyle. Second, the one-on-one tutoring is amazing, and students at "traditional" universities seldom have the opportunity to work with their professors on such an intimate level. Finally, the course and program selection is constantly growing and courses are frequently revised to reflect changes in field.

Speaking generally, what do you feel is the primary role of a students' union (ie, student advocacy, services, financial support, etc)?

Student Advocacy is primary to an effective students union, because individual students may not have the resources or time to keep abreast of all legislation or policies that can affect their course of studies. Second I think it is imperative for AUSU to offer an interactive community for students. Since our university is almost entirely virtual students need to have a place to talk, ask questions, vent and gain support from their peers and most importantly feel like they belong to a community. Finally increasing financial assistance and offering a medical/dental plan for students is important.

Is there one, most important thing that you want to do for AU students as a member of council?

Well actually there are two issues that I feel are very important to consider for AU students. First, I think we need to look into the cost/benefit of medical/dental benefits for students. Most "traditional" universities offer these types of plans, and since the number of full time AU students is steadily increasing I think it is important for AUSU to seriously consider offering a plan. Second, I think we need to look into the possibility of starting a used book exchange for students or provide a medium for students to sell textbooks online. This can help students to reduce their education costs and recoup some material costs.

Working with AUSU council means working with a group. What do you see as the benefits and/or disadvantages of working as a part of a large group or board, rather than as an individual.

Working in a large group (particularly through e-mail and message forums primarily) is definitely slower and more time consuming then working alone. However, an individual working alone is not representative of the student population and can be biased towards a single goal. Groups facilitate discussion, debate and can help ensure that the solutions chosen really do represent the needs of the students as opposed to one individual's point of view.

AUSU COUNCIL CANDIDATE - Simon Davenport

See <http://www.ausu.org/election/candidates.php> for a list of all of the candidates.

How did you first become aware of AUSU Council, and why do you want to be a part of council in 2004?

I first became aware of the AUSU Council when I joined AU in September 2003; I was browsing the AU website and found the AUSU website. I recently attended the AUSU Council meeting in a non-participant capacity and found it very illuminating.

I have been involved with student groups and unions before and I feel that I can use this experience as an asset to the Council.

I would like to become a part of the Council in 2004 in order to serve the AU student body.

Tell me a little about your experience with distance education: How many AU or distance ed courses have you completed, and what have you found hardest, or most rewarding, about distance study.

My experience with distance education is study at AU. I am currently enrolled on a Bachelor in General Studies and have completed one of my course subjects and am toward the end of my second subject. I have transferred 42 credits from a previous post-secondary education qualification towards my total of 90 credits.

The most rewarding aspect about distance study is the flexibility of the studying process. By this, I mean that I can pick up my books whenever I wish to.

What role, if any, has AUSU played in your AU experience so far? If AUSU has not played a role, what could it have done to facilitate your learning?

The AUSU has played a vital role in my AU experience, as it is an excellent source of relevant information for people studying at AU.

I have received the AUSU publications, subscribe to The Voice and visit and use the AUSU website on a regular basis; the website contains a wealth of information and contacts.

What work or life experience(s) have you had that you feel will be particularly valuable to you in working with council?

I have been privileged to be able to travel the world extensively and seen many different cultures and peoples.

I have also worked in a variety of sectors, both public and private, that has necessitated me to work with a wide variety of individuals, groups and organizations as well as develop my inter-personal skills.

Since a very early age, I have been actively involved with the playing, coaching and refereeing of sports and in particular football (I have to get used to calling it soccer).

If someone were to ask you why they should choose to attend AU, over other universities, what would you tell them?

I would tell them that if you want a rewarding, flexible, home study programme for your studies, then AU is one to consider attending. It is a cost effective way for people to go to university without having to leave the comfort of their own home.

Speaking generally, what do you feel is the primary role of a students' union (i.e., student advocacy, services, financial support, etc)?

A students union is there to represent and further the interests of students. The emphasis should be focused upon the educational interests of its members and ensuring that students have the maximum possible influence on the operation and development of AU.

The students' union role is to co-ordinate the organisation of social and welfare activities for its members to promote and represent the educational interests of all students as members of AU.

Is there one, most important thing that you want to do for AU students as a member of council?

As a member of the council, I would see my first and foremost role as being a representative of the AU student body - that, in a nutshell, is the most important thing that I would want to do for AU students.

Working with AUSU council means working with a group. What do you see as the benefits and/or disadvantages of working as a part of a large group or board, rather than as an individual.

The benefits of working as a part of a large group or board, that I see, are that as group, individual's skills can be incorporated for the common good; it is all about being able to negotiate, co-operate and develop a team-working environment in order to tackle specific topics and issues.

The ability to gain a consensus from those involved means that all view points have been represented within the decision making process. The old adage that two sets of eyes are better than one proves that working within a group environment is of definite benefit.

If conflicts do arise within a group environment, then these can and should be remedied by a little give and take by those involved. A little bit of diplomacy if you will.

AUSU COUNCIL CANDIDATE - Zil-E-Huma Lodhi

See <http://www.ausu.org/election/candidates.php> for a list of all of the candidates.

How did you first become aware of AUSU Council, and why do you want to be a part of council in 2004?

I have been taking courses with AU since March 2002 but didn't realize that AUSU exists.

I became aware of AUSU when I received a flyer mentioning the study buddy program provided by AUSU in Feb 2003. I was feeling isolated as there was an absence of peer support so I decided to work as a volunteer for a couple of AUSU committees. Since then I am actively participating in discussion forums to minimize the feeling of isolation.

I ran for councilor position in Sep 2003 and didn't make it but I am glad the people who got elected were proved to be worthy of it. Now I am trying again for 2004-2005 candidacy, If elected my goals are to listen to student's academic concerns, provide the information needed to solve their problem and advocate on students behalf.

Tell me a little about your experience with distance education: How many AU or distance ed courses have you completed, and what have you found hardest, or most rewarding, about distance study.

I have completed my B.Sc. degree with a conventional university and went to college for a two year business diploma, but this is the first time I am attending distance University. I am taking Bachelor's of Health Administration (post diploma) and I have two more years -- after that I will be looking forward to my Masters from AU as well.

I admit distance education provides flexibility but there is also a dilemma of isolation to it. Its very easy to procrastinate in the absence of real life class schedules and peer support. But I take it as an opportunity to use self-leadership and practice self-direction and self-motivation to achieve my goals. In the end it is also very important for me to recognize my achievements through rewards :)

What role, if any, has AUSU played in your AU experience so far? If AUSU has not played a role, what could it have done to facilitate your learning?

AUSU is more than a virtual union. For me it helped in the past by providing an excellent community of

students in the form of discussion forums. As a new distance education student I had no idea how to manage my time and resources thanks to AUSU study skills package I was able to do so.

Study buddy helped me find fellow students taking the same course. I was even able to talk with an AUSU councillor about my future academic program and the prospects of finding a job in that area. Last but not least I am very thankful to The Voice for providing me inspiration and encouragement to contribute as a writer.

What work or life experience(s) have you had that you feel will be particularly valuable to you in working with council?

In the past I was involved with Canadian Red Cross and implemented a successful campaign for blood donation in my college. I was fortunate enough during conventional university to participate in Rotary Club science exhibitions. I was also a Class Representative in my college and this gave me an opportunity to be very open to students problems and work as a bridge between students and the college. Currently, working with the Academic and External committees as a volunteer also gives me an insight of students problems and concerns and how to address them.

If someone were to ask you why they should choose to attend AU, over other universities, what would you tell them?

My answer will be accessibility and flexibility. I been to conventional university I can do the comparison of time and resources lost during travel (not to mention time wasted during putting on make-up:) . Foremost, AU works with me, not the other way around. For example, with family responsibilities if I am not able to study during the day I can manage my time at night and I don't have to worry about getting a doctor's note to my teacher :).

Speaking generally, what do you feel is the primary role of a students' union (i.e., student advocacy, services, financial support, etc)?

I believe that the role of the AUSU should be based on these principles: advocacy, accountability, supportive and viability:

Advocacy: AUSU should work on behalf of students and help voice student concerns and questions to the university.

Accountability: The AUSU should be accountable to the students. To address this, AUSU should publish meeting minutes, so that students can be better informed of the AUSU's progress on important issues.

Supportive: AUSU need to be inclusive and ensure a student's AUSU. One that supports clubs, committees and a student body who want to be involved.

Viability: The AUSU is responsible for a lot of money that comes from students. It has an obligation to use that money wisely and efficiently. As a student I want to see a tuition freeze. I want to see student debt reduced. AUSU can work with students, the administration, and governments to have our voice heard.

Is there one, most important thing that you want to do for AU students as a member of council?

I would like to see more student involvement and this can be done by promoting groups, clubs and societies. I also like to work with other Canadian institutions so our students at AU will be able to reap the benefits of both Conventional and Virtual student life and services.

Working with AUSU council means working with a group. What do you see as the benefits and/or disadvantages of working as a part of a large group or board, rather than as an individual.

Due to globalization and information technology sooner or later we all have to work with teams. I am a team player and believe working with a team results in better decision quality and decision commitment.

Of course, during our interaction with people of diverse personalities we are bound to have conflict. Instead of concentrating on our differences we should be able to manage our differences. One should not be afraid of being different as it can open the door for debate, dialogue and creativity.

See the February 25th (v12 i08) and the March 3rd (v12 i09) editions of The Voice for interviews with candidates Lonita Fraser, Melanie Gray, Stacey Steele, Cindy Stobbe, Joy Kryz, Teresa Neuman, and Shannon Maguire.

The pdf versions of these issues are available at: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/pdf/pdflist.php>

The interviews are also available online at:

Lonita Fraser: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2597>

Melanie Gray: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2598>

Stacey Steele: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2599>

Cindy Stobbe: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2626>

Joy Kryz: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2627>

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Shannon Maguire: <http://www.ausu.org/voice/articles/articledisplay.php?ART=2629>



This column focuses on a wide range of issues affecting post-secondary students. Students are encouraged to submit suggestions and educational topics they are concerned about, or personal experiences with courses or university situations they feel other students should know about. If suggest a topic or a course alert for Taking Notes, contact djabbour@ausu.org

INCREASED LOAN LIMITS

Debbie Jabbour

The Federal government has announced that, in order to allow students to borrow more money to help cover the rising cost of post secondary education, student loan limits will be increased for the first time in a decade. The current loan limit of \$165 a week will rise to either \$210 or \$235, allowing students to borrow up to a maximum of \$13,294 a year instead of the current cap of \$9,350 - a borrowing increase of 42 percent. The increase in federal loan limits will also require an increase to provincial contributions (except Quebec) in order to match the 60/40 funding share.

According to some estimates, at least one-fourth of students are unable to manage within the current lending limits and are turning to private loans and higher interest rates to fund their education. Since the limits were established in 1994, federal and provincial funding of PSE has dropped dramatically, while tuition and related academic fees have risen by 99 percent - from an average of \$2,023 to \$4,025 a year across Canada!

What does this loan limit increase really mean? A 2002 study indicated that among students who must borrow money to attend university, average debt at graduation is at least \$21,000. An increase of 42 percent in loan money will mean a corresponding increased debt at graduation - burdensome debt loads that many students are already finding impossible to manage.

Increasing student loan limits not enough, education critics say: Rising costs will leave graduates further in debt. Sarah Schmidt, CanWest News Service, Ottawa. *Edmonton Journal*, February 25, 2004.



NATURE NOTES:

from the backyard to the biosphere

By Zoe Dalton

Oil: The good, the bad, and the ugly

Oil: such a simple word, such a basic substance. We cook with it, eat it, bathe with it, use it as fuel. It heats our homes, powers our cars: in short, it allows modern life as we know it to carry on. Think of the loveliness of an essential oil, scented by the flower or fruit from which it was extracted; olive oil, that sacred golden substance that graces the finest plates and palettes. Crude oil, motor oil, 'edible oil products', sesame oil, canola oil, peanut oil, animal-based oils: oil is ubiquitous throughout our society. Whatever you eat, whatever you wash yourself with, whatever you use to pretty yourself up, whatever mode of transportation you use, you are participating in the culture of oil. You can't avoid it; the stuff is just so darn useful and has so many applications.

There aren't many things that spark debate as readily as oil, its uses and abuses. You will no doubt find people on each end of the spectrum of the oil question: those decidedly for and those decidedly against its use. This article is not meant to address the merits, or lack thereof, of oil. Rather, it is intended to give you an idea of what happens when oils, even the seemingly benign varieties, make their way from their point of primary use into the environment. The full array of effects on everything from soil nutrient dynamics to ecosystem productivity is astounding, and merits a several volume, must-read book for those in the oil-hungry industrialised world.

But even gaining a snippet of insight into what happens to wildlife affected by oil is useful and important. This is particularly true for those of us who think that problems only arise for wildlife during events such as the Exxon Valdez spill, in which huge amounts of oil impacted thousands of wild animals. Fascinating as it is sad, the truth of the matter is that wildlife are oiled in our communities every day. And the effects of such oiling can be just as severe for wild animals impacted by an oily puddle on the driveway as for those caught in a more newsworthy large scale spill.

Last fall's oil release into an east Toronto creek affected birds, mammals and other taxa in the riparian ecosystem. Research into this event demonstrated that relatively small scale spills, while clearly more limited in scope than those of Exxon magnitude, are far more common, occur daily in many communities, and receive far less attention. Think of the vat of cooking oil left out back behind your favourite greasy spoon. What about that puddle in the driveway, shining from the oil leaking out of that old lemon? In investigating this topic, it quickly became clear that oil spills occur on a regular basis. Small-scale though many events may be, in distribution and sheer number they rival the bigger spills in overall impact on the health of wildlife and the environment. Ontario's hydro generation company alone reports hundreds and hundreds of spills every year. Each of these 'releases' affects wildlife in the ecosystems into which oil makes its way.

How exactly are wild animals affected by oil in the environment? There are two primary ways in which wildlife is impacted by oil releases. Firstly, the oil products in which animals usually find themselves covered are often composed at least partially of toxic substances. As wild animals attempt to clean themselves of the oily substance coating their bodies, they cannot help but ingest some of this oily matter. Such ingestion can lead to illness or death caused directly from toxins.

The second way in which wildlife is affected by oiling has to do with the mechanism by which they stay warm. For aquatic birds such as mergansers, ducks or loons, or semi-aquatic mammals such as otters, river martens, muskrats or beavers, the quality of their waterproofing determines how well their bodies are protected from cold winter water. Like us, these animals are endothermic, meaning that they rely on 'internal' sources of heat to maintain their body temperature. And the means by which they keep the heat in are equaled in importance only by the means by which they keep the cold out. Insulation such as fur and feathers, which act to maintain the body heat generated by the animal within a certain envelope, also act as barriers to cold from the environment.

In the case of water birds, proper feather structure, or the alignment of the feather's elements in relation to one another, is imperative in keeping the cold water from contacting the birds' bodies. Oil on the feathers both interferes with a bird's ability to continuously preen and keep aligned these elements, and can actually damage the feather structure itself. Even an oiled area the size of a quarter on a water bird can lead to hypothermia within minutes. Thus a seemingly minute patch of feathers with compromised structure and function can mean death to a bird affected by oil.

And this is the case with any oil. In terms of overall environmental damage, toxic oils are no doubt more detrimental to ecosystems than, say, vegetable oils. But to a wild animal just trying to make it in a harsh, cold, climate, even the spill of a lovely organic sesame oil behind a health food store can mean death.

The moral of the story? Don't assume that any release of oil into the environment is trivial. It comes as a surprise to most of us that oil spills happen every day, and that wild animals are impacted regularly by oil release events that we never have, and never will hear of. So while we are justifiably upset, and perhaps disturbed to the point of action when large-scale oil spills occur, we should be just as watchful to ensure that frequent, small scale spills become as reviled as the more media-friendly biggies. Here's to fixing those engine leaks, securing those oil storage containers, and recognising that even little spills can mean certain death for wild animals trying to make it in an oil- obsessed world.

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PHILOSOPHY of the Environment

Athabasca University 

PHIL 375: Course Review

Katie Patrick

Athabasca University's new offering -- PHIL 375 - Philosophy of the Environment -- gives students the opportunity to experience a unique blend of two fascinating disciplines: philosophy and environmental issues. A 3-credit course with no prerequisites, Philosophy of the Environment is offered in both print-based and online versions.

Both versions of the course focus on several key issues packed into eight units. The first 4 units introduce students to philosophical world views from the early cosmological theories of Ptolemy through an overview of our modern perspectives, and onward to encompass alternative views as well.

The next part of PHIL 375 deals with a wide variety of the conflicting issues of today's world, such as anthropocentrism vs. eco-centrism. Students are then introduced to, and encouraged to discuss, environmental ethics, and the related "Value Theory" in detail. Philosophy of the Environment (PHIL 375) finishes by examining sustainability in light of the principles of environmental philosophy learned previously in the course.

Perhaps one of the most important features of PHIL 375 is that it endeavours to teach students to think critically regarding current issues, and to be able to present logical arguments. The third assignment in the course deals with an application of this: it is a position paper, in which students are encouraged to develop a stance on a particular issue and defend their position in a manner patterned off of the course's teaching.

As with many of Athabasca University's new courses, PHIL 375 enables students to incorporate an online content into the course, ensuring a rewarding learning experience. The online content consists of online articles for each unit and a bulletin board to participate in class discussions, as well as other resources including an online timeline of the history of philosophy.

Course professor Bruce Morito, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Athabasca University. Dr Morito is active in the philosophy field, especially environmental philosophy, as he is the editor of the *Trumpeter*, an environmental journal (<http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/>). Additionally, he is a strong voice for aboriginal rights. For more information on PHIL 375 course professor Dr Morito, you can visit his homepage at: www.athabascau.ca/html/staff/academic/brucem.htm.

The evaluation structure of PHIL 375 is student friendly, consisting of 4 assignments of increasing weight (with no midterm or final exams). The third assignment, worth 35%, is a position paper which applies many of the concepts taught in the course. The final (fourth) assignment, for 40% of the total course mark, entails a detailed case study.

For more information on PHIL 375, Philosophy of the Environment, you can visit the course syllabus website at: www.athabascau.ca/html/syllabi/phil/phil375.htm, and the course homepage (for online students). <http://www.athabascau.ca/courses/phil/375/>

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR CONFERENCE Promises and Paradoxes

Wayne E. Benedict

On Friday March 5th and Saturday March 6th 2004, I attended a conference called *Employment & Labour Law & Policy for the New Millennium: Promises & Paradoxes*. It was hosted by Professor Judy Fudge (1) at the University Of Saskatchewan College Of Law and was supported by the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan. Professor Fudge is the present holder of the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan Chair; past holders include: Dr. Allan Blakeney; Dr. Richard Gosse; Dr. Sydney L. Harring; Professor Michael Taggart; Dr. Alan C. Cairns; Professor Julien Payne; Professor Denise Réaume (2). Professor Fudge arranged the conference which was focused on a few key issues that will likely be facing employment and labour law practitioners in the coming years. As you will note, she procured speakers with expertise in numerous areas including, but not limited to: economics, industrial relations, social sciences, human rights and employment equity. This article will only briefly touch on the contents of the conference and if readers wish to procure full-text copies of the papers presented, they will be incorporated into an upcoming edition of the Saskatchewan Law Review (3).

Unfortunately, one of the scheduled speakers on Friday was unable to attend the conference due to strike-related commitments elsewhere. Andrew Jackson (4), Senior Economist with the Canadian Labour Congress, was scheduled to speak on the topic: *Regulating National Labour Markets: Canada in a Comparative Context*. His absence meant that speaker Richard Chaykowski (5), Professor in the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, had to carry the weight of the opening-evening with his presentation on *The Changing Structure of the Labour Market: Employment and Labour Policy Challenges*.

Dr. Chaykowski spoke about how the so-called "New Economy" is becoming an old idea now. He talked about the main transformational pressures of competitive market pressures (economic globalization; rise of markets); technological change (transformation of productive systems, work arrangements, and employment relations); and changing skills and educational requirements of the labour force. His presentation included discussions on governmental policy shifts and the main drivers of change: globalization and technology. According to Dr. Chaykowski, the Human Resource Management paradigm has taken a stronger hold in the US than it has in Canada where the Labour Relations model remains paramount. Challenges facing those who wish to raise labour market standards include: ensuring the reach of labour and employment standards; ensuring balance in policy composition; mitigating economic insecurity; rethinking the broader policy architecture (how labour policy can be redesigned in order to integrate with general government policy); and ensuring equality.

The first speaker on Saturday was Rosemary Amelia Venne (6), Professor in the College of Commerce, University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Venne's presentation was entitled *A Half Century of Work: Women in the Labour Force*. Filling out the pre-coffee-break segment themed *Challenging Workplace Norms*, was Judith Martin (7), Executive Director of the Work and Family Unit of the Saskatchewan Department of Labour. Her presentation was entitled "*Workplace Flexibility*": *Conditions and Considerations for Shaping Flexibility as an Effective Component of a Family-Friendly Workplace*.

The after-coffee segment was dedicated to "Equity in the Workplace" and the first speaker was Beth Bilson (8), Professor in the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan. She spoke on *The Ravages of Time: The Federal Pay Equity Task Force and Section 11 of the Canada Human Rights Act*. Dr. Bilson is the Chair of the federal Pay Equity Task Force (9) which is due to release its report in the near future. Dr. Bilson was followed by John Hill (10), Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, speaking on *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: Employment Equity in Saskatchewan*. Following Commissioner Hill's enlightening discussion, the conference broke for lunch.

The first post-lunch segment was dedicated to *Labour Policies for New Employment Norms*. First to speak was Dave Broad (11), Professor in the School of Social Work, University of Regina. Dr. Broad spoke to *Flexibility and Security: Employment Standards for Part-time Workers*. He was followed by Karen Hughes (12),

