

# THE VOICE

Vol 27 Issue 11 2019-03-15

## Minds We Meet

Interviewing Students Like You!

## Student Engagement

Connecting at a Distance

## Convocation Celebration

It's Just Around the Corner!

*Plus:*

*Survival in the Garrett - Energy Tips  
Seven Tips to Ace University  
and much more!*



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**We love to hear from you!**  
**Send your questions and comments to [voicemagazine.org](http://voicemagazine.org),**  
**and please indicate if we may publish your letter!**

**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 Tomorrow's Problem

Karl Low



As we approach the Alberta election, I'm probably going to start looking more into the politics here in Alberta as well as out in Ontario. The reason being that the United Conservative Party (UCP) here in Alberta has adopted language in their policies about demanding that all fees for student unions and student association be paid on a voluntary basis. This is very similar to what has happened in Ontario, where, among other changes to tuition policy, Doug Ford has mandated that students must be able to opt out of student association fees.

The mandatory nature of fees, like taxes, is that, while unpleasant, we all benefit more when we all pay. After all, when a student union fights to keep tuition down, or create benefits for the student body, it's not as if they can dictate that only those students who've paid their student union fees can benefit from these changes.

As an example, at one point in AU's history, they were looking to charge a significant fee to process any transcript request. AUSU fought against this fee, brought research to the table showing how it would make AU an outlier among most universities in

Alberta and Canada, and AU relented. That's why you can get free transcripts today.

With legislation like that imposed in Ontario, however, those who never paid into AUSU would still receive that same benefit. But that research wasn't free, as it cost the union both time and money to complete, never mind the time spent in meetings talking to AU staff about the matter.

Even if a students' association was able to keep track of who paid for their services and who did not, the additional overhead associated with doing so would add additional cost to every program provided. There is an enormous "free-rider" problem that can come along with changes like these to advocating bodies. So, if such a policy comes to existence in Alberta, you can expect AUSU to be looking for ways to cut costs and pare back services. Student media is often one of the first things to go, because it's hard to argue that services like *The Voice Magazine* are more important than awards to needy students or paying for the student app that gives AUSU a way to directly connect with students. And even though I'd argue that *The Voice Magazine* is at least as important, if not more, because of its' ability to critically watch AUSU's activities, I would be hard pressed to blame the union if *The Voice Magazine* wasn't at least scaled back, if not eliminated.

But, fortunately, that remains a tomorrow problem.

Today, the problem is mostly personal, and my apologies for the lateness of this issue. If you read last week's editorial, you'll understand why it happened, but I still wanted to be sure to get this issue out there. Especially because our feature article this week is a return of the Minds We Meet column! This week, we interview a seventeen-year-old AU student who is seeking to become a country singer and find out how AU has fit into that goal. Just another reminder of the vast scope that makes up AU students. With that plus our normal assortment of advice and thought-provoking articles, I'm sure that this week you'll enjoy the read!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl".

# MINDS WE MEET



*Justine Blanchet is a seventeen-year-old country singer and songwriter from Quebec. She is in the Faculty of Business focusing on marketing classes to better market her music business. You can learn more about her on her [website](#) and listen to her music on her [YouTube channel](#). This is her story.*

**Can you give us a little bit of background information about yourself? Who are you? Where do you live, where do you come from?**

My name is Justine Blanchet and I am seventeen years old. I am the second child of a family of four. I live in St-Colomban, Quebec, and I come from the South shore of Montreal. I was homeschooled all my life and it has helped me with a disciplined schedule. I am also a singer-songwriter in the style of country, and I have been doing music since I was 4 years old.

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

I was homeschooled from age six to age sixteen. I started earlier, along with my older brother, so we were always in the same grade. I decided to go with online education because it gave me the same flexibility that homeschool gave me to pursue my music career. I am in the marketing field at the moment, choosing this field because it would help me market my own business.

**Can you explain the similarities with being home schooled and studying at AU? Do you think you were at an advantage?**

The similarities involve things like flexibility, being independent, and managing my own schedule. All of these are needed for an online education and homeschooling. It was easier for me to adapt to online education from previously doing independent studies. Time is a lot more manageable for sure.

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

I like to workout and do music. I hang out with my family and friends when I am not busy with music or school.

**What are your plans for this education once you finish? How does it fit in with where you want to go?**

I want to advance my music career with my knowledge in marketing and communications. After this semester I will enroll in another college to pursue my bachelor's degree in communications because this other college is a little cheaper which is, unfortunately, more convenient for me.

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

My mother is my influence. She is a teacher and learning specialist. She has taught me all my life and shaped me to be who I am today.

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

I love the online experience because it allows me to work my school around my music business. I like the easy access and e-text that I carry on my phone. I don't like the hassle of exams (ProctorU) that creates confusion a lot and the exams are very tricky.

**What's your most memorable AU course so far, and why?**

My memorable class so far has been MKTG 406: Consumer Behavior. I like the psychology of consumer's minds, knowing what stimulus happens in their minds is very fascinating!

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

I have given up the opportunity to socialize with other students and travel to my college like an adult and take responsibility for my education. It was worth it in some sense that I got to do a lot more of music.

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

I like that they are very supportive and kind in their emails.

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

I do not like it when people chew with their mouths open.

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

I would like to have lunch with Taylor Swift because I want to ask her how she handles all the fame. I know I wouldn't be able to handle it if my career blew up because fame and money is not what I want the most.

**Describe the proudest moment in your life.**

I got a 96% on a paper I wrote, and it made me really proud of the work I did.

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

I survived an acute appendicitis. I was forty-eight hours from dying when I was brought to the hospital. At eleven years old, it was really hard to get through sickness and three weeks of hospital. I still get side effects from the big surgery I had.

**Oh, no, what kind of side-effects?**

I had side effects that included my intestines blocking that lead to vomiting, constipation, and severe cramps. These effects still affect me today up to twice a year, unfortunately.

**Have you travelled? Where has life taken you so far?**

I spent a year in Mexico back in 2009 and I have traveled to the USA often and Canada as well.

**Why did you spend a year in Mexico?**

I spent a year in Mexico for my dad's job. He works at Bombardier and he helped out the company at their location near Queretaro. It was pretty amazing to live an entire year elsewhere! There are only two seasons (rainy and hot). We live in a little community of homes with a gate and a guardian. Since we were homeschooled, it was easy to pack up and leave Canada for a year!

I'm glad that I was old enough to remember Mexico! I was happy to come back home because the whole experience was nice but getting to come back in your comfort zone is pretty nice too.

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

Life is fleeting. You never know when it could be your last day so appreciate the time you have to say "I love you" often to the people you love.

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



## Survival in the Garret 15 Energy Saving Tips for Frugal Students

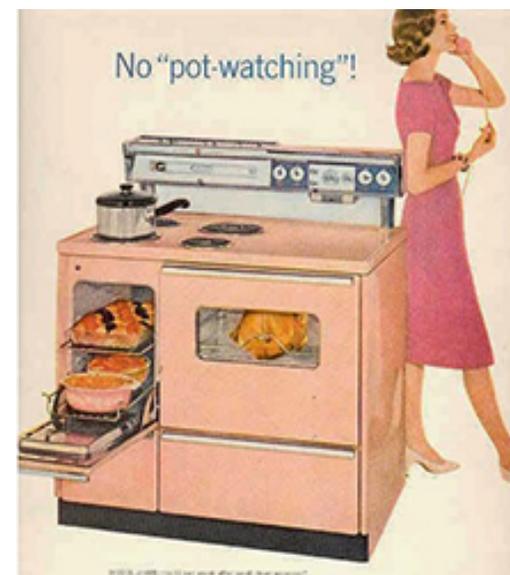
**Wanda Waterman**



Nobody wakes up in the morning deciding to use as much electricity as they can that day, but let's face it, there are three main reasons why we overconsume to our own demise: laziness, ignorance, and status consciousness.

Your buds on the alternative side of the tracks can't help you with your laziness, but they can pooh-pooh your status consciousness and help dispel your ignorance in an effort to help you get through university without a lot of debt. Part of frugal living is, of course, limiting energy consumption. You might have heard some of this advice from your mom, but you'll no doubt find some of it a little "out there;" well, "out there" is our middle name. Here's today's advice:

1. When you use the oven prepare to cook several things at once to take advantage of the heat. Turn off the heat 5-10 minutes before the food is scheduled to be done cooking. If it's cold out leave the oven door open afterwards for extra heat.
2. If you're single consider getting a toaster oven to accommodate your smaller meals.
3. When you need to reheat food or drinks, use the microwave instead of the stove. This cuts electricity use by up to half.
4. Don't leave water running when you brush your teeth, wash your hands, or shower, and when you wash be thorough but fast (save those long soaks in a hot tub for when you're really stressed).



5. Unless the water is bone-chillingly cold, wash and rinse your dishes in cold water. Hot water really provides no advantage for cleanliness except to remove grease, so just use it for that. The same goes for clothes.
6. Do you really need a dishwasher? They're massive power-guzzlers, and there really is something to be said for getting people together to wash the dishes and tidy the kitchen together after a meal. Some of the best conversations happen that way.



7. The clothes dryer is another power-hog. It also shortens the life of fabric, takes up space, and makes noise. Granted, driers are great for removing wrinkles, lint, and animal hair from clothes, but if you need this feature consider hanging your clothes until they're nearly dry, then finishing the drying process in the dryer.

8. Putting on a sweater is always cheaper than turning up the thermostat.
9. Try to get used to sleeping in an unheated bedroom, wearing warm jammies and piling up the duvets. If it's not too cold out crack your window a little. You'll find you sleep better and feel sharper the next day.
10. Turn down the heat and turn off the lights in uninhabited rooms. If you're gone all day leave the heat off. When you return just leave your coat on until the place warms up.

11. Keep your freezer full to cut down on how much electricity is used to freeze the empty space. If it's not full place bottles of water inside (this way you can also have ice water handy).

12. Don't wash your clothes just to wash them. If you've worn a clothing item and it's still clean, hang it on a hanger to air out. You can keep it fresh for future wearing by giving it a light spray with diluted alcohol or fragrance.
13. If you have a vehicle look for excuses not to use it. Use public transportation, a bicycle, or your feet as much as possible.
14. Make sure the car is a fuel-efficient model and maintain it well.
15. Drive within the speed limit no matter what the schmucks around you are doing.

In addition to saving money another great thing about cutting energy consumption is that environmentalist mystique, that self-righteous superiority that alternative types love to cultivate. So go ahead and brag to your friends about it. The smugness'll look good on ya.



## Convocation Celebration You've Earned It!

Barbara Lehtiniemi



Are you ready for the elation, the emotion, the high fives, and the cheering crowds?

Students who finish their AU degree requirements by April 30 are eligible to attend AU's convocation ceremonies this June in Athabasca, Alberta. Will you be among the hundreds of excited graduands visiting the campus of Athabasca University for the first time?

Attending AU's convocation in June 2018 was the perfect way to celebrate obtaining my bachelor's degree. I'd worked hard for over five years to complete it: sixty-six months of relentless rolling enrolment. Early on, I knew I wanted to attend convocation at Athabasca. In the final two years, I knew I was working toward a fixed date with fixed deadlines. The carrot of convocation kept me focussed.

Completing the requirements for my degree by April 2018 proved anti-climatic. I was officially done but it was very "meh." A momentary flutter of excitement when my parchment arrived in the mail the following month, but other than that it was a soft finish to what was an enormous achievement.

AU's convocation was the party my parchment deserved. The anticipation, the getting there, the people, the lights, the gowns. For the first time, I met people—real people—who had only existed online before. And I met many more students who, like me, had travelled long distances to celebrate their achievements.

Exchanging stories and experiences while we waited for the procession to begin made me understand that I wasn't alone. While I had been toiling at coursework on my own for years, other students had been doing the same thing. I sat in the gowning room with my tribe of BGS graduands, all wearing our black gowns and green-trimmed hoods, chatting like long-lost friends. And then we proceeded together to the convocation hall and later walked across the stage one after the other for our bright, shining moments. We made it!

With family and friends in the audience at AU, or watching the livestream at home, each AU graduate felt—really *felt*—the sheer immensity of what they had accomplished. There can be no substitute for this experience. You really have to be there.

There are no second chances for convocation. If you fulfill your AU requirements during the period from May 2018 to April 2019, and fill out an application to graduate, you'll get an invitation to the convocation ceremonies in June 2019. If you decided not to attend convocation, you'll never get another chance to celebrate the degree you just worked so hard for in the style it deserves.

AU's convocation is a celebration all its students have earned. If you can make to Athabasca in June, you'll have an experience you'll treasure forever.

For information on AU's Convocation 2019, go to [convocation.athabascau.ca/](http://convocation.athabascau.ca/). For information on the graduation procedure, including a link to the Application for Graduation form, go to [calendar.athabascau.ca/undergrad/current/adm-reg-eval/grad-procedure.php](http://calendar.athabascau.ca/undergrad/current/adm-reg-eval/grad-procedure.php).

*Barbara Lehtiniemi is a writer, photographer, and AU graduate (BGS 2018.) She lives on a windswept rural road in Eastern Ontario.*





## Student Engagement at a Distance

Francesca Carone

Distance education has been rising throughout the world thanks to computers and the internet. Traditional on-campus classroom environments have been the norm, and, until the 1980's, really the only possibility.

The history of distance education is longer than you might expect. In 1922, Pennsylvania broadcasted some of its courses through radio. In 1953, the University of Houston offered the first televised college course. In 1965, Wisconsin tried out a telephone-based learning program for physicians. In 1976, Coastline community College became the real first "virtual college" with broadcasted courses only. When 1980's hit, various online programs began to appear throughout the U.S and they became somewhat successful due to more personal access to computers on the rise at the time (Online Schools Center, online).

Many universities are now offering online education as a way to reach more students, and it's becoming more popular.

But traditional classroom environments offer in-class teachings and lectures as well as many engagement programs such as orientations, maybe a lounge for discussions and study, on campus counselling, clubs and groups, and even child care. With distance education, what is offered for student engagement?

You might be surprised to find that there are various programs that distance education offers to aid in student engagement. At Athabasca, there is social engagement and academic engagement offered through various programs and services. Here is a look at some, many brought to you by the AUSU.

### The Landing

The landing is a social site for posts and discussions. It can be accessed online at <https://landing.athabascau.ca>. It is a place where students and invited guests can share thoughts, ideas and ask questions, sort of like a message board.

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You can post messages but if you want other features, you will have to log in. There are blogs, photos, polls, and the wire. Students can upload files to share and engage in discussions about their homework. There are groups that you can join and create wikis. It is a nice place to share and meet other students.

### **The new Athabasca Student Mobile App**

You can download this app on your smartphone or tablet and can instantly have access to other students through a student wall, and chat with friends, among other things.

This is a great way to keep connected with other students and be informed about new things going on with Athabasca. You can even have your own calendar and access information about your assignments, as well as manage your classes. There is also a tour option where you can virtually see your campus and learn about what is offered.

### **The Voice Magazine**

This is another way to reach students and engage. Any student can write articles for students to read. Students can voice their opinions about life, school, and more. A lot of information is available about how to manage home and school, and other aspects of university life.

### **Contests and Surveys**

These are other ways that are used to engage with students. They offer information or services and giveaways to get students more active in something or involved in the online community. Some contests are posted on the Facebook page and on the Athabasca website. Surveys are usually sent through email and there are also the course evaluation surveys, which are a good way to help inform Athabasca about your feeling about the course and tutors.

### **Contact form Tutors**

I have noticed some tutors contacted me to say good luck or asked me how things are going. At the start, they usually send you a welcome message as well. This type of communication by your tutor can be encouraging as it offers an aspect of reality that is sometimes missing from distance education. This type of academic engagement is important.

### **Facebook**

Yes, Athabasca has an official Facebook page where students can get up to date information about some events at the university. Their link is <https://www.facebook.com/AthabascaU>, but there are a number of other groups as well. Often made by students, these groups include general contact groups for students and others, study groups, individual course groups, and even groups devoted to only current students. Students can join the groups, ask questions both to the editors of the Facebook group or others within and get replies, and perhaps get help or discuss course work. Contests and other events are posted on the official page as well.

Virtual student engagement is not impossible. There are many other ways that are being used to engage with student of distance education. New ways are being developed as well. Things like face-face meet-ups or skype conferences are just some of these ideas. The future is wild and almost anything is possible.

### **References**

Online Schools Center. Retrieved from: <https://www.onlineschoolscenter.com/history-of-online-education/>

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



**Course Exam****Brittany Daigle****FREN 201 (First Year University French II)**

FREN 201 (First Year University French II) is a three-credit introductory French course that further develops the ability to read, understand, speak, and write French. This course enables and encourages students to use French in social situations, discuss a variety of issues, and express opinions. In addition, the course leads students through a major review of grammar and develops the students' ability to understand and compose short passages.

FREN 201 has FREN 200 (First Year University French I) or equivalent as a prerequisite. If you would like to learn more about the prerequisite course, read my FREN 200 article.

First Year University French II is made up of twelve units, five written assignments weighing twenty percent each, five oral assignments that weigh twenty percent each, a composition assignment weighing ten percent, an oral examination worth ten percent, and a written examination that weighs forty percent. For students to receive credit for FREN 200, they must complete and submit all of these, and achieve a course composite grade of at least a "D", which is equivalent to fifty percent, with a grade of at least fifty percent on the written examination.

Dr. Evelyne Gagnon has been working with Athabasca University since 2016 and has been the course coordinator for FREN 201 since joining. She provides a brief introduction of herself, stating "I have researched and studied in Québec, Canada and France. I hold a PhD in literary studies from Université du Québec à Montréal, and I also achieved two postdoctoral fellowships on contemporary literature. My second post-doctoral fellowship brought me to beautiful Alberta, where I worked at the Canadian Literature Centre (CLC-University of Alberta) on renewed forms of melancholia in contemporary Québécois and Canadian literature. My areas of expertise are French lyricism and French Canadian and Québécois literature, but I also have a great passion for poetry, and I am publishing my own creative writings as well. Before joining Athabasca University, I taught French language and French and Quebecois literature at various post-secondary institutions. What I appreciate particularly about AU is the variety of learners we have in our courses. AU's students possess so many diverse and profound life experiences that nurture their learning paths, and those enrich non-only our teaching approaches but our own relationship to knowledge."

Alongside this course, she is the course coordinator of FREN 200 (First Year University French I), FREN 305 (La littérature jeunesse), FREN 362 (Second Year University French), FREN 374 (Littérature Québécoise), FREN 375 (Vocabulary Expansion), FREN 405 (Translation from French to English).

Aside from being the course coordinator, she also teaches two of the courses. She states, "I am teaching FREN 305 and FREN 374. FREN 305 is a great introduction to literary studies, precisely we study the history and evolution of Children literature in France and Québec. FREN 374 is a six credits panoramic literary studies course, where we analyze the history and evolution of Quebecois literature and Culture from the Nouvelle-France, to a complex modernity, and then to contemporary works reflecting on the beauty and crisis of the present time."

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Dr. Gagnon describes the course, stating “The aim of this First Year University-Level course is to help students further develop the French reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. We recommend completing the FREN200 (three credits) and FREN201 (three credits) courses successively and chronologically, as those two courses are logically designed to complement one and another. In FREN200, we study the first half of the textbook *Le français, ça me plaît*, and in FREN201 we study the second half. More specifically, the following French grammatical structures are studied in the FREN201 course: various verbs tenses, interrogative and negative sentences, diverse pronouns, adjectives, or prepositions. Moreover, FREN201 continues the learning of fundamental grammatical structures in French and builds on vocabulary linked to justice, economic issues, education, travelling, contemporary values and the pursuit of happiness.”

She continues, providing some insight into the structure of the course, “The textbook we use in FREN201 contains short reading passages on interesting topics, vocabulary lists, and grammar lessons. In each chapter, there are comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary exercises. At the end of each chapter is a listening exercise. In the course website, students will also find links to short films, some grammar audio lesson overviews, supplemental explanations and didactic videos, and some online self-correcting practice exercises. All the topics and the vocabulary studied in each module are brought to a comprehensive level in the exercises and evaluations. In this course, there are five written assignments, five oral assignments, one composition assignment, one final oral examination, and one final written examination. The written assignments should be submitted to the tutor after having completed the modules on which the assignment is based. In each oral assignment, the student will discuss one or two short readings in the textbook, or a short film assigned for viewing. The oral assignments are to be done over the telephone. Students have topics and questions to prepare in advance, but the oral evaluation aims to be completed as a “real” conversation between a student and his/her tutor.”

When asked what kind of work ethic students will have to have to be successful, Dr. Gagnon states “To ensure a logical pedagogical progression through the course’s content, it is recommended that students complete each module and assignment chronologically. It is also crucial that each assignment represents the entire and sole work of the student. We like to say to students: do not trust online devices or translating programs, they are way less intelligent than you are! As human being, we have this amazing capability to train ourselves to be more and more sensitive toward the diverse meanings and subtleties of any language, and French is such a lovely one! Even if a student makes a lot of errors, the best way of learning language skills is to progressively go through each step and each difficulty of your study yourself and to persevere. Of course, your tutor will be there to guide you along the way.”

She provides some advice for students who are currently enrolled in this course or who are considering enrolling in the future, stating “French 201 contains a variety of material (audio, video, and written components) and numerous exercises to assist students in enhancing various language skills. Because learning a language requires a great deal of practice, it is recommended that students spend several hours per week working through the material. Spending some time each day studying French is an effective way to learn. I would also recommend that students follow their own interests to discover more about the French and Francophone literature and culture, such as listening to songs written in French to familiarize their ears to the pronunciations and sonorities, watching movies or documentaries in French with the subtitles to help them identify and recognize sounds and orthograph, etc.”

Dr. Evelyne Gagnon recommends this course to “Any student attracted to French and Francophone language and culture will be interested in our FREN200 and FREN201 courses. As

French is also an official language in Canada (and within our Federal governance), we also have a lot of students in those courses who are aiming to improve their French language skills to then have access to wider career paths. Any student with a basic knowledge in French (from immersion classes in high school, to personal, professional or familial relations to Francophone communities and settings) will find this course very helpful, and especially to review, improve and deepened their French language skills. Some students also have a high capacity to learn various languages and will excel in that kind of course. Strong grammar skills in English can also be an asset.”

When asked what she thinks students will take away from this course, she explains “The course leads students through a major review of French grammar, develops their ability to understand and compose short passages, and enables them to use French in social situations to discuss a variety of issues and express their opinions. This course also allows students to familiarize themselves with the French and Francophone culture, literature, and society in various contexts.”

As for which aspects of the course are most difficult for students, Dr. Gagnon concludes stating, “Some students may think at first sight that oral evaluations are intimidating, but our students soon discover that it is an efficient and even fun way to “mimic” the conversation skills required in “real” life. Moreover, most students enjoy having those punctual conversations with their tutor about the topics studied and the films watched. They appreciate having the opportunity to express their understanding and opinions related to those interesting themes.”

Whether FREN 200 is a degree or program requirement or if the topics above are of interest to you, this course will have you improving your ability to read, write, listen, and speak in French!

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



## Scholarship of the Week

**Digging up scholarship treasure for AU students.**

**Scholarship name:** Retail Education Scholarship Program

**Sponsored by:** Retail Council of Canada

**Deadline:** April 1, 2019

**Potential payout:** up to \$5000

**Eligibility restriction:** Applicants must be enrolled full- or part-time at a Canadian college or university for Fall 2019; pursuing a retail, business, or marketing related program; and currently working part- or full-time in the retail industry.

**What's required:** An online application form, along with an official transcript, proof of enrollment, a reference letter from a current employer, a maximum 250-word essay describing your passion for retail, and a presentation on brand trust using video, text, images, and/or animation.

**Tips:** Read the "Tips for submitting a scholarship application" section in the [Application Guidelines](#).

**Where to get info:** [www.retailcouncil.org/resources/education/retail-education-scholarship-program/](http://www.retailcouncil.org/resources/education/retail-education-scholarship-program/)



## Five Tips for Booking Cheaper Flights Student Edition

Xin Xu



As summer vacations are right around the corner (despite the recent snowfalls), there are plenty of options for students to consider when it comes to vacations. If part of your vacation plans require air travel, then this read can hopefully save you some of the time and money you spend with air-travel. Last year was one of the most adventure-filled years I've had as I embarked on long-haul trips to the Southern Hemisphere. Over the years, I have gained some little bits of wisdom about booking flights and hunting for flight bargains. Here are my top hacks for finding the optimal flight.

### Off-season travelling

Ironically, as we speak of summer vacations, certain summer months such as July and August have some of the highest airfares due to the large crowd of travellers in this time. The best part of being a student is the flexibility that comes with travelling. Instead of booking summer trips, winter, spring or fall vacations tend to have lower fares. Oftentimes, the least popular time to travel follows peak seasons such as August and December. Therefore flights in September and January tend to reach all-year lows.

### Book with ultra-low-cost carriers if you don't mind having little luggage

If your priority is keeping budgets low and maximizing the value of your vacation, reducing your travel items to just a personal backpack can significantly reduce the cost of your airfare. Ultra-low-cost carriers are a new sensation that has taken Canadian airlines by surprise. For example, Flare is one of the low-budget airlines that offer flights at sometimes one-third of the cost of Westjet offerings.



### Book flights four months in advance

While there is no golden equation to find the optimal time to book a flight before departure, typically between a two- to four-month window can provide dramatic reductions in cost of airfare. The closer to the date of departure you decide to book a flight, the higher the airfare.

### Keep your destinations open

As a student traveller, I often don't have a specific destination in mind, so watching and waiting patiently for the optimal airfare can be ideal for me. This year, having the opportunity to visit Miami after one low budget airline announced this new destination allowed me to explore a new area despite it not being in my travel bucket list. Keeping your options open also makes vacations pleasantly surprising and spontaneous. Google Flights is one



option I use to keep track of low flight options. Other websites worth visiting that make it easier to compare airfare from multiple airlines include:

[www.ca.Kayak.com](http://www.ca.Kayak.com)

[www.Flighthub.com](http://www.Flighthub.com)

[www.skyscanner.com](http://www.skyscanner.com)

### Double check prices with a different browser

Algorithms that track your digital footprint can change the charge on a flight if many people are searching for the same flight. One optimal way to circumvent this is to search for your flights in incognito or private browsing mode. Whether you're using Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari or Internet explorer there are private browsing modes possible when you open a new window or tab. Once you've found the flight you want, try using a different browser and looking again. You can sometimes find better prices on the same flight simply with a different search history.

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



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

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



#### AthaU Facebook Group

Chelsea asks if an Alberta journeyman certificate counts toward an AU degree; AU staffer Erin points her in the right direction. Ang celebrates getting into law school after completing an AU degree. Chanelle seeks help deciphering an ambiguous EDUC 201 exam description.

Other posts include courses to complete while recovering from surgery, Google Scholar, and courses ACCT 454, CMNS 420, ENGL 255, and ORGB 364.

#### reddit

A trio of queries about transcripts, AU's masters programs, and French Language Proficiency Certificate.

#### Twitter

[@AthabascaU](#) tweets: "Get your entry ready for the [@CLCUAlberta](#) poetry contest. Open to all [#AthabascaU](#) students! Win \$500, a pot of books from [@UAlbertaPress](#), [@NeWestPress](#), and [@au\\_press](#), and publication in [@GlassBuffalo](#)'s summer issue! <https://bit.ly/2UOOBnl> [#abpse](#) [#canpse](#) [#PSE](#)."

[@austudentsunion](#) tweets: "AUSU council just held their mid-term executive election. Congrats to our returning executive, President Brandon Simmons, VP External & Student Affairs Melinda Goertz, and VP Finance & Administration Natasha Donahue! Looking forward to another great year with this team! <https://bit.ly/2EXNH2Z>."

## Porkpie Hat On the Persistence of Memory

Darjeeling Jones



“No matter how much suffering you went through, you never wanted to let go of those memories.” - Haruki Murakami

What a strange one-way journey all of us are on, this short trip from birth to death, with barely enough time to change out of our swaddling cloths, grab a quick canape or two, snap a few selfies in front of the Eiffel tower, the pyramids, or a wax sculpture of Lady Gaga, then wriggle into our most tasteful burial duds. Where do we come from, and where do we go? Are there monsters, are there angels, is there anything at all? So many things we have no way of knowing. It is a fact, though, that we are born into a legacy of inevitable death, combined with the fact that we have inherited a fraught, volatile world that, at any moment, might burst into flames or else slowly lapse into an eternity of darkness and desolation.

But, on the plus side, there's layer cake! There's jelly roll, symphonies in the park, and sweet kisses in the dark. There are so many things we don't have, but so many things that we do. We haven't been recognized and feted the way that perhaps we feel we should. But we have smelled distant thunderstorms, and built snowmen, and known the feeling of another's hands in our own. We don't have everything we want. We may not have financial security, fame, fortune, true love, a feeling of serenity. We don't have certainty or any kind of assurance, but we have the rococo of the unexpected and the unpredictable, the rich black-velvet chiaroscuro of mystery and ambiguity.

Why do we insist, then, on believing it is the big milestones that give our lives meaning? So much invested in our achievements, our accomplishments; always fretting that we have not reached our goals, are not where we should be on this journey. Always so worried, on this turbulent night flight, about not staying on our unrealistic schedules, so concerned about making that connecting flight, that we don't notice the northern lights dancing on the horizon. It's a world of trouble and devastation, for sure. History, politics, trauma, loss, regret, guilt: what burdens we have to bear, what baggage our sore limbs must carry. But what a delightful trip it can be if we cast aside our expectations.

For all we know, at the end of it all, we will be greeted at the ivory gates of heaven by radiant beings playing cover ragtime jazz on silver saxophones. On the other hand, there exists the possibility that there is no meaning at all; after all, nothing is more likely. There is no resonant truth blazing forth in blinding glory; there is only the brief, ephemeral glow of stolen, jeweled moments. You're five years old, falling asleep in the backseat of your parents' station wagon, watching the through the fogged-up glass. You're seventy years old, dancing to Abba at your granddaughter's wedding. You're seventeen years old, sitting on a fire escape, sharing a cigarette and a kiss. All these moments falling upon us like a shower of bright sparks drifting down from the passing comet of eternity. These are the sparks we call memory. Perhaps we should pay attention.



## Fly on the Wall

### Love for Learning

Jason Sullivan



### Sprouting Passion on Spring Slopes of Study

Like learning our course material and then applying it to our lives, to understand something is to become part of the process of its existence. The answers may be in the back of a math textbook, but, in the broader plains of AU life, the answers are to some extent within us as we learn and grow. Each new truth blooms as part of our experience and adds to our splendour; we're almost like plants in that way, but certainly not vegetables in the pejorative sense. We embody spring by being right

there in spring, or in the idea of it if we still await its appearance in the month of March. And spring, like distance education, is nothing if not a process of growing.

As a tree falling alone in the forest, the crashing sound makes the experience wholly real as something we are a part of. Likewise, be they digital or paper, cracking the books symbolizes the fissure of our old self and the birth a new, updated, version. Our AU textbooks are like trees awaiting warmth—with buds about to open; the intrigue of our interaction with course content is like walking through an awakening grove where new growth emerges each day. Likewise, being open to details both obtuse and inscrutable makes us better scholars. We have to check our preconceptions and core beliefs at the door, especially when taking courses we think we already know a lot about. Here again the inchoate potential for the unknown abounds in spring. By contrast, winter can often seem like more of the same.

### Spring: A Panoply of Potential

Like the multifarious nooks and crannies of an academic subject, our schooling inhabits not one but many stories just as the outdoors blooms in new ways as ecosystems change over time. Spring opens new possibilities for us to interpret course material in the bright light of day; we are always on the cutting edge as we take the most up to date version of a given course. Being aware of the seasons gives a backdrop to our studies too. I've always noticed that courses with a January start date culminate with a great sense of success that parallels the shift of the changing seasons. However, with spring comes more distractions as the outdoors beckons and here we must apply a greater flexibility. No one wants to be a party-pooper on a sunny day if they can avoid it! Flexibility is a great skill to have and applies to how we interpret the learning process itself.

### Desire for Knowledge as the Essence of Spring

We may desire knowledge, but we also might question this desire at its root. To desire the finality of a last and final explanation is to wish it removed from the unfolding, seasonal reality of existence. Derrida concludes that “we must recognize in truth 'the normal prototype of the fetish' (Derrida, 105). Truth is a stand-in for the desire to learn; as adult learners we know that we're never done learning and growing. Likewise, not one topic, not even the maths (to plant a faux-Brit seed), has failed to undergo radical change over time. Like the lovely concept of two becoming one in a marital union, the peaceful transgression by which truth ties loose ends

together remains a dream of longing rather than a reality of being. Remembering that can also curtail our perfectionist study tendencies.

Truth, like spring, is always there as a possibility in the future. But there's never a moment where spring is literally just around the corner; Spring is a state of mind and so is the insatiable desire to learn. Knowing we cannot know all makes the process more enjoyable; it's like making the transition from a neurotic gardener who weeds obsessively to one who tolerates a few plants out of place here and there.

Once we realize that, despite recurrent snowfalls or stubbornly depressed temperatures, spring is imminent in the month of March, we also may grasp the reality that truth is that which is thought into reality. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" wrote W.I. Thomas (Thomas, online). With the onset of new coursework, new vistas may seem to rise out of nowhere as we encounter new course material. Similarly, spring becomes real as we imagine its inevitable appearance. Anticipation is half the fun; in the case of spring just the idea of it is enough to make us apply ourselves greater to our present studies. The potential contained in spring is what makes all the difference. Whether it's believing in our ability to write that stellar essay or our skills to memorize those complex brain organs, the impending onset of the season of love can bring out the best in our academic minds.

### **The Mad Brilliance of Passion: AU Studies as Joyous Delirium**

Being passionate about our studies may seem odd to others in our life. Our studiousness might even appear as weird as the mating displays of some birds. Michel Foucault, expert on the mental world, noted: "Sauvages sketched out the fundamental role played by passion, transforming it into a more obstinate, invariant cause of madness, the form that somehow seemed most deserved: 'The wandering of our spirit is the result of giving in blindly to our desires, and of not knowing how to refrain from giving free reign to our passions or moderate them'" (Foucault 225). What seems to us like pleasurable studies can to others appear a bit obsessive; who

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

### **Google Scholar Webinar**

Tues, Mar 19, 9:00 to 10:00 am MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Library

[library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html](http://library.athabasca.ca/orientations.html)

No pre-registration necessary

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

Tues, Mar 19, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[business.athabasca.ca/event-](http://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/bcomm-cpa-information-session-10/)

[details/bcomm-cpa-information-session-10/](http://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/bcomm-cpa-information-session-10/)

Register online at above link

### **Undergrad Program Orientation for New Students**

Wed, Mar 20, 5:00 to 6:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Business

[business.athabasca.ca/event-](http://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-mar20-2019/)

[details/business-undergraduate-new-](http://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-mar20-2019/)

[students-information-session-mar20-2019/](http://business.athabasca.ca/event-details/business-undergraduate-new-students-information-session-mar20-2019/)

Register online at above link

### **Halifax Meet & Greet**

Wed, Mar 20, 7:00 to 9:00 pm ADT

The Arms Restaurant, 1515 South Park St,  
Halifax NS

In person

Hosted by AUSU

[www.ausu.org/event/halifax-meet-greet-2/](http://www.ausu.org/event/halifax-meet-greet-2/)

Email [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) to RSVP

### **AU's 2019 3MT Competition**

Fri, Mar 22, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm MDT

Online

Hosted by AU Faculty of Graduate Studies

[athabasca.adobeconnect.com/threeminutet](http://athabasca.adobeconnect.com/threeminutet)

[hesis/](http://athabasca.adobeconnect.com/threeminutet)

View the live presentations through above link

*All events are free unless otherwise specified*

chooses to study on a sunny spring day! However, we do have to find good school-work-life balance.

Such are the pitfalls of AU distance education. We inhabit a unique, but splendid, isolation. We aren't at AU to be understood by others so much as to learn and grow ourselves. We are the garden we make of our life and AU provides the fertilizer. With regard to being misunderstood about our passionate desire for our coursework, Foucault concludes that “what is really targeted through that denunciation is the radical line between the phenomena of madness and the very possibility of passion” (Foucault, 225). We might seem a bit crazy to be writing essays all the time but to each their own. As AU students we're fortunate to find something we enjoy learning about; if everyone understood our studies the same as us maybe they'd cast aside their own hobbies and projects and sign up for distance education. In any case, where creativity lives so does a certain madness; the colourful desire to create is as boundless as Spring blooms.

### **Growing New Tendrils of Our AU Story**

Spring, inchoate with unlimited potential especially in these weeks where it hasn't fully appeared, is a reminder of fresh starts. We can rewrite our academic narrative just as the natural world is re-growing itself. The psychoanalytic figure Jacques Lacan, famous for noting that a certain *lack* underpins our consciousness, thus urging us to discover means of expressing our creative power, described how we function well when we identify our own personal story as a story as of discovering personal truths. Lacan wrote of the psychoanalytic process of self-expression known as anamnesis: “Let us be categorical, in psychoanalytic anamnesis it is not a question of reality, but of truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by giving them the meaning of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the small amount of liberty in which the subject makes them present” (Lacan in Derrida, 108, *Ecrits*, 1966, p. 256). Spring abounds with potential for us to reinvent our academic journey; it's our story to write, after all.

Peter Singer, a noted animal rights philosopher, stated likewise in this vein that “to desire something is to wish to possess it and thus not to destroy it—but also transform it into something that is yours, and thus strip it of its foreignness” (Singer in Christensen, online). Learning embodies this desire for unity with the object of our knowledge. We spring forth in our development as we take in new knowledge and we rewrite our story in a way that makes our course material personal.

Spring, then, is an idea containing the seed of our growth. As Athabasca students, we lead ourselves down a delightful path of passionate explanation along with fellow students in grouped study courses and helpful tutors in each AU offering. If we are fortunate, we find others of our ilk along the way with whom to share the blossoming of our mental realms then all the better. We might even meet new aspects of our self in others! With spring, the history of our studies begins anew; I clean off my desk and symbolic start a new version of academic self. Spring is an opportunity for growth so let's dive right in with open eyes.

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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.*



## The Fit Student Stop Your Thoughts from Killing You

Marie Well



This morning, my loved one warned me, “Life is not ‘for getting.’ Life is ‘for giving,’ and in order to do that, you need to be forgiving to others—especially those who did not give you what you thought you were going to get.” I’m not sure where my loved one found this quote. She did recommend the book *Conversations with God*, which I downloaded today. Perhaps that’s the source.

So, why did she share this warning? Well, because I harbor anger, fear, worry, unforgiveness. I expect we all do at times. That is, until we learn healthier ways to cope.

And when we don’t “give,” when we instead expect to “get,” when we can’t forgive, well, we can come down with disease. I read that negative thoughts—like unforgiveness and anger—collect in pockets in our brain. And these pockets can add up to cancer. Author R. Huntington says, “Note that there are various studies that prove that eighty-five percent of harmful diseases like cancer are due to emotional factors.

Learn how to effectively manage your stress levels and handle unresolved emotional issues” (Huntington, location 293 of 319, 92%). In other words, thoughts can kill.\* (Even our gut microbes get upset by our negative thoughts, according to John Douillard’s YouTube clip called *Lymph – The Ancient Key to Longevity*.)

I disclosed to my loved one my burden of anger toward my family. She said she’s amazed I’m still functioning. But I’m not functioning well. Recently, I came down with chronic tension headaches. But the interesting thing is that I have zero pain when I first awake. But within minutes of waking up, the brain tension strikes. So, what happens during those first few minutes of waking up? Well, my thoughts settle in—thoughts of victimhood, of fear, of anger. I’m the black sheep in my family. And now I’m estranged from most of my family members.

My mom is getting old, and I hope one day we’ll heal our relationship. I read Buddhist books saying that, if not for our mothers, we wouldn’t have been born, been raised, been fed, been bathed, been clothed, been loved. And my mom did so much more. So, one way to find forgiveness involves embracing the positives. After all, we couldn’t have survived without our mothers.

Now, to heal my aching brain, I hope to free myself of trapped thoughts. But we all need to free ourselves of trapped thoughts. That’s because we all suffer negative thoughts at times. It’s the nature of being human.

This morning, I thought of ways to heal my chronic tension headaches. I phoned an acupuncturist. I gave myself a scalp massage. I created affirmations that challenged automatic negative thoughts. Yes, I’d stop blaming others. I’d quit calling myself names. I’d avoid saying

words like “should,” “must,” “always,” or “never.” And I’d forgive others and myself. Good thoughts heal; bad thoughts ache.

And then I read up on foods for brain health. I could try a liver detox. I could start eating walnuts and keep up my exercise. I could try new hobbies and learn new skills to boost self-esteem.

All these things help heal the brain. But do they heal the broken heart that cries out at the brain? For that healing, I called upon spirituality. I now listen to the book *Conversations with God* and revisit my Buddhist books and Christian Bible. I also boosted my time spent meditating using the Wim Hof method. As well, I added loving kindness meditation. All in one day.

But, most of all, I’ve begun to forgive. After all, “life is not ‘for getting.’ Life is ‘for giving.’”

Within twenty-four hours of writing this article, Mom and I have finally begun to find peace.

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*\* People with intrusive thoughts due to obsessive compulsive disorder have no control over their thoughts. Thus (from an empathic point-of-view), the rule “thoughts can kill” does not necessarily apply to them.*



## Tara’s Top 20 Tips for Happiness & Wellbeing

**Tara Panrucker**



I was never a fan of regrets in life, and never had any—until I got older and somewhat wiser. Surely, if you don’t have any regrets, chances are you haven’t made any major mistakes yet, or you’re living inside a box. Regrets do seem to come with life experience. Indeed, if I had the opportunity to do it over again, there would be several things I would change, primarily in my head.

I gained a great deal of wisdom by reading about other people’s experiences. And so, here are twenty tips I’d give to my younger self if I could.

1. Education matters. Regardless of what anyone says, if you choose not to invest in an education both financially and time-wise, you’re limiting yourself in several ways to a lower income and fewer opportunities. Why wouldn’t you want to increase your chances of freedom and better life experiences?
2. Refrain from ruminating on other people’s actions and behaviours; concentrate on your own instead. Be the person you admire and work on your own skills, mental attitude, and abilities.

3. Train your mind to focus on the good around you instead of the bad. The sooner you do this, the quicker it becomes a habit and orients your neural pathways.
4. Give your parents and those around you the best gift of all: your independence, and pay your own way in life. Take responsibility for your health and well-being while you're at it. Get a part-time job, exercise, and learn to cook and eat healthy.
5. Instead of wasting time and energy trying to decipher what other people think of you, focus on being your best self. You cannot know how people perceive you, and it's not your job to figure it out anyway.
6. Treat everyone of all walks of life the same way you'd treat a family member or good friend—with respect and compassion. You never know what anyone else has been through or how they may positively affect you in the future.
7. Spend time exploring your values. Revise your values regularly. Also explore what you value in others and what you will not compromise on—this will save a lot of heartache and frustration later when choosing who to spend your time with.
8. Do not betray your own values and morals to fit in with anyone. Doing so destroys your peace of mind and self respect.
9. Practice using your intuition, or heart, to make choices and decisions. Your intuition rarely lies; by contrast, your emotions are like the weather—ever-changing and unpredictable.
10. Distance yourself from toxic people and situations. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll attract healthy relationships and circumstances.
11. When terrible things happen, consider the inherent illusion of time. Nothing lasts forever and tough times eventually pass. Seek help if needed.
12. Don't always trust what your eyes tell you. What looks beautiful and attractive on the outside can be covering up an ugly, or worse, hollow core. Surround yourself with people that have inner beauty; they're the people who will help you succeed and add value to your life.
13. Accept that sometimes we must do what we don't really want or feel like doing, from unpleasant jobs to tough school assignments. Disciplining yourself to do the best you can delivers you faster to what you want and builds character and determination along the way.
14. Avoid the trap of complaining and blaming others for your lot in life. It's a vicious cycle that leads nowhere. Focus on your blessings and take responsibility for what you can change instead.
15. Remain open to other's point of view—read, travel and communicate with as many people as possible. It's the best form of education and understanding how the world works.
16. Take time for yourself and to spend by yourself, whether it's being out in nature or working on a hobby. Time alone heals many wounds.

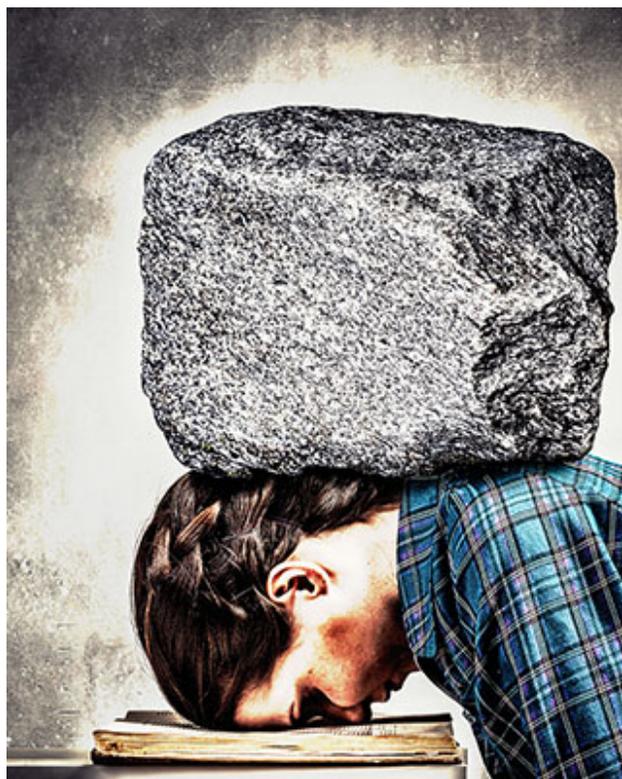
17. Never take family or friends for granted. Show your appreciation of them. They can be gone in an instant.
18. Spend more time cultivating your talents, skills, and knowledge and less time killing time.
19. Enjoy all your senses to the fullest—touch, taste, smell, sound, and sight. Ultimately, we lose our taste buds and vision deteriorates, among other distressing aging symptoms.
20. Give and receive freely—of your time, money, and talents. A healthy and happy life was not meant to be lived on a budget. You'll be amazed at what you receive in return.

*Tara Panrucker lives on Vancouver Island and is seeking a General Arts Degree at AU.*



## Seven Tips to Ace University

Marie Well



Ace university with a capital A. Sound good? It's really quite simple. And you don't need an Einsteinian brain either. You only need to learn the art of studying.

But you're in luck. The Study Dude's read countless books on how to study. So, here are seven tips to help you ace university from yet one more book: *Straight A at Stanford and on to Harvard. Teenager Version: How to Become a Great Student* by Peter Rogers, MD.

**Buy co-op notes.** Co-op notes help you ace exams. Some online stores exist where you can buy study notes. I almost started one of those online stores for Canada, but the cost for the plug-ins seemed to high. So, "get co-op notes from last year .... The students get together, and each makes a typed copy of the lecture notes from one class lecture. You can buy a copy of last year's version .... Everyone is smarter when they have seen the material before. You will be too" (Rogers, p. 1 of 243, 5%).

**Read ahead.** I like to read one chapter of each textbook prior to starting a semester. I also did math problems in advance of each lecture. If I didn't do them in advance, I'd get lost—and I was the top student in most every math class. Dr. Peter Rogers writes, "The night before biochem lecture, I read last year's notes and look at the pictures in the book .... My ability to comprehend a biochemistry lecture just went from 30% to 95%" (p. 3 of 245, 5%). So, now that you've read ahead, "you can listen carefully for voice changes that signal something is likely on the test" (Rogers, p. 3 of 243, 5%).

**Sit in front row. Never miss a class. Take classes from the best.** At university, I only missed classes when I vacationed for a week in Mexico. But I studied beachside the entire time. And in class, I sat at the very front: “Show up on time. Go to every class. Sit in the front row” (Rogers, p. 3 of 243, 5%). Plus, I registered only in classes with the highest rated profs. Not only do they assign the best textbooks, but they teach clearly and test fairly. So, research class textbooks to ensure you have fully worked out solutions. And research instructors’ ratings when you can.

**Rehash material.** I used to play over and over in my head dance moves I learned that week. I recited facts from lectures over and over, too. When on a stationary bike, I’d do math problems based on the changing numbers of the timer and settings. So, “if you drive to school, then review ... by repeating out loud what was covered in lecture. If you run, then do the same while running” (Rogers, p. 3 of 243, 6%).

**See the plus-side of loneliness.** Loneliness can turn us into A students. If you live isolated, then become an MD or lawyer. Sets your sights high—as you’ve got opportunity for singular focus. Dr. Rogers says, “On the weekends, I studied until I couldn’t take it anymore, and then would eat or go workout. In the afternoon and evening I would study some more. Lonely was an understatement” (p. 10 of 243, 8%). But the author of that quote ended up an MD and a champion wrestler.

**Condense your notes.** I read about the value of condensed notes in one how-to-study book. The author suggested making increasingly condensed notes. By tightening your notes, you synthesize and organize it. Dr. Rogers agrees: “Condensed notes mean that you make your own set of summary notes for all the important stuff covered in the class. You just put it into an 8X11 spiral notebook. This includes information from lectures, textbook and practice problems” (Rogers, p. 11 of 243, 9%). By condensing your notes, “you are learning the material. It gets you to study in an active way. This deeper processing leads to deeper understanding and better” (Rogers, p. 13 of 243, 9%). I recommend keeping each copy of your progressively condensed notes. You may need more detail come study time.

**Read.** I read often, mostly about health. Varying your reading can stretch your brain and allow a multidisciplinary mindset. That means, you synthesize topics, creating opportunities for novel ideas: “The vocabulary in nonfiction books is ten times greater than routine conversation. The vocabulary in novels and science textbooks is another ten times greater. The more you read, the more your vocabulary grows. The bigger your vocabulary, the more you can understand, the more you can express yourself” (p. 18 of 243, 11%).

You don’t need a Guinness-sized skull to get straight A’s. Just ask yourself, “Is acing university your goal?” If so, it will not only become your academic reality, but will also build habits for a lifetime of success.

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## Grade Shock



Dear  
Barb

Barbara Godin

*Dear Barb:*

*Hi, I have just begun taking courses at AU. I have been out of a school and working for the last 10 years. When I graduated high school, I was one of the top students in my class, now I'm barely passing and finding the work very difficult. It's very disappointing and I'm not sure I will be able to continue. Also, I find it hard to discipline myself to set a study schedule and do my school work. I end up leaving everything until the last possible minute. I have attempted to use Saturdays as my day to work on my course, but then if a friend calls and wants to do something, I'm gone. Since I work full-time, I cannot attend regular school and I really want to obtain a degree and change my career path. Are there any tips you could suggest that would get me motivated, or should I just give up?*

*Thanks, Megan.*

Hi Megan:

Initially when individuals make the decision to take online courses, they are motivated and anxious to begin; however, as you are realizing Megan, it is difficult to remain focused. Online education doesn't always work for everyone. The reason you are barely passing may be more a result of simply going from high school to university. The drop in your

grades may have happened even if you went to a brick and mortar university. According to research, students leaving high school with a 90+ grade average, experience the biggest drop in their grades once they enter university. An [article in Maclean's Magazine](#), from July 8, 2010 by Carson Jerema, states: "A student who gets 90s in high school, who gets high 70s and low 80s in university, is doing quite well."

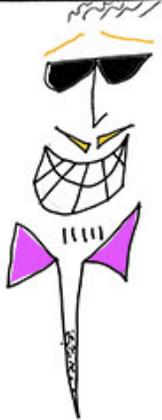
I would never suggest you give up. It's all a matter of disciplining yourself. The most important thing for you to do is to learn to say no to your friends. Set aside some time for socializing, but outside of that time, you need to tell your friends you are busy and let them know when you are available. Construct a schedule, so you can let your friends and family know when you are free. If you were attending a regular university, you would have to set time for attending class and you still need to set up a similar schedule for your online courses. The schedule will not only let your friends know when you are busy or available, but it will also provide you with a time table so you know when you need to study. Stay focused on your long-term goals. For example, if you plan to have your degree by a certain date, make sure you are staying within the time frame required in order to meet your goals. Thanks Megan, hope this helps.

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



### Chazz Bravado Empathizing with Trudeau

### Wanda Waterman



I have SO much empathy for Justin Trudeau right now!



One little booboo and suddenly Mr. Popularity's name is MUD.

A similar thing happened to me when I tried to help a new strip club ...




... by sending letters telling the mayor's office to lighten up on the zoning regulations — or else!



One of the chicky-poops in the office recognized my handwriting from an earlier threatening letter.



I tell ya, hell hath no fury like a First Nations feminist when a white man asks her to break the law!.....



My advice to Trudeau is, offer Jody Wilson-Raybould a bouquet of roses, staring into her eyes like this. That'll melt her butter!

Although it didn't quite work in my case ...





**AUSU**  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENTS' UNION

## IMPORTANT DATES

- **Mar 15:** [April degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Mar 29:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for May](#)
- **Apr 10:** [Deadline to register in a course starting May 1](#)
- **Apr 10:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)
- **Apr 15:** [May degree requirements deadline](#)
- **Apr 30:** [Deadline to apply for course extension for June](#)
- **May 9:** [AUSU Council Meeting](#)

This space is provided by AUSU. The Voice does not create this content. Contact [services@ausu.org](mailto:services@ausu.org) with any questions.

## Peer to Peer Course Evaluations

Have you finished any courses in the past year?

We encourage all undergraduate students to fill out an [AUSU course evaluation](#) online after every course! Good feedback or not, your fellow students want to hear from you!

### Why should you fill out an evaluation?

- Although your evaluation is anonymous, the results are compiled and available online [here](#). This information can help students choose their courses.
- The AUSU course evaluations are different than the ones sent out by AU – ours can be filled out anytime, even after your course is completed.
- The information we collect can be used to help advocate to the University on behalf of students for things like course content, materials, and instructional value!
- Evaluations are easily accessed and filled out online.

Fill out a course evaluation online [here](#).

*If you have any feedback on how we can improve our course evaluations, please contact us at [ausu@ausu.org](mailto:ausu@ausu.org).*



## Help set Mental Health Standards in Canada!

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) wants student feedback from across Canada to help set a new standard on psychological health and safety for post-secondary students.

As an AU student, your voice is particularly important to reflect the needs of online students! **Fill out their online survey to help affect mental health standards!**

[English Survey](#)

[French Survey](#)



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

## AU Website Quick Links

Have troubles navigating the Athabasca University website? Not sure how to find what you are looking for?

AUSU has you covered! Check out our [AU Quick links page](#), with easy-to-find links to most commonly accessed AU pages, information, and resources.



**Athabasca University**  
**Quick Links**

*Courtesy of AUSU*

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# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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## THE VOICE

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