

Federal education review a well-kept secret—until now

IT'S AN UNFORTUNATE TRADITION FOR THE FIRST issue of the year to fill this editorial space with something inspiring. But I have absolutely no advice to give you, my dear first-year students.

Let's face it—after five years at this slightly-above-par postsecondary institution, I'm basically as clueless as I was the morning I walked in. Meanwhile, there are others out there who are desperately in need of my advice, if they would but listen.

I should talk to you about the ills of procrastination and poor preparation, except that more often than not, I get my best marks on the papers I finish at 6am on the morning they're due. I'd tell you that university is tough and that you should work hard, but frankly I've yet to discern any correlation between how much effort I put into a class and the final grade I receive. University is a massive sham. Deal with it.

No doubt you've already gotten an inkling of this from your over-eager orientation leader's insistence that, "Sociology classes will totally break out into the Arts chant and random times, so you'd better know it!" As a result, any advice I'd pass your way would be insincere at best.

Instead, I'd like to spend the next 500-or-so words advising someone in much more dire need of it: Human Resource and Social Development Canada.

You see, my good friends at HRSDC, if you're going to ask Canadians to "share their views regarding overall objectives, governmental roles and accountability on postsecondary education" as part of a greater effort to restore fiscal balance in Canada, you might want to tell Canadians that you're seeking their advice. I understand that you're "looking forward to hearing [our] views!" Still, seeing as this consultation is to close in little over a week, it may have been prudent to notify interested parties beforehand.

I certainly didn't know about this, and I keep my ear fairly close to the ground when it comes to postsecondary education. But no one else at our dear little paper had heard a peep either. Neither did Liberal MLA Dave Taylor, Critic for Advanced Education, nor University of Alberta Provost and Vice-President (Academic) Carl Amrhein. You know who else didn't know about it? Alberta's Minister of Advanced Education Denis Herard, and he's the person in charge of postsecondary planning in our province—though perhaps he can be forgiven, since he was somewhat hastily appointed and may still be learning the ropes.

How to explain the others, though, or that the U of A Students' Union wouldn't have found out, had they not happened upon a thread on a certain Maclean's columnist's weblog? This just gets curiously and curiously.

As far as I can gather, Alberta isn't an aberration in this either. Across the nation, those with a vested interest in postsecondary education—the "stakeholders," as the PR guys like to call us—have all been caught off guard by the federal Conservative's apparent desire for our input. They may have tried to keep this on the down-low, but oops—we found out anyway.

So surf over to www3.hrsdc.gc.ca and spend a few minutes telling the feds what you want from your postsecondary education. This way, at least when they say they asked us we can say we told them—and that there's a hell of a lot of work to be done.

Unfortunately, the veil surrounding this survey speaks to the widespread problem of transparency—or rather the complete lack thereof—in the world of postsecondary education. We saw this with the *A Learning Alberta* review that ended in November 2005, which produced many important suggestions but no substantive action as of yet.

We saw this continued with the passing of Bill 40 earlier this summer, which effectively de-legislated tuition policy, allowing the Alberta Government to change postsecondary tuition policy on a whim. We were assured that this was to streamline the process and to make things better for students, but we have seen little work done and again, no action.

It's saddening to see that our federal Conservatives, through this HRSDC consultation, seem poised to extend Alberta's proud tradition of unaccountability and wordplay in lieu of tangible, concrete action.

MATT FREHNER
Editor-in-Chief



MATTHEW BARRETT

LETTERS

Challenge that comfort zone, everyone

I was very pleased with the article "Pick up a book—and a lab coat" (10 August) by Michael Zahorodny-Burke. I appreciated his insight into the usefulness of a general degree while explaining how to be open-minded in our studies.

The article was written very eloquently. It explained how a general degree or variety of courses can help us not only in our professional lives but also our personal lives. I meet with students all the time who see themselves in one and only one profession when really they can use their knowledge and interests to help guide them in many directions.

At this point in my career I wish I had explored more avenues, studied more things, and tried harder in school. All of these things would have made me a happier and well-rounded person. I guess it was my youthfulness that kept me from seeing the big picture. I am not letting these opportunities pass me by any longer. I am involved in clubs, writing articles, exploring

my interest in science, and dancing. Pretty well-rounded activities, according to Michael.

This article was disappointing in one sense: the stab taken at Arts students. What is the point of an Arts degree? The point is to see the big picture, analyze and interpret the world around you with a critical mind and not take things at face value. The author seemed to imply that there is no practical application for an Arts degree—a real myth indeed!

I challenge everyone out of their comfort zone today.

AMANDA ROY
Via Internet

Surly review eggs on emo listener

It's a good thing that everyone is entitled to their own opinion (re: CD review, "Blue October," 10 August). I'm not knocking you for yours, but just from the second sentence alone (the comment about the tin foil), I could make a decision that you have either lived a very sheltered life or are completely clueless.

It was amazing that this album came out when it did in my case,

being that this is a freakish replica of what I'm dealing with today, from the boyfriend who I found out was on crystal meth, to the depression I faced in dealing with it, it sounded like the songs were specifically sang to me—surprisingly, along with many others I know.

Again, all opinions, but I do know one fact: the emotions are definitely real, whether they those of the person singing them or someone who feels and lives them like me.

JESSICA BROOKS
Via Internet

Letters to the editor should be dropped off at room 3-04 of the Students' Union Building, or e-mailed to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca.

The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libelous or otherwise hateful in nature. The Gateway also reserves the right to publish letters online.

To be considered for publication, letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the name, student identification number, program and year of study of the author.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Canadian customs confound confederate

Being from the southeast, I'd like to know a bit more about the habits and customs out here.

1) At dances, why do couples walk around in circles after a selection has been played? They get plenty of exercise walking around during the music. Surely they don't have to supplement more during the interval.

2) At a "formal dance," do the men also dress formal or is it merely the women? Note that I am not referring to semi-formals.

3) Does Friday's Gateway always come out on Saturday?

"PERPLEXED"
24 October, 1947

From the Archives is a semi-regular feature where the Gateway runs historical letters that we feel are of particular importance.