

University is your chance to shine—so don't blow it this year



AMANDA
TERMEER

“With so many reasons to achieve, it’s somewhat surprising that students find themselves pulled into a world of slacking, mediocrity and even failure—yet they do it time and time again. To compensate for such failures, they fall back onto previous achievements.”

At the beginning of a new semester, many students wake up and have an epiphany. At this point, five simple words are boldly proclaimed: this year will be different.

Reasons for changing can be anything from the desire for parental approval to personal perfectionism. Either way, students can choose to stagnate their progress or flourish in the learning environment offered at the University of Alberta.

There are a variety of resolutions that students can have for a new school year. They can be as simple as running a sub-20-minute race or as complex as completing a PhD in molecular genetics. However, for the rest of us, one of the most common resolution is to hit the books, study hard and finally pull off a good GPA.

The lofty notion of achieving high marks is so common that tons of seminars are offered to help students achieve their annual goals. Academia thrives on young minds who desperately want to improve. Tutors make a living by attempting to teach students

new concepts that will enable them to ace their courses. Week Of Welcome introduces new students to all of the various programs offered to ensure an easy adjustment into university life. University also offers many extra-curricular programs to make achieving excellence possible.

Every group of students has its own reason for high academic achievements. First-years are filled with blind ambitions and assume that university will be as easy as high school. Second-years think that they will understand the system better and therefore be better able to play the game of academia to score killer marks. Third-year students realize their marks suddenly count towards determining whether they will graduate with distinction and make it into grad school. And fourth-years just want to go out with a bang. Overall, everyone has a reason to believe they should strive for excellence.

These great expectations for the new year quickly disintegrate, and inevitably, homework assignments

remain undone well past their due dates, sparkling new textbooks remain unopened and unread, and hours spent drinking may well outnumber those spent studying.

With so many reasons to achieve, it’s somewhat surprising that students find themselves pulled into a world of slacking, mediocrity and even failure—yet they do it time and time again. To compensate for such failures, they fall back onto previous achievements: and instead of discussing a failing assignment for a tough course, discussions of aced high school diploma exams will dominate the discussion—because reverting to the glories of the past is better than accepting a dismal future.

The problem here is that talk is cheap, so rather than bragging about your potential, you should actually start walking the walk. Rather than slacking, put some effort into your academic life. Strive to exceed potential and expectations—even your own—because after all this year will be different, right?

Time for a lesson in Slacking 101



MICHAEL
SMITH

you’re instead treated either to a repeat of the first class or to one of those round-table introductions where you learn the name of every person in your class, what their major is and whatever other information I need to know about the people I will secretly loath for the next four months due to their clearly superior intellect.

Of course, if every professor did this, the choice would be an easy one. Some, however, knowing that they have no chance of getting through the syllabus, try anyways. Sometimes, just to be annoying, they may hand out year-end group assignments on the first day, then never mention said group assignments again until you ask them weeks later when such assignments will be passed out.

Well of course I *should* have been there that day, but if I was there, how would I have been able to watch the entire first season of the original *Star Trek* series in my underwear? Beat that logic!

So, based on this dilemma, I’ve devised a new proposal to the University: make Friday a mandatory holiday for all staff and students. It’s really a win-win situation. Those professors who feel some crazy desire to crush the spirit of their students as soon as possible will have no choice but to delay the end of hope until the following Monday.

This way, the cool profs can spare me the touchy-feely crap about people I will probably want to forget about afterwards anyways, and realize at the same time that they won’t get through their syllabus either and start some actual teaching instead.

As for us students, we will enjoy a well-deserved respite from the hard work that proceeded this newly created long weekend, and I might not feel guilty about skipping class for once. That is, until Monday of course.

It’s that time of year ladies and gentlemen: back to the ol’ grind of school! At least, it is for those of us who aren’t over-achievers (or desperately trying to complete our degrees)—and who don’t believe in Spring and Summer terms.

I’m faced with the same dilemma at the beginning of every new semester—one that taxes me to the breaking point. For anyone not entering first year (since they’re too doe-eyed to be this cynical), I’m going to break down this first week for you.

Wednesday, as you have probably already discovered by the time you read this, involved waking up, going to your classes, and receiving many a syllabi. Thursday, same thing: wake up, go to class, receive syllabi. For these first two days, most of us only pay attention to whether or not the final exam will be cumulative. After that, we set off blissfully to the beer gardens to drink ourselves into a stupor and try to forget the small amount of information the professor just attempted to convey.

This is where my personal dilemma comes in. You see, it’s on the almighty Friday that I face my greatest challenge: whether to go to class at all. I’m sure most of you will have faced a similar dilemma as you show up for that 8am class on the third day of school, only to have the professor smite your will to live with the words, “Who hasn’t received their syllabus yet?”

Looking forward to a long weekend,

THE BURLAP SACK

Now, I’m not usually one to bemoan the loss of material possessions. “Ebb and flow with the tide,” my Zen guru used to say. “Detach yourself from what you own, and happiness will come.” Well, fuck that; because, last night, some Whyte-area hooligan killed my bike, and, dammit, I really liked that bike.

Let me set the stage for you. There I was, enjoying a strawberry-banana milkshake while editing newspaper copy and watching the season premiere of *House*—blissfully unaware of the chaos unfolding on the street below. However, when I went to retrieve my bike a little after 1am, I found my lock difficult to open.

I quickly realized that said lock had been compacted into my bicycle’s top tube, creating a savage, irreparable bend. Its structural integrity compromised, I walked home, dejected.

It was a Schwinn Moab—from back when Schwinn was a reputable company—and had served as my trusty steed for many a grueling and spectacular off-road trail in Banff and Jasper. Without complaint, my Schwinn propelled me through seven Edmonton winters—the most recent of which as my only method of transportation.

This bike served me well, and I’m indeed saddened by its loss; but worse still is that this act of violence gained nothing for anyone. And so, were my sack big enough, I would use it to beat into oblivion all the world’s senseless acts of violence.

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