

Athabasca's privacy policy under scrutiny

Univeristy hopes new privacy advisor will help maintain institution's solid record on FOI requests

PRIVACY • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"It's really unfortunate that the privacy commissioner took this long for an issue didn't involve a lot of different issues—it was one thing," Ross Low said.

The current President of Athabasca University, Dr Frits Pannekoek, came into the position in June 2005, after Abrioux left. However, Ross noted that the adjudicator's report was not clear in stating which president forwarded the e-mails in question.

"And this is really unfortunate because the report just says 'the university president' which implies that it was the current university president, which it isn't," Ross said.

Ross explained that since that time, Athabasca University has appointed a privacy and policy advisor, Kent Nelson, to deal with any questions and concerns about the province's privacy act.

"It looks like something really good is coming of this because the University has been reviewing all of its policies and making sure that everything is absolutely compliant with privacy," Ross said.

Nelson explained that this case is the first instance in which Athabasca University has ever been ruled to be in violation of the Alberta privacy act.

"We don't very many complaints or requests for information at our institution," Nelson said. "Our record is good."

Wood explained that this case was nothing out of the ordinary and that his office deals with a "fair number" of this type of investigation every year.

"For the most part, everybody is pretty good at adhering to requests for information and making sure

that they're not disclosing too much personal information about people," Wood said. "I think overall, we have a 93 per cent success rate in the province of Alberta of freedom of information requests being completed, which is pretty darn good."

"Anytime we collect the information, we are required by law to advise the student of why we're collecting it, and under what legal authority we're collecting it and how we will use that."

**KENT NELSON,
PRIVACY AND POLICY ADVISOR,
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY**

Alberta's FOIPP Act was recently amended during the Legislature's spring session (and won't be up for changes for another five years), but Nelson said that the changes didn't really affect postsecondary institutions.

He explained that the University collects only the minimal amount of information necessary to provide educational services, and that the information is relayed directly from students to the institution.

"Anytime we collect the information, we are required by law to advise the student of why we're collecting it, and under what legal authority we're collecting it and how we will use that," Nelson concluded.

University-level English doesn't make the grade

CATHERINE SCOTT
News Writer

As the University of Alberta tries to attract more international students to campus, the importance of teaching English grammar becomes obvious. And with this increased weight comes a need to improve the writing skills of both local and international students alike.

The Writing Task Force, created by the Dean of Arts Daniel Woolf last year, is designed to improve the writing of students throughout the University.

The organization is co-chaired by two U of A English professors, Ingrid Johnston and Betsy Sargent who both said that there isn't enough help for students with their English-writing at the U of A.

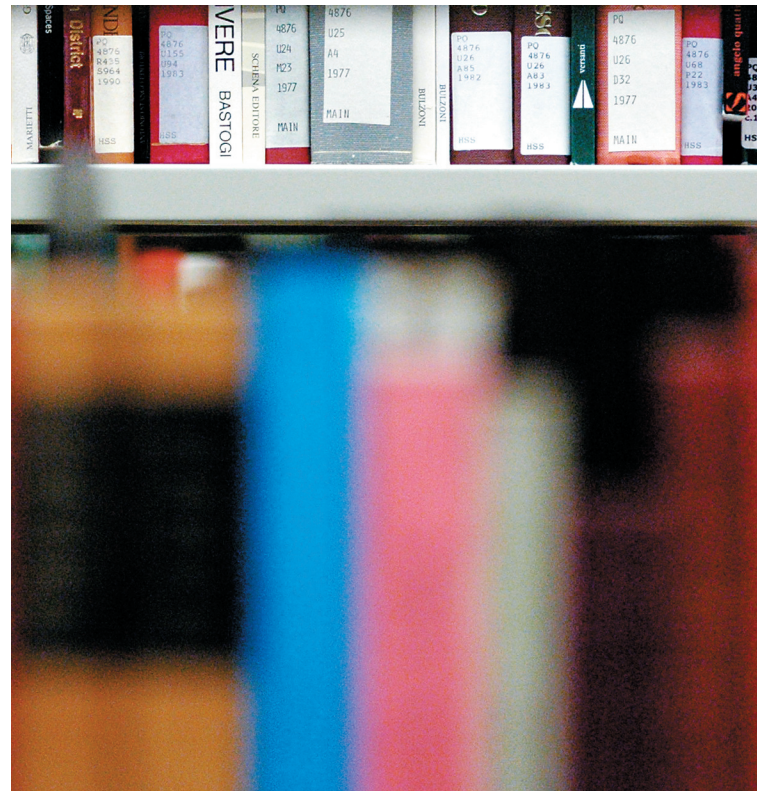
"We're trying to globalize our campus; we certainly don't want less international students. [But] the amount of support we have for them on campus is not as great as it should be ... the resources are really limited and also the University, just realistically, can't supply unlimited resources," Sargent said.

And it isn't just international students who struggle with writing in English.

According to Sargent, programs like Effective Writing Resources, which is run by the U of A's Academic Support Centre, offers help to all students, but currently there's only one person available to aid students with their writing. Many students take advantage of this service in times of pressure, such as when a PhD dissertation is due the next day, Sargent explained.

"They've been told their ideas are good, their research is good, but they need help with their English," she said.

Both Sargent and Johnston agreed that good grammar could mean the difference between an employer seri-



TARASTIEGLITZ

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS U of A wants students to know how to grammar.

ously considering a student for a job, or throwing out the student's resumé at first glance.

"One year I had my first-year writing class write a generic application letter for a job. [These letters were] going out to a banker, a builder and a businessman. The banker said he would interview three or four of them, the businessman said he would interview the same three or four [while] the builder didn't want to interview any of them ... [his comment being] 'if that's what they do with a comma, what will they do with a nail?'" Sargent said with a laugh.

But while grammar is important, according to Johnston, it isn't the only

thing that defines good writing.

"We believe writing is so much more than that ... there's a difference between good writing and correctness," Johnston said.

Both Sargent and Johnston agree that proper grammar is not separate from good content in writing. They encourage all students to look at the content of their writing more so than their grammar.

According to Johnston and Sargent, that's what good writing is about.

"Research shows that if you teach writing in isolation, it doesn't seem to have a large carry-over effect, but if you teach it in context, then it does," Johnston said.

Get food for thought at CaPS!



Career and Placement Services (CaPS)
2-100 SUB www.ualberta.ca/caps 492-4291

Get great advice!

CaPS FREE Brown Bag Lunch Seminars are an excellent way to spend your lunch hour and learn career-related information. Gain knowledge today that you can use tomorrow.

Experience that pays: Finding internships
Monday, October 16 - 12:05 to 12:50 p.m.

Moving to the head of the class: Looking for teaching positions
Tuesday, October 17 - 12:35 to 1:20 p.m.

Making Career Fairs and Forums work for you!
Wednesday, October 18 - 12:05 to 1:20 p.m.

Going global: Applying for work abroad
Thursday, October 19 - 12:35 to 1:20 p.m.

Self employment: Putting your entrepreneurial spirit to work
Monday, October 23 - 12:05 to 12:50 p.m.

All seminars take place at CaPS, 2-100 SUB. Pre-registration is not required. These aren't the only Brown Bag Lunch Seminars CaPS has to offer. For more information on upcoming seminars check our website at www.ualberta.ca/caps.



www.usfilter.com

chris.larsen@siemens.com



SIEMENS

Water Technologies

Water is your most important reagent.

Free cartridges with the purchase of a PURELAB® Ultra system! Ask us about our system trade-in program, it could save you up to \$2,000.

PURELAB® Ultra brings guaranteed 18.2 MΩ-cm water to the lab with real-time TOC monitoring, memory dispense and innovative cartridge design that reduces annual operating costs.

Call Chris Larsen today! Cell: 780-975-3132 or 800-382-8517

PURELAB Ultra is a trademark of ELGA LabWater.

* Offer good until May 2007

