



GATEWAY OPINION

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Long-overdue new tuition policy only puts us back to square one



MATT
FREHNER

“It’s clear that the majority of U of A students don’t give a shit about tuition policy. The Tories can dilly-dally with PSE because they know both that the bulk of students won’t lift a finger to protest higher fees, and that we won’t be casting ballots anyway, so our opinions won’t affect the political climate in the slightest.”

The sarcastic little “days we’ve been waiting for an affordable tuition policy” sign that our Students’ Union put up in SUB the other day must have done the trick: the Tories finally unveiled their entirely underwhelming tuition policy last Friday.

Quite obviously, Advanced Education Minister Denis Herard was walking through SUB, saw the poster and said to himself, “Oh, right, that’s what I was supposed to be working on these last six months. Shit. We’d better get something in writing. How about setting tuition policy back 2004/05 levels? Oh, we already did that? Well, let’s tie the tuition increases to CPI, and throw in some extra tidbits that look good, but don’t really help students in financial need, like increasing loan limits. And let’s get this thing out tomorrow, I want to go tobogganing this weekend.”

Never mind that millions of dollars were poured into reviewing postsecondary education via conferences, consultations with “stakeholders” (oddly enough, usually old white men), and colourful, glossy brochures. I was there last November at the PSE policy discussions, when then-minister Dave Hancock acknowledged that barriers to postsecondary are much more nuanced than simple tuition fees. Housing costs in Edmonton continue to rise, and the Campus Food Bank is strained. Rural and low-income Albertans are perpetually underrepresented.

But we need not only to understand that these barriers exist; we actually need to act on it. And frankly, after 600-some days of waiting, students shouldn’t be expected to take Herard at his word that the affordability framework will continue to improve, and, come budget time, Alberta will be ready to set up the most affordable tuition policy in Canada.

To be fair, the U of A Students’ Union has historically been a bit scattered in their approach to affordability. A few years ago, our SU was pushing for a tuition policy set at Consumer Price Index (that is, inflation) plus two per cent per year. This was dropped in favour of a complete freeze (does anyone remember the hilariously ineffective campaigns such as freezing the letters T U I T I O N in see-through plastic pails?) before the current SU policy of advocating a return to 2000/01 levels was put in place.

It’s clear that the majority of U of A students don’t give a shit about tuition policy. The Tories can dilly-dally with PSE because they know both that the bulk of students won’t lift a finger to protest higher fees, and that we won’t be casting ballots anyway, so our opinions won’t affect the political climate in the slightest. The apathy at this campus is absolutely astounding.

Albertans weren’t always this lazy. Back in ’82, over 3500 U of A students marched to the Legislature to protest

large funding cuts at the University. In those days students were unwilling to see their fees raised and their services cut, and that was at a time when tuition made up a paltry nine per cent of the University’s operating budget, compared to the over 25 per cent we pay today. It’s strange: we pay for a lot more of our education these days and care a lot less. The last time I remember the SU marching to the Legislature—and that was a few years ago—I could count the number of people on two hands and one foot.

Yes, we’re apathetic. What’s absolutely absurd, however, is that Herard had the brass balls to suggest Alberta’s tuition policy is anywhere near the most affordable in the country: in fact, at \$4828, we’re well above national average, and fully \$2912 above Québec, which boasts lowest tuition in Canada. Unless they’re insinuating that tuition is affordable because of the stellar economy in Alberta, which belies the fact that a booming economy furthers rather than tightens the gap between rich and poor. It’s the responsibility of the government in a time of surpluses to instigate progressive, long-range policies. What the Conservatives have given us so far is absurdly vague and lacks imagination. Let’s hope the budget shows something of substance: until then let’s let Herard know we actually give a shit about the future of university education, for once.

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Organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Students Association
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Don’t look at all the lovely people

There’s a place for beautiful boys and girls—but it isn’t here at university



KELSEY
TANASIUK

There I was, comfortably seated in my sociology class just minding my own business, when my professor wandered down the aisle. It was then that I caught him out of the corner of my eye—the blonde. I sat there in a daze, as if struck with a frying pan to the temple, admiring his beauty from afar. Suddenly that rude little voice in the back of my head gently reminded me, “Hey dumbass! Class! Remember?”

Snapping back to reality, I attempted to focus my attention on our professor’s explanation of why humans developed opposable thumbs. Despite my best efforts, however, I still spend a vast majority of my class time sneaking glances at this adorable sweater-clad specimen. I have this problem in most of my classes, which brings me to the point of this article: attractive people shouldn’t be allowed in university.

Okay, I realize this may seem a little crazy, but bear with me a moment—I’ve put some careful thought into this claim. First of all, attractive people are just too distracting to the rest of us. How am I supposed to concentrate on a Symbolic Logic lecture when a 9.3

on the hottie scale has been registered a mere three seats to my left? It’s hardly my fault I have rampant hormones and the attention span of a goldfish.

Eliminating beautiful people from our university would also cut annoying classroom chatter in half. If students weren’t there to flirt with each other mid-lecture, overall class comprehension would go up ten-fold. Making classes uglier would also make not-taking a much less stressful endeavour.

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Let’s face it: these good-looking people don’t really need education. They can all go on to successful careers of underwear modeling and trophy-wife-dom. It’s us average-to-homely people who need our smarts to get by. I certainly don’t have any *Sports Illustrated*

swimsuit photographers beating down my door with their cameras in hand. I need my Arts degree—otherwise I’d be faced with a future of french fries and Happy Meals.

Think of a famous person, your favourite one—just off the top of your head. Now, I’ll bet 90 per cent of the people reading this thought of someone who’s famous for their looks and not their smarts. Look at Jessica Simpson: does anyone out there think for a second that maybe she has a university education? Of course she doesn’t—because she doesn’t need one. This is the girl who can’t determine fish from chicken, yet people still idolize her.

That isn’t to say that only beautiful people are idolized—they just come by it easier. Take Gandhi. Not exactly the most attractive guy, right? And think of all the crazy stunts he had to pull to get noticed, all that hunger-striking and such: he totally did it for the chicks.

Now I realize that completely eliminating attractive people from campus may seem a little extreme—Nazi-esque perhaps—so I am going to propose a compromise. Any beautiful person wishing to attend this university should de-hottify themselves. Stop washing your hair, dress like a hobo, reek of body odour and replace your facial cleansers with bacon grease. This will help create a better campus society—perhaps not visually, but academically at least. Repent, beautiful people! Repent for the good of our grades!