

# THE GATEWAY

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## Survey probes education attitudes

SCOTT LILWALL  
Deputy News Editor

A recently released study has evaluated the attitudes of Canadians on the education system in the country, and finds that many have concerns about accessibility to postsecondary education.

The study, released by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), was designed and administered jointly with Statistics Canada. While the report covered everything from early childhood learning to occupation-related instruction, strong opinions were found relating to postsecondary education, said Bob LeDrew, Senior Media Relations Specialist for CCL.

"The poll looked at questions such as how important the postsecondary sector is to Canada," he said. "It sounds like Canadians are hugely supportive of postsecondary education."

PLEASE SEE SURVEY ♦ PAGE 4

**DOWNING THE DINOS** The Pandas beat Calgary twice this weekend, capping off an undefeated weekend for the U of A teams. Full coverage on page eleven.

## Opinions divided on mentorship program

ROBIN COLLUM  
News Staff

A new mentor program put forward by the Alberta government aims at getting children to think about their postsecondary plans at an early age.

While some say the mentorship program will establish the importance of further education in the minds of grade-school children, some are saying that the initiative is a distraction from other, larger issues.

SU Vice-President (External) Dave Cournoyer has panned the provincial government's new mentorship pilot program, saying that the government should instead focus on making postsecondary education more affordable to potential students.

The recently announced program, which will team up elementary with high-school students mentors that will provide them with information on their options after graduation. The program begins its three-year trial period in February.

"It's great to get young people to think about postsecondary education when they're younger," Cournoyer said. "But if [postsecondary is] unaffordable to [potential students] when

it comes to the point when they want to enter the system, then it's not going to make much difference."

In Edmonton, the program is being run by Big Brothers Big Sisters, while Calgary's program is headed by the Boys and Girls Club.

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DAVE COURNOYER,  
SU VP (EXTERNAL)

The Ministry of Advanced Education will train high-school volunteers, who will then be matched up with children from their communities. They are also providing the funding for the \$200 000 program.

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## Online tests hoped to click with students

RYAN HEISE  
News Staff

With the multiple-choice examination. That's what a group of researchers at the University of Alberta hope to achieve by developing new ways to administer tests to students.

A research team headed by Dr Anup Basu, a professor in the Department of Computer Science, is looking into whether or not exams that have a large multimedia component are better able to hold the attention of students and more accurately assess their knowledge.

"The idea is to get away from the paper and pencil type tests that we have been doing all along and not just have multiple choice, because that is kind of boring, but be very interactive," Dr Basu said. "People can drag and drop things, they can play games, and in the process get tested."

The exams being developed differ from traditional in-class exams, as they use many multimedia components that allow students to interact with each question. For instance, instead of simply being asked the chemical composition of a substance, students are prompted to build a model by selecting and connecting different on-screen molecules. Questions such as this are currently only developed for use on computers, but in the future,



SHAHEED MERANI

**NO MORE PENCILS, NO MORE BOOKS** At least for tests, if Basu can help it.

Basu hopes to be able to send the exams over a network to a multitude of devices, including cellphones.

Testing will also be scalable for each student. As questions are answered correctly or incorrectly, subsequent problems will change in real-time to accommodate the student's level of knowledge.

"[W]e want to tailor the test to a student's ability. If the questions are too hard we make it easier, if the questions are too easy we make it a little more difficult," Basu explained.

However, this isn't to boost the scores of students who are not prepared

for the exam, but rather to allow them to stay focused on their task by not making them discouraged with questions they can't answer.

Dr Irene Cheng, the program's director of research, explained that a new methodology of scoring the exam would take into account the real-time tailoring rather than just a raw score as current exams do.

The system would be based around item response theory and also allow examiners to see whether or not students are simply guessing on certain questions.

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## Who's the liberalest?

Is it the Academic? The Frenchman? The Goalie? Our writers give you the skinny on who should lead the Libs.

OPINION, PAGE 9



## A Wii-valuation

Our A&E writers—and all-around gaming experts—didn't go out of their way to test drive the new Wii.

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