

# Memorial offers free tuition to student with best YouTube rant

New marketing scheme creators say it captures the Newfoundlander spirit

SHEENA GOODYEAR  
*The Muse*

ST JOHN'S, NL (CUP)—Got a good rant? Then the Memorial University of Newfoundland is looking for you. The St John's institution's latest recruitment ad features actor Mark O'Brien roaming around downtown St John's, ranting about the difficulties of choosing a university. The ad challenges viewers to out-rant O'Brien. Prospective students can send their own rants to the university for a chance to win a year's worth of free tuition.

The new campaign, "Rant like Rick," mirrors the popular rants of Newfoundland comedian Rick Mercer on his CBC show *The Rick Mercer Report*.

"We didn't really know what we wanted to do, we just knew the idea of somebody ranting about something was a place to start. Then we developed a campaign about it," said Michael Pickard, Memorial's associate director of marketing.

Pickard was one of the people behind last summer's controversial university re-branding, which was heavily criticized for removing the word "Newfoundland" from promotional materials, and the aesthetics of its new logo.

While the recruitment campaign centres on a prominent Newfoundland figure, Pickard says it's more about

local spirit. And while Mercer is on board with the campaign, viewers won't find him anywhere in the ads.

"I don't think it's about Rick Mercer, and we as a team have agreed that this is so much more about inviting self-expression," Pickard said.

Pickard says the target audience of 16- to 18-year-olds is hard to reach, which made it a challenge to choose where to air the ads.

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**MICHAEL PICKARD,  
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY**

The ads were launched on 2 February on popular video-sharing website YouTube, and in movie theatres in St John's, Halifax, Ottawa and Kingston, Ontario.

"One thing we know is teenagers still go to movies. They still go every bit as much, and so it's a cultural thing, so we knew we would be able to reach them," he said.

He also says the ad is filmed in YouTube style, and looks "almost

user-generated."

"If we created the typical pictures-of-the-buildings-friendly-faces-come-to-Memorial ad, and then put it on YouTube, it would be like, 'Come on, give me a break.' Anybody can put anything on YouTube, but this feels like something you'd see on YouTube," he said.

One comment on the site criticized the ad for being filmed off campus.

"Leave it to MUN to film a recruiting video away from campus. Axel [Meisen, MUN President] and friends should stop trying to make this place look hip. We are a university. Try selling the professional look," reads the comment by user Chayes85.

However, Pickard isn't bothered. "It's kind of ironic that that comment was there. The whole rant is about not showing your campus. [O'Brien] is talking about how universities typically show their smiling faces and their ivy-covered buildings and they focus on their location because it's in the middle of nowhere. In fact, we're saying we don't buy into that," Pickard said.

"These ads are about students making decisions, so they're really not supposed to be on-campus at all. We consciously took it off-campus. So that comment actually drove home the point."

The deadline for student rant submissions is 16 March. For more contest information, see [www.mun.ca/rant/submit](http://www.mun.ca/rant/submit).

# Social networking sites continue to challenge student election officials

PRECIOUS YUTANGCO  
*Excalibur*

TORONTO (CUP)—Student election committees may have to review their policies to deal with new Internet technologies and social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook when it comes to campaigning.

The York Federation of Students (YFS) at York University hosts several groups on Facebook. However, while the official campaigning period for the YFS elections doesn't begin until 5 March, there had been speculation that some candidates began to campaign early by using Facebook—a practice scrutinized during last year's elections.

Last year, vice-president (external) candidate Shamini Selvatnam reported that an opponent, Tamar Tepper, was using Facebook to pre-campaign. And as a result, Tepper's party was penalized in accordance to the Elections Procedure Code and Guidelines.

Michael Landry, who ran alongside Tepper, explained all she said in her Facebook post was "I am running."

But, last year's YFS Chief Returning Officer Jeremy Salter considered the post a form of campaigning and said that it's distinctly defined in the outlines as being against the rules.

Landry pointed out that sometimes it's hard to define what campaigning is.

"Before you start campaigning, you need to get 100 signatures," Landry said. "So, if you're getting these signatures from different people, obviously you have to tell them that you

are running for a position, but somehow that doesn't qualify as campaigning."

There are no clear guidelines written in York's candidate nomination packages regarding digital campaigning. While the rules state that campaigning is restricted to the allotted time period, it limits its discussion to posterage while ignoring newer technologies such as Facebook.

**"The CRO cannot babysit campaigning fully. But should act as someone to clarify and organize the rules and to make sure everyone is on the same page."**

**ERICA HENDRY,  
MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY**

Similar situations have occurred in student elections on other Canadian campuses.

On 30 January, students from Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, were surprised to be invited to join a handful of groups on Facebook. The sites belonged to candidates for the school's upcoming election and the nominees used the tool to encourage members to vote for them. The candidates also invited members of the school's Student Administrative Council (SAC) to join.

Sarah Smith, Chief Returning

Officer for the Mount Allison elections, considered the activities as campaigning outside the legal timeline allowed. After deliberations took place during a Council meeting on 7 February, it was determined that the candidates that were caught would suffer a \$50 decrease in funding, and have their legal campaign period reduced by 24 hours.

"It wasn't so much the use of Facebook so much as it was that the groups were created before the official beginning of campaigning," explained William Wolfe-Wylie, Editor-in-Chief of the *Argosy*, Mount Allison's student newspaper.

Erica Hendry, the current president of SAC, also pointed out that every nominee was given multiple resources to help them stay within the rules of campaigning.

"The CRO cannot babysit campaigning fully. But should act as someone to clarify and organize the rules and to make sure everyone is on the same page," she said.

Here at the University of Alberta, many candidates intending to run in this year's Students' Union elections created groups on Facebook announcing their political ambitions prior to the nomination deadline on 15 February.

However, SU Chief Returning Officer Rachel Woynorowski wasn't against use of social networking sites. Woynorowski pointed to the positive side of Facebook saying she hoped that it helped candidates recruit volunteers and organize their campaigns.

With files from the *Argosy*

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**FACT:** This year, there have been no human bites reported during *Gateway News* meetings, held Fridays at 3pm in 3-04 SUB

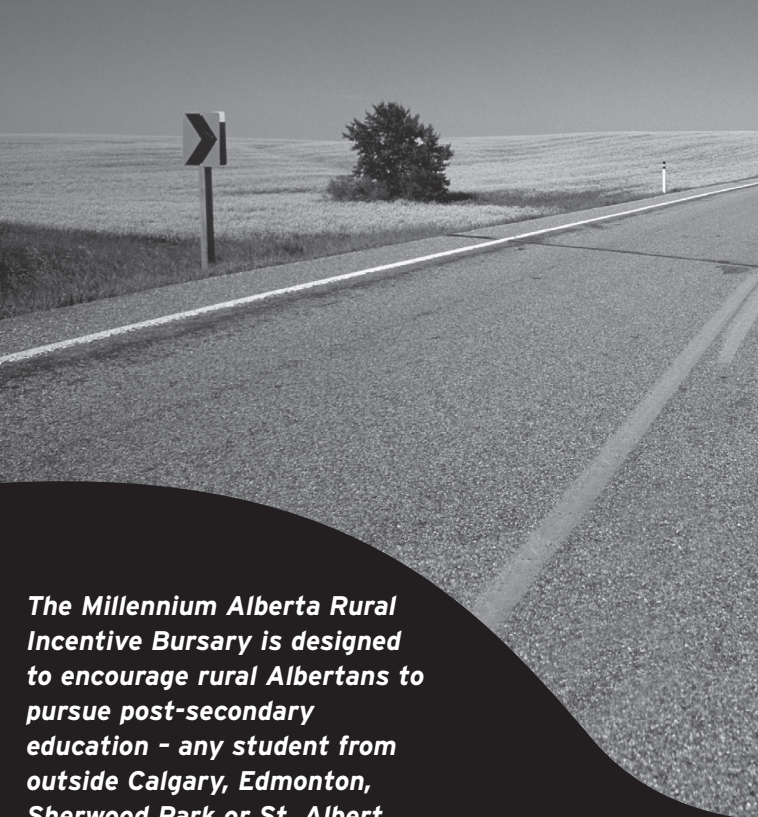
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