

THE GATEWAY

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Nursing grades exposed

SCOTT LILWALL
Deputy News Editor

Some at the University of Alberta are calling for an apology and greater security measures from the Faculty of Nursing after the release of confidential academic information of students enrolled in the after-degree nursing program.

Victor Harding, one student that had his grades sent out over the after-degree program's e-mail list on 16 March, described his reaction when he was first told by a friend of the release.

"At first, I didn't know if I was [among those who had their grades e-mailed out], so I was just kind of like 'Well, that sucks.' When I heard it was me, I was shocked and a little bit angry that it was my information that was leaked out."

"No one from the faculty has contacted me yet to tell me that my confidential information was given out to people who it shouldn't have been."

**VICTOR HARDING,
NURSING STUDENT**

The e-mail, which was mistakenly sent out by an associate coordinator in the faculty to all the first- and second-year students in the program, included a Microsoft Excel file that contained the names and student ID numbers of some senior-year students. Also in the file was information on where the students had requested consideration for clinical placements, grade-point averages and academic standing, including if students were on academic probation. While it's unknown how many people read the information in the e-mail, the message was sent to about 170 students.

Harding said that knowing other students had gotten a hold of his grades wasn't much of a worry for himself, but he was upset that the faculty Administration had made no attempt to let him know what had happened.

"No one from the faculty has contacted me yet to tell me that my confidential information was given out to people who it shouldn't have been," he said. "I think that's a mistake on their part and I think it makes them look very unprofessional."

PLEASE SEE GRADES ♦ PAGE 6



DAN LAZIN

THE LAND OF THE RISING NEON SIGNS U of A graduate Alex Deacon relates his adventures teaching English abroad in Fukuoka, Japan. Feature pages 14-15.

Polar bears could face extinction, scientist warns

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA
Senior News Editor

The Norwegian word for polar bear is *isbjørn*, or "ice bear," but, due to climate change, that name might not remain entirely reflective of their environment.

University of Alberta biologist Dr Andrew Derocher explained that changes in patterns of sea-ice breakup have raised concerns that the bears' futures may be in danger.

"It doesn't take one very long to recognize that if you take away the habitat of any species, particularly highly specialized species like polar bears, you eventually see them drop out of the ecosystem," he warned.

Derocher has studied polar bears for almost a quarter century and is currently involved in researching their populations in three areas: the southern Beaufort Sea, Wager Bay and western Hudson Bay.

"One of the long-term goals [of the projects] is to basically try to come up with an understanding of movement patterns, habitat use, amount of time that the bears are spending on the sea ice in different areas, and we're going to try to relate that back into long-term variation in climate," he said.

As Polar Bear Specialist Group chairman for the World Conservation Union, Derocher explained that a US

proposal to list polar bears in Alaska as a threatened species is "actually a global petition." However, the decision on listing polar bears, which is due next January from the Alaska's Fish and Wildlife Service, has become a contentious issue.

"[If] the US Administration decided that the linkage was climate change and sea-ice loss, then the concern would be that all industrial activity that would impinge on greenhouse gases might be affected," he said, adding that the petition doesn't come in any way out of opposition to the current practice of quota sport hunting.

"What's really driven a lot of the conservation concern for polar bears is the actual disappearance of their habitat," he said.

Derocher said that researchers are already seeing some of the more subtle effects of habitat changes in three different polar bear populations. These include declines in the survival of offspring and a decrease in the overall condition of bears. He also further disputed claims that polar bears could adapt to live on land.

"Somewhere between 200 000 and 400 000 years ago, [polar bears] split off from the brown bear or grizzly bear ancestor—they moved rapidly to change colour, shape, anatomy, physiology to deal with becoming a specialized predator on seals," he said,



SUPPLIED: DR ANDREW DEROCHER

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME Derocher has spent decades studying polar bears.

adding that while they are capable of eating other things, the reason they can make a living in the Arctic is tied to the fact that they are able to exploit the blubber of seals.

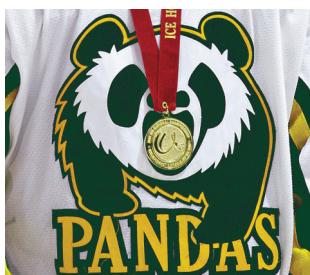
"Without access to [blubber], it's highly unlikely that they're going to find an alternate means of surviving. If this was a [climate] change over tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years, I'd say all bets are off," he said. "[But] the problem is we're talking about extremely rapid change

in the Arctic in the order of decades to centuries, and that is not an evolutionary time frame that's meaningful for a species that has a very long reproductive interval and very slow rates of population growth.

"If people can't draw the lines between the sea ice disappearing and the polar bears disappearing then ... I would say they don't understand how polar bears make a living and nor do they understand the basic principles of conservation biology," he said.

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Guarding the crease

Thanks to their goaltender, the Pandas hockey squad will be taking over RATT for the rest of the month.

SPORTS, PAGE 16



C'mon, we can take it

We're not perfect, and we need your help to get better. Fill out our survey for the chance to win fabulous prizes.

READER SURVEY, PAGE 26