

THE GATEWAY

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PETEYEE

GOLDEN ON THE GRIDIRON The University of Alberta Golden Bears shone against the Simon Fraser University Clan in a 45-10 victory this past Saturday at Foote Field. For full coverage see page 11.

Graduate degrees on the rise

As an increasing number of students pursue master's and PhD degrees, University of Alberta grad students feel their programs are under funded

JASKARAN SINGH
News Staff

The growing number of bachelor's and master's degrees being awarded in Canada suggests to some researchers that there seems to be more incentive for students today to take the academic route.

According to Statistics Canada, the number of postsecondary credentials has been consistently increasing for the past six years. One of the most significant leaps was in 2004, when universities across Canada handed out 209 100 degrees, diplomas, and certificates.

Julie Charchun, President of the University of Alberta Graduate Student Association (GSA), explained that "graduate school is often misconceived as just further classes, but graduate school is a much wider and broader experience than that. It is an opportunity for individuals to pursue a specific area of research, to develop those research skills as academics.

"Another common misconception is that graduate students have a regular schedule, when really it's all year round," she said.

Matthew Robertson, Vice-President (Communications) of the GSA, added that "a lot of people think that those who have a degree and are in programs like medicine and law are graduate students. But really the only people who are graduate students are those doing their master's or a PhD."

"The capacity to earn [money] is limited. Sometimes you'll find graduate students working two or three jobs outside of their lab."

MATTHEW ROBERTSON
GSA VP (COMMUNICATIONS)

According to Robertson, a major drawback of the U of A's graduate program is the lack of sustainable funding for students. This means that a graduate isn't necessarily guaranteed a minimum amount of funding.

"For graduate students, funding is really the issue. A lot of grad

students are offered TA-ships and RA-ships and stuff like that, but their supervisor will cover that," Robertson explained. "But the capacity to earn [money] is limited. Sometimes you'll find graduate students working two or three jobs outside of their lab."

While scholarships and bursaries are available, the money is unevenly distributed, and the available grants may not cover basic living costs. This is a fact that Associate Dean of Graduate Studies Jerry Varsava openly acknowledges. According to Varsava, departments tend to offer research grants or fellowships for graduate students at a base rate of \$13 000 to \$15 000. He also agrees that while this is a vast improvement over a complete lack of funding, it isn't sufficient for addressing living costs.

"Once one takes into consideration tuition and the increased cost of living in Edmonton, it isn't a great deal. Some programs are able to provide funding on a twelve-month basis. That is extremely uncommon in the social sciences and humanities," Varsava said.

PLEASE SEE FUNDING • PAGE 2

U of A researchers warn of stem-cell clinic claims

KEVIN CHARLTON
News Writer

The medical world has been abuzz recently over talks of stem-cell therapy being a supposed miracle procedure, with the ability to treat many ailments that have yet to be treated by other medicine or therapy.

However, this supposed fountain of youth has been placed under scrutiny by a study done at the University of Alberta by Dr Tim Caulfield, professor of law and public health sciences.

Ubaka Ogbogu, a researcher at the Health Law Institute of the University of Alberta who's been working on the project with Caulfield, said that "if you study the literature and talk to scientists, you get the sense that the stem-cell technology is not ready for prime time."

Ogbogu explained that certain companies are already offering stem-cell based therapies to patients, but stressed that their apparently positive results are overshadowing the risks involved.

"When these companies tend to underemphasize the risks associated with the therapies they offer, it makes

you wonder about the types of credibility and if what they are doing is a productive choice for the science in general."

If the case reports found on the sites can be considered credible, then it's good news for people with degenerative or untreatable diseases. Before these treatments are offered to the general public, however, there must be proper clinical trials done to prove that the therapies are safe to be used on patients.

"Often times, you have a headline that discusses stem[-cell research] being used for benefit in a clinical study somewhere," explained Darren Lau, a PhD candidate from the Department of Health Sciences. According to Lau, there have only been small clinical trials so far.

"It's the big ones that truly count: the large, randomized, approved, controlled trials. Some of them are in the works now, but the results haven't come out yet," Lau said. "This is really the gold standard for evidence-based medicine and the basis upon the regulatory framework where they decide which therapies are safe for public consumption."

PLEASE SEE STEM-CELLS • PAGE 4

Inside

News	1-4
News Feature	5-6
Opinion	7-10
Sports	11-14
A&E	15-18
Comics	19
Classifieds	20



Talkin' 'bout regeneration

It's time for another municipal election, and issues such as affordable housing and transit are the topics *du jour* for Ward 4 candidates.

NEWS FEATURE, PAGE 5-6

