

# THE GATEWAY

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## New SU policy battles for textbook bargains



RYAN HEISE  
Deputy News Editor

Students' Council unanimously passed the first reading of a political policy advocating for lower-cost academic materials at their Council meeting on 18 September.

The policy, which was introduced by Students' Union Vice-President (Academic) Bobby Samuel and Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics councillor Jacqueline Geller, is comprised of three main goals: pressuring publishers to lower the costs of academic materials, educating professors as to the price of academic materials and alternatives available to them, and advocating for academic materials to be standardized across the University.

"From 2004 to 2005, textbook costs [per student per year] were around \$1050. In 2006/07, textbook costs were \$1200 for Arts and Sciences undergraduates," Samuel stated. "So obviously they represent a significant chunk of how much an undergraduate spends in a given year.

"The long-term goal is to reduce the cost of academic materials," he added.

Much of the policy is derived from *Rip Off 101*,—a 2005 report from California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) that shows how publishers artificially drive up the price of textbooks for students at colleges and universities.

ACADEMIC ADVOCACY The Students' Union and the U of A Bookstore are setting out to pressure textbook publishers to reduce the costs of academic materials.

PLEASE SEE MATERIALS • PAGE 2

## Doctors tuning in to new technology

### U of A professor introduces idea of replacing stethoscopes with MP3 players

RYAN HEISE  
Deputy News Editor

Dr Neil Skjodt thinks he might have the answer to replacing the centuries-old stethoscope. But rather than designing a new instrument, he's looking to consumer technology that is a staple in many university students' lives—MP3 players.

Skjodt, an associate professor of pulmonary medicine, along with audiology professor William Hodgetts, has been experimenting in using off-the-shelf MP3 players to record and play back clinical sounds of patients, a practice he says is a huge step up from traditional stethoscopes.

"The stethoscope has all that hose between here and there," Skjodt said, gesturing from his chest to his ear. "That's inefficient. If I wanted to transmit sound well, I'm not going to transmit it through a hose. [With the MP3 player] it's a few millimetres before the sound hits the recording electronics; there's a lot less noise loss."

According to Skjodt, the concept couldn't be simpler: a physician

simply places the microphone of the player on the area of interest on their patient and pushes "record." The sample can then be played back instantaneously.

**"Its footprint was the right size, [...] it's much more portable than a stethoscope, and the cost is quite cheap. Right now they're going for \$40 dollars US on the Internet."**

DR NEIL SKJODT  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
PULMONARY MEDICINE

The idea to use an MP3 player with a built-in microphone stemmed from the desire to have a way to easily transmit clinical sounds over cellular networks from remote locations. Skjodt said the ability to easily do this could mean the

difference between life and death.

"Canada is a vast place. So in your nightmare situation, you're a nurse practitioner, and you deliver a baby in the Northwest Territories. That baby has a heart murmur, and you have to make a big decision of what to do on the spot. You also might not have access to more technologies like a chest X-ray machine in a given centre. So, we're very interested in how to transmit things over cellular networks."

After experimenting with various microphones and cellphones with amplifiers, Skjodt opted for a cheap MP3 player with a built-in microphone. He chose a device with open-source firmware so that it can easily be tweaked and upgraded to achieve the best possible recordings, and stressed that the price of these devices makes them a very attractive alternative to stethoscopes.

"Its footprint was the right size, [...] it's much more portable than a stethoscope, and the cost is quite cheap. Right now they're going for \$40 dollars US on the Internet," he said.

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KRYSTINA SULATYCKI

LAW FACULTY COURTS NEW IDEAS The U of A is set to establish a chair in energy law and policy after receiving a hefty donation. See story page 3.

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## Let's jump off bridges ...

Paul Knoechel explores the lighter side of peer pressure. You should read it because everybody else is.

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## ... without clothes on

Mischief and Mayhem theatre present *Ubu Roi*, a burlesque version of *Macbeth*. At a skate park.

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