



**THE SKY'S THE LIMIT** Dean of Law David Percy says the faculty's new chair position will offer endless possibilities.

## \$1.5 million donation to help fund new Energy Law chair

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Senior News Editor

After close to three years of working out the details, the faculty of Law is poised to establish a new chair position in energy law and policy.

On Tuesday, a \$1.5 million donation from Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG), a national firm with over 700 employees in offices across Canada, was announced. The donation will be matched by the U of A using funding from the Government of Alberta's Access to the Future endowment, with the combined sum of \$3 million providing for the energy specialist chair in perpetuity.

"By law firm standards, this is an enormous gift; it's certainly the biggest I know to support a teaching position in western Canada," said David Percy, dean of the faculty of Law. He explained that the position will allow the faculty to offer an extended range of courses in the energy law field, in addition to helping improve the staff-to-student ratio.

Percy said that with the funding confirmed, attention is now being focused

on recruiting internationally for the new position.

"The first thing we have to do is to cast our net very widely, and I think we will be looking for an individual with an academic background, but I also think we have to be flexible and realize that there are people, particularly in legal practice, who've developed a great deal of expertise in this field as well," he said.

"Although we'd like to appoint someone in 2008, it may take as long as 2009 to find the right candidate," Percy said. He stressed that given the time and effort that went into procuring the donation, the faculty will be sure to make "exactly the right choice" when hiring the new chair.

Students' Union Law Councillor Ian Stedman explained that BLG sponsors a fellowship every year, but that this year, students were told there would be a surprise announcement. Stedman added that the chair was an important step towards addressing the workplace realities of many U of A Law alumni.

"Lots of the graduates here end up in Calgary doing energy work, so it's going to be great [...] for the students

that are coming to U of A," Stedman said. "There will be a lot more opportunity to learn about the energy [sector] and all the issues affecting Canada with respect to the energy sector."

According to Percy, energy law and policy is inextricably linked with where Alberta is going to be going in the future, and that this chair is a pioneering effort by the faculty.

"There aren't any law-school-specific chairs that I'm aware of anywhere else in Canada in the field of energy law," he noted. "It's a very exciting development for the law school, [but] I also think it's a very important development for the province."

Percy said that these days energy law and policy feature prominently on the public agenda, specifically in regards to issues concerning royalty reviews and climate change, stressing that "there is little room for a calm, objective viewpoint."

"You tend to get invested interests pursuing their own agendas, and you don't often get commentary on these vital issues of public policy from an objective standpoint," he said. "That's what I think the University can bring."

## Devices hailed as a cheap alternative

MP3 • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Skjodt added that low-end stethoscopes that don't work well cost around \$30, while decent analog models are in the \$200 range and newer digital ones can cost upwards of \$500.

He added that his initial results have been quite promising, and that the recordings are significantly clearer and have less noise than the sounds transmitted through a stethoscope.

However, Skjodt says that the uses for this technology go much further than supplanting an age-old medical instrument. For example, with an MP3 player, physicians would be able to carry around hours of medical transcriptions or podcasts, as well as a collection of clinical sounds to use as a comparison.

"You can actually carry around a library of every type of abnormal clinical sound and have that on your MP3 player with lots of room to spare," he said. "For 40 bucks, you're getting a really intense value compared to the [stethoscope]."

The idea of a digital library of sounds could also be extended to artificial intelligence. As Skjodt puts it, a recording of a clinical sound could be download onto a computer,



**DRM-FREE HEARTBEATS** MP3 players may one day replace stethoscopes.

where a program would compare it to vast collection of recordings and offer a diagnosis.

Skjodt said that the idea of replacing stethoscopes with MP3 players universally is likely still a ways off, though he's confident that digital recorders will one day be commonplace in the hands of a physician.

"Why use a device [whose] technical

prowess is two centuries old?" he asked. "The original stethoscope was not invented for its acoustic value—it was invented for hygiene. All the stethoscope is supposed to do is put some distance between the physician and the patient."

"Millions of people use MP3 players everyday; it's a frighteningly easy technology."

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