

THE GATEWAY

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RUTH MCGAFFIGAN

LEAFING THROUGH YOUR BOOKS Fall colours have appeared on campus in full force. That can only mean one thing: midterms are just around the corner.

By-election fills seats

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA
Senior News Editor

A record number of students voted in last week's Students' Council and General Faculties Council by-elections—621, to be exact.

Craig Turner, chief returning officer for the Students' Union acknowledged that 2.5 per cent of eligible voters may not sound impressive, but he explained that he was happy with the number of ballots cast as it has never been that high.

"I was impressed with the turnout," Turner said. "I wish that we would have 100 per cent turn out, but I realize that that's not realistic, and I just hope that every year we can continue to increase voter turnout."

However, the election wasn't without its hiccups. Turner said a technical glitch required him to run through all the ballots again, but he's confident that the problem won't reoccur during the main spring elections.

"Everything's been ironed out," he said. "I can assure people that I will be doing a review into our ballot counting procedures."

Please see www.thegatewayonline.ca for official election results.

Top honour goes to nanotech researcher

JONATHAN TAVES
News Writer

He's a giant in a tiny world, but he doesn't like to admit it.

Humble, sociable, and witty, Michael Brett isn't necessarily the epitome of what comes to mind when thinking of a University Cup-winning engineering professor. But with numerous teaching awards already lining his office wall, receiving University of Alberta's highest honour for excellence in teaching and research isn't only well deserved—it seems to have been an inevitability.

Brett's university career has taken him across the country: he began at Queen's University before pursuing graduate studies in applied physics at the University of British Columbia, and from there, his interest focused on nanotechnology.

"It's a discipline that crosses many boundaries," he explains. "It goes into chemistry, physics, engineering, and medicine."

Brett was essential to the creation of the Micromachining and Nanofabrication Facility within the U of A's Faculty of Engineering. Now recognized as a leading facility in

North America, Brett credits his success with NanoFab to his timing.

"I don't know that there was a conscious decision to spearhead [NanoFab]. It was more like there I was and there was the opportunity. I think anyone in my situation would have taken advantage of it."

Since NanoFab's beginning in 1999, one of Brett's duties has been to find funding to satisfy the facility's \$1.3-million annual operating budget.

"Various levels of government and industry have put a lot of funding into my research program," he explains, adding that before his career is done, he hopes to return that investment.

"I would like to see some payback to the government and to the economy through creation of a high-tech start-up licensing of some of the work. We're trying hard to make that happen now because we're focusing more on the application [of the research]."

Instruction is also large part of the University Cup award, and Brett is no stranger to the classroom.

"Good students are enjoyable at all levels. I have a lot of interaction with the undergrad engineering physics students. They're great students, and

they have a lot of curiosity and a lot of interest in the work that I do."

However, undergrad interest in Brett's classes isn't always present.

"I had at least one person sleeping in the last class," he laughs.

Brett credits much of his project's success with the work of students.

"They are excellent. They do the research so I can take credit for it," Brett says with a wink. But those that work with him appreciate his positive, encouraging mood.

"Mike is as friendly of a boss as you can imagine," says Jason Sorge, a graduate student who has worked in the NanoFab facility since April 2004. He adds that the progress of the lab is a symptom of the easy-going, accessible relationship Brett maintains.

"There is lots of opportunity provided here," Sorge continues. "No one feels intimidated asking for help. There is a real sense of camaraderie."

However, there was no big celebration at NanoFab for the University Cup.

"I'm sure Mike is really proud of the award. Yet, at the same time, doesn't want everyone to make a big deal out of it," Sorge says.

The recognition is yet another honour for Brett, but he continues to



KYLER ZELENY

BIG VICTORY FOR SMALL-SCALE PROF University Cup winner Michael Brett shows off the prize he received for his research in nanotechnology.

look to the future and all the potential that lies ahead.

"Something might happen tomorrow that will be a complete surprise and lead to an opportunity for development," he says, adding that the life of a senior research officer at one

of the nation's leading nanotechnology centres isn't all micro fibres and thin-films.

"You have to have balance in your life. I'm a great proponent of that," Brett says with a smile. "I'm off to hike in Jasper this weekend."

Inside

News	1-5
Opinion	6-9
Feature	10-11
A&E	13-17
Sports	18-21
Classifieds	22
Comics	23



Campus ride-along

No affiliated ne'er-do-wells had to be escorted off campus during the making of this feature.

FEATURE, PAGES 10-11



Canadian sing-along

The Weakerthans are back with another album filled with quintessential Canadiana.

A&E, PAGE 13

Turkeycide!

The Gateway won't be around on Tuesday, as we'll be recovering from massive doses of tryptophan and pumpkin pie. But fear not, as we'll return with an issue on Thursday, 11 October.