

Report card shows we've got far to go

THE *GLOBE AND MAIL* RELEASED THEIR 2007 University Report Card Tuesday, ranking dozens of postsecondary institutions across the country based on student polls. If you can get past the fact that the whole glossy pullout is just a University of Western Ontario love-in, you'll discover that the University of Alberta has fared roughly the same as they always do—average.

But as a recent graduate of the U of A, I felt compelled to look deeper at the somewhat arbitrary rankings—which are simply letter grades with no justification—and try to add some insight into where our school has been positioned.

We received a B+ in each of “Quality of Education” and “Quality of Teaching.” Not only do these categories seem fairly synonymous and equally ambiguous, giving them a letter grade is difficult to do. I've personally had professors that have spanned from F to A+; giving an average is overlooking the fact that your school probably has some awful instructors along with some brilliant ones—but you're only as strong as your weakest link.

“Libraries” was given an A-, and, while I think this is an acceptable mark, I would advocate that it should be even higher. The collections that the University holds—both on and off campus—is nothing short of vast. The sad thing is that the ease of use that the Internet provides as a research tool has made libraries go underused when it comes to undergraduate research.

“Buildings and Facilities,” on the other hand, only received a B, which, I have to admit, is appropriate. While we have newer buildings with all the bells and whistles, there are still structures on campus plagued with asbestos insulation. It's a problem the University is addressing, but deferred maintenance is definitely starting to add up. B- is probably more accurate.

“Ease of Course Registration” was given a B as well, which I can only assume stands for “Bobby Samuel tried to make this grade significantly lower.”

Another puzzling grade is the B+ in “Recreation and Athletics.” With consistently good showings at the national level from men's and women's volleyball, men's and women's hockey, and women's basketball, along with fantastic facilities between the Van Vliet Centre and the Saville Sports Centre, there's no reason why the U shouldn't have been in the A range.

On to the student life portion of the survey, where the *Globe* graciously gave us a C+ for “Campus Pubs and Bars.” Somebody must really love the sweet potato fries at Dewey's. Coming from someone who has been on campus for the majority of the Powerplant's most recent fall from grace, this hands-down needs to be a D. While not technically on campus, the only real saving grace is how close we are to Whyte Avenue.

They hit the nail on the head for “Food Services” and “Student Residences,” both garnering a C-. With only 4000 residence beds and mediocre-at-best Aramark meals offered to Listerites, these were probably the most accurate grades given out by the *Globe*. It's probably sounding like a lot of rhetoric at this point, but affordable student housing remains the most important issue affecting students at the U of A.

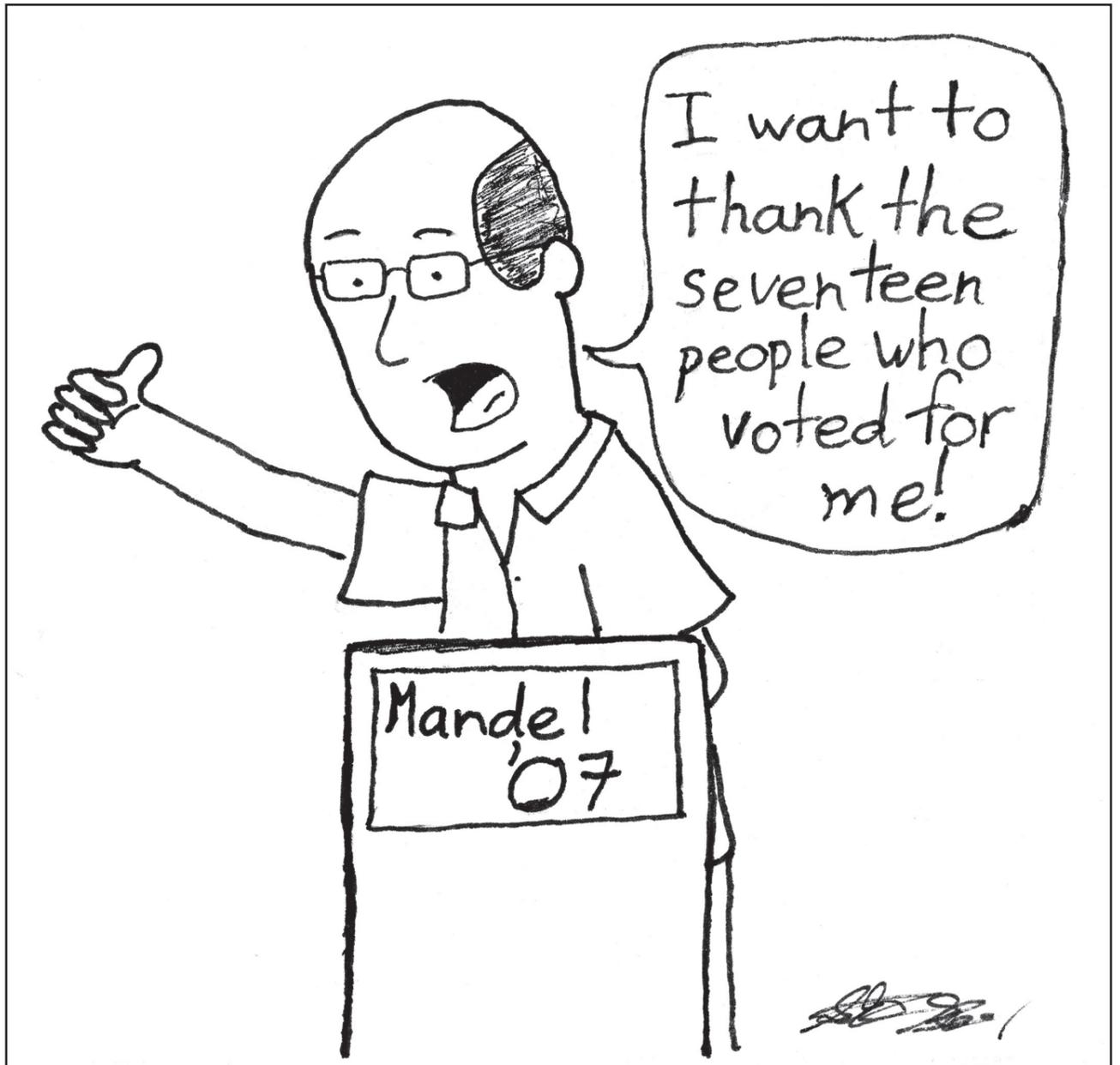
The other categories, ranging from “Course Variety and Availability” to “Student-Faculty Interaction,” were fairly innocuous, but seemed spot-on.

But while the rankings magazine is an interesting read to see how other schools across Canada are stacking up, the marks still remain fairly ambiguous. With averages given where averages skew the truth, the *Globe*'s survey demonstrates why so many schools—the U of A included—protested *MacLean*'s infamous rankings in the first place.

Still, they should make continuing students, as well as faculty, staff, and administration, re-evaluate the priorities of the University. Changes need to be made; they don't need to be in line with the rankings, but creating a positive atmosphere for students to excel in—and not the budget's bottom line—should be the number-one goal of the University and its administration.

You're never going to be able to please every student on a campus our size, but if you're averaging a B- or lower in any of the categories that the *Globe* presents, methinks it's time to rethink your approach.

RYAN HEISE
Deputy News Editor



STEVEN SMITH

LETTERS

Comic is factually false— Oh the humanity!

Though the quality standards of the comic submissions in the *Gateway* certainly don't reinvigorate anyone's libido, I just thought I'd point out that Spencer Morrison's comic (re: *Dinorex*, 11 October) seems to be completely ignorant of the glorious history of zeppelins.

Since the vast majority of zeppelins throughout the past century used helium much like an inflatable balloon, his comic makes no sense in the way he contrasts the two. Granted, there were zeppelins that did, in fact, use hydrogen, but the positives you get by using hydrogen—that is, being lighter than air—are far outweighed by the very likely chance of blowing the fuck up. Not exactly convenient at 5000m.

In fact, as Spencer would have been aware had he done just a little bit of research before sitting down with a piece of paper and a pencil, just such a thing happened in May of 1937, when the Hindenburg exploded in front of a group of thousands of very surprised people, killing 37 of the 97 passengers on board (and a guy on the ground, if you want to get technical).

So perhaps Spencer should try explaining to the families of the victims of the 1937 incident, then, how it is that he came to the conclusion that hydrogen is, in fact, a better balloon filler than helium. Unless, I suppose, he has a thing against 1937 Nazis.

MICHAEL TANDARA
Business III

Pickle Frenzy, we hardly knew ye

It was to my great dismay that I had to see Mike Kendrick exploit my roommate Jake Troughton's great comic genius (pun well-intended) for his personal gain (re: *Pickle Frenzy*, 16 October).

Mr Troughton may not be the originator of the joke template used, but I just so happened to bear witness to his relentless proliferation of said template to Mr Kendrick about two weeks ago, at one of the illustrious University of Alberta POGOB (Playing of Games on Boards) Society meetings.

So, please do me a favour and acknowledge the man who works so hard at trying to best me at sexual innuendo, yet never will. After all, you quoted him practically verbatim.

I mean, seriously, verbatim? You hardly knew 'im!

CATRIN BERGHOFF
Arts Alumna

Privatized health care doesn't cover apples

Amanda Termeer demonstrated a stunning lack of basic logic in her “analysis” of the problems we face with our semi-socialized healthcare system in her article “An apple a day won't save you from the shortcomings of socialist health care” in the 16 October issue of the *Gateway*.

If A, B and C lacking public coverage is a problem, it seems to me an exceptionally illogical (perhaps even mentally deficient) conclusion that removing

coverage from everything would solve the problem.

How, if the lack of coverage currently results in those unable to pay lacking access to necessary treatments, will removing the funding, and thus their access to even more treatments, improve the situation? Termeer speaks of Canada demonstrating a national lobotomy, but I find “making things worse, it'll make things better” demonstrates a far greater “lack of brains.”

Termeer claims the system is a colossal waste of money, and yet our healthcare system delivers better results for less money than the American system Termeer seems so enamoured with. The same system which leaves millions of Americans without access to basic health services, and in which half of all bankruptcies are due to private medical bills (and three quarters of those who declared bankruptcy due to medical expenses had private insurance when first struck by illness). The world over, tax-funded public healthcare resoundingly correlates with more efficient, effective and equitable healthcare.

Even within our system, the sectors of the health industry that are covered by public medicare have shown stable costs, while those not funded (like prescriptions) are the cause of skyrocketing health care costs.

How anybody can propose trashing the effective components of our healthcare system to resemble the unsustainable components as a means of fixing anything but private profits is beyond me. The obvious solution that would

actually serve Canadians is more coverage by public medicare.

ADAM FERLAND
Science V

People can't live off of eating fancy ribbons

Kudos to everyone involved with the Make Poverty History campaign, specifically those who were wrapping plastic streamers around the trees on campus earlier this week.

Although it's certain that every banner that was put up will become garbage that will be, most likely, strewn across Quad, it's at least arguable that wrapping trees in plastic in no way improves conditions for the global poor.

While I support the premise, perhaps the time and money that went into producing and putting up these ambiguous white strips could have been more effectively spent.

DOUGLAS STONE
Civil Engineering II

Letters to the editor should be sent to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca (no attachments, please).

The *Gateway* reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous or otherwise hateful in nature. The *Gateway* also reserves the right to publish letters online.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student ID number to be considered for publication. If you have a problem with any of these terms, feel free to write us a letter.