

I'm a failure with a fancy degree



CONAL
PIERSE

"Now, after several years of rolling my eyes at friends who chose to pursue a trade over further education, I have found that it was me who, for the most part, wasted my time. While they earned money and learned a skill, I sat at a desk poring over a book for little benefit and even less respect."

Over the semester break, I did something that I have dreaded doing since I first came to the University—I applied for graduation. Now, barring an unforeseen epic failure on my part, and whether I like it or not, at the end of this term I will walk out of here a graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree—and that fucking terrifies me.

I've never really known quite what to do with my life, so when I graduated from high school, University was just the thing I had to do to put off growing up for a few more years. I figured that within the walls of this institution, I'd somehow "find" myself and discover that elusive calling, but all I've managed to do is become more bitter and jaded—and likely dramatically decrease my life expectancy through caffeine and alcohol abuse.

I chose Science over Arts because I had been raised to believe that an arts degree was a waste of time—a useless scrap of paper that wouldn't get me anywhere other than being the burger flipper at McDonalds who also happened to have an appreciation of Chaucer. But I've since come to the unfortunate discovery that my degree ultimately leads to the same

place—only now, I have an appreciation for the many bacteria crawling around beside said grill.

I quickly discovered in my first year that university life was nothing like I had been told it would be. My classes weren't about the pursuit of knowledge, but rather the grind for grades. The majority of my classmates were med hopefuls, each youthful face a future doctor—many of whom would step on your throat to get where they wanted to be—and I quickly came to realize that it didn't matter if you could recall the citric acid cycle verbatim months later, but only that you knew it at the time of the exam. You cram as much shit as possible into your brain, and then once the course was finished, you squeeze it all out like a wet sponge and started all over again. So now, despite being university-educated, I truthfully only have as much knowledge as my last batch of courses contained—save for random scraps of knowledge like why everybody has nipples and the effects of LSD on the brain.

And so it has gone for my post-secondary career, barely scraping by on the promise of better things out the other side only to find that a degree

gets me nowhere. And now that my nails are all cracked and worn down, I've got to go scrape out a living in the real world, no longer able to hide behind the label of "student." Sure I could always go into graduate studies, but you can only hide your true motivation from yourself for so long.

Now, after several years of rolling my eyes at friends who chose to pursue a trade over further education, I have found that it was me who, for the most part, wasted my time. While they earned money and learned a skill, I sat at a desk poring over a book for little benefit and even less respect.

This isn't to say that I regret going to university—I had some great memories here and have managed to fulfill one of the unfortunate stereotypes of my Irish heritage. I do, however, regret that I was so naïve about what I would my degree would do for me and that I didn't have the guts to pursue the field of arts instead of lying to myself and sleeping through biochemistry. But who knows? Maybe, when I get that slip of paper, if I click my heels twice, everything will magically change, and I'll finally become a productive member of society based on my meager knowledge of genetics.

Golf is a good piece of real estate wasted



BRIAN
GOULD

full-size golf courses near downtown. As private courses, the Royal Mayfair and Highlands aren't exactly public spaces, and with the cost of clubs and fees, public courses like Victoria and Riverside aren't much better. By keeping out the vast majority of Edmontonians, golf courses aren't just a vegetative monoculture—they're a human one as well.

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Environmentally damaging and artificial, golf just isn't a good match for the natural river valley. Worse yet, courses are a horrible waste of land for the heart of the city, and force true public spaces out (or in the case of Louise McKinney Park, perched up uselessly on a steep hill). The mismatch in density with the busy downtown core is staggering, as even with a foursome on each hole, each golfer has nearly two acres to himself. Sprawling Mill Woods looks incredibly dense by comparison—36 times more dense, if you want to get technical.

Admittedly, the Mayfair did recently host a major event. This year's LPGA tour stop attracted 65 000 in one week; however, crowds of this magnitude are incredibly rare and are no more diverse than what's seen the rest of the year. Yes, these courses are regularly enjoyed by thousands of people, but last time I checked, there were more people in the city than just a few thousand.

Hawrelak, on the other hand, annually hosts 350 000 people for the three-day Heritage Festival alone—in two-thirds the space, no less—along with various other music, arts, and sports festivals. Ten years of triathlons have called Hawrelak home. And though Bright Nights could only be considered a festival in Edmonton, that's held there too, along with countless other events that serve to bring the community together. So while Mayfair may have history, Hawrelak has character and heart.

Yes, I'm sure that the views from these courses are very pretty, but other uses could improve the view and open it to more people at all hours in all seasons. Mayfair would make a spectacular extension of Hawrelak Park, parts of Victoria would be great for development with a funicular to Jasper Avenue, and Kinsmen Pitch and Putt provides a phenomenal opportunity to extend Garneau. I'm not saying that we should convert all of these immediately or all at once, but in the future, we're going to need to start thinking that way.

By this point, I'm sure all the golfers are saying that I'm just anti-golf—this isn't completely unfair, as working early mornings raking sand traps tends to do that to you. However, I do go mini-golfing reasonably often; I've also golfed Kinsmen Pitch and Putt and have enjoyed them both. I'm also sure that the full game wouldn't be that bad to play either. Conversely, though I can't stand watching baseball, I'm not saying we should get rid of Telus Field. That's because this isn't about the game, but rather its impact on a city. I'm sure horseback polo, skeet shooting, and fox hunting are great if you're into that kind of thing, but none of those things belong in the river valley.

With growing environmental consciousness and acceptance of redevelopment in Edmonton, it's time to take a serious look at our river valley and make sure we're making the best use of it. I'm not advocating that we completely give up on the concept of the river valley as a recreational area; however, it's time to reassess what that means, and it certainly shouldn't mean more golf courses.

Event and activity parks are critical to vibrant cities (picture New York without Central Park), yet Edmonton only really has Hawrelak Park, and the majority of suitable land for such parks is currently going to waste. "Recreation" in Edmonton seems to include freeway-style interchanges and roads along the riverbank, eyesores only topped by the "historic" Epcor plant in Rosedale. This city needs its own version of Vancouver's Granville Island or Winnipeg's the Forks, and Rosedale is the ideal site (barring the odd flood, of course).

Development is understandably sparse as a matter of city policy. Stopping new development makes sense, but leaving the existing developed area as empty lots, houses, and overbuilt roads doesn't, since the land isn't going to magically turn back into pristine river valley. Well designed densification would be an improvement, and the City could trade building permits for parkland.

The worst offenders are the four

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