

\$500 million needed to reduce injuries—U of A researcher

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News Staff

Injuries caused the death of over 1500 Albertans last year, and now a University of Alberta researcher is advocating for the creation of an endowment to drastically reduce that number.

Dr Louis Francescutti, who also works as an emergency physician at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, began his campaign to make Alberta safer after seeing first-hand the suffering caused by preventable injuries.

"If you look at the 35 000 students we have at the University, the leading cause of death for them is injury, exceeding all other diseases combined," Francescutti said. "Car crashes, drowning, suicide, assault, rape, those are all known as injuries. We have a tendency of referring to these things as accidents. If you keep referring to these things as accidents, you develop this notion that there's not much you can do about it."

Francescutti has made it his mission to convince the public these tragedies aren't accidents, and he believes a provincial fund would go a long way in improving the epidemic.

"We should be the ones to set the example for the rest of the world to follow," he argued. "If we were to put \$500 million in an endowment, that

would generate about \$50-\$60 million a year that we could use to start tackling the problem."

Francescutti believes that aside from extending lives and improving safety, a successful allocation of the endowment would have economic payoffs for the province as well.

"If we could reduce unintentional injuries by 50 per cent, we would free up enough money to pay for the tuition of every post-secondary student in Alberta for three years [of their degree]," he said.

Reduced pressure on the health-care system, he said, "would free up an enormous amount of resources [...] that we could put towards global warming initiatives, figuring how to make the tarsands more environmentally friendly, solving housing issues. It's a ripple effect."

The fund, which would be guided by an international panel of experts, would target areas of risk with public awareness of injury campaigns, better traffic surveillance systems, recreational and occupational injury, and suicide and violence prevention programs, among other strategies, Francescutti explained.

"You've got to bring many disciplines together to try innovative things," he said.

Francescutti credits petroleum companies for identifying injury as



HEADS UP Dr Francescutti wants funding put towards raising public awareness of common injury-causing activities.

a major issue and using considerable resources to make the industry safer in recent years. But, he noted, poor safety practices in the most statistically dangerous workplaces—agriculture, forestry, mining, and construction—cause hundreds of injuries a year.

The Workers' Compensation Board reported a significant increase in occupational fatalities over the last year. 154 people were killed on the job in 2007, compared to 124 in 2006.

But Francescutti said the deaths

are only a symptom of a much larger problem: a poor conception of injury in the province.

"If it bleeds, it leads," he said. "If every day on the newspaper's front page it's fires, poisonings, or a building blows up, or some dog mauls a kid, somebody drowns, we think, 'That's life.' Well, it's not life. The first hurdle is you've got to convince people that's not normal."

Popular trends such as cell phone use while driving have convinced

Francescutti that younger Albertans aren't aware of the consequences of injury.

"What's really sad is that these people are previously perfectly healthy, and then they're either perfectly dead or permanently disabled. Cancer, diabetes, heart disease take time to manifest themselves," he said. "This is the last public health epidemic that's before us, and this one is solvable."

"To do nothing would be negligence on a criminal level."

luncheon roundtable
with President Samarasekera

Dr Samarasekera invites students to join her for lunch and a roundtable discussion on topics of interest to you.

tuesday, february 26, 2008 | 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm
papaschase room | faculty club | 11435 saskatchewan drive

To register, please call Sheila at 492.1525 before Friday, February 22.
Please note that space is limited and attendance is on a first-come, first-served basis.

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION AWARDS

UNDERGRADUATES

Nominate your favourite TA or graduate student instructor for the Graduate Student Teaching Award

GRADUATE STUDENTS

be sure to check out all available awards

Forms available online at www.GSA.Ualberta.ca or at the GSA Office, 206N Power Plant
Phone: 492-2175
Email: gsa@ualberta.ca

NOMINATIONS CLOSE
February 20, 2008

GFC COMMITTEES: STUDENTS NEEDED

The terms of office for students serving on **General Faculties Council (GFC)** Standing Committees, Appeal Boards and committees to which GFC elects members will expire on April 30, 2008. Undergraduate and graduate students (as noted) are encouraged to apply now to serve on any of the following committees for terms of office beginning May 1, 2008 and ending April 30, 2009. (Some students currently serving on these committees may be seeking re-election to serve additional terms.)

Committee	Student Vacancies	Meeting Times (monthly)
ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE (APC): GFC's senior committee dealing with academic, financial and planning issues.	ONE undergraduate & ONE graduate	2:00 pm / 2nd & 4th Wednesdays
ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE (ASC): GFC committee dealing with admissions, academic standing, transfer and examination policies and other related issues.	ONE undergraduate	9:00 am / 3rd Thursday
CAMPUS LAW REVIEW COMMITTEE (CLRC): Reviews Code of Student Behaviour, Code of Applicant Behaviour and Residence Community Standards.	TWO students (undergraduate and/or graduate)	9:30 am / last Thursday
COMMITTEE ON THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (CLE): Promotes an optimal learning environment in alignment with guiding documents of the University of Alberta.	ONE undergraduate & ONE graduate	2:00 pm / 1st Wednesday
FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (FDC): Recommends on planning and use of facilities, proposed buildings, and parking and transportation facilities.	ONE undergraduate	1:30 pm / 4th Tuesday
UNDERGRADUATE AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE (UASC): Approves new awards for undergraduate students including selection and eligibility criteria.	TWO undergraduates	2:00 pm / 2nd Tuesday in October, March and June 4th Tuesday in January
UNIVERSITY TEACHING AWARDS COMMITTEE (UTAC): Adjudicates the Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the William Hardy Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the Provost's Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching and the Teaching Unit Award.	TWO undergraduates & ONE graduate	Normally three times a year (October, March and May)
ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE (AAC) / UNIVERSITY APPEAL BOARD (UAB): AAC hears and decides student appeals regarding academic standing. UAB hears and decides student appeals regarding disciplinary decisions of the Discipline Officer and/or Dean as made under the Code of Student Behaviour.	AAC: TWO under-graduates & TWO graduates UAB: FIVE under-graduates & FIVE graduates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will normally participate in 3 to 4 hearings per year. Hearings are scheduled as needed Monday to Thursday; Hearings normally start at 4:30 or 5:00 PM, and last 3 to 5 hours. Students should have flexible evening schedules two nights a week (including summer months).
COUNCIL ON STUDENT AFFAIRS (COSA): The aim of the Council is the betterment of the quality of student life at the University of Alberta. (Open only to current members of GFC.)	ONE undergraduate & ONE graduate	Afternoons/normally 3rd Monday (September to March)

Application forms and committee information are available on the University Governance website: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/secretariat/> or in Room 2-5 University Hall. Applications should be completed and returned to University Governance by **Wednesday, March 5, 2008**. For information regarding committee membership and terms of reference, students are invited to contact: Ms Vanessa Ogilvy, Secretary to the GFC Nominating Committee (NC), at 492-4715, or by e-mail: vanessa.ogilvy@ualberta.ca.

NOTE: There is ONE STUDENT VACANCY on the GFC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE for an undergraduate student who is a GFC member for the 2008-09 academic year. Expressions of interest for this position should be directed to Mr Garry Bodnar (garry.bodnar@ualberta.ca), Secretary to the GFC Replenishment Committee, University Governance.