

Centennial year forgets students

I VIVIDLY REMEMBER THE DEBACLE THAT WAS a classmate's ninth birthday in third grade. While elementary-school birthdays are typically fun affairs where pizza, cake, and copious amounts of sucrose-based beverages are consumed, this event was ruled over by my friend's matriarch of a mother: there was no shouting, no running around, and no playing with the birthday boy's presents for fear of breaking them. Needless to say, it was one of the most boring birthdays I've ever attended.

However, this may have been topped by the U of A, as the festivities for the its centennial get into full swing and the invitations for students all seem to have been lost in the mail.

Taking a quick look at the upcoming events along with the ones that have passed, it's fairly clear that the University has invited its closest friends: alumni, current faculty, and mainstream media. Even what seems like the most relevant to current students—homecoming next September—is geared primarily towards alumni.

Instead, students are left with the opportunity to purchase tickets to the Prime Ministers' Conversation Series or attend events that would have taken place regardless, but which have the word "centenary" thrown somewhere into their titles. At least at that ninth birthday, there was some sort of sugar-free orange drink to wash the sawdust-flavoured boredom out of my mouth.

The University is missing out by not trying harder to include those that are at the forefront of the University's next 100 years. The grad students that are integral to pushing groundbreaking research forward, the support staff that are the behind-the-scenes glue, and the 30 000 undergraduates that give this place a reason to exist are all being pushed to the backburner in order to wax poetic about a bygone era. Very few current students have an incentive to keep ties to an institution that has been financially draining on them and given back the bare minimum—a degree.

While it's important to know how we've gotten to where we are at the U of A, the centennial should be more about looking towards the future than putting time and resources into reminiscing about the past. In 2006, the U of A launched its "Dare to Deliver" campaign, which is aimed at laying out a "a bold and expressive vision for [the University's] future"—the centennial would have been a perfect time to build off it by putting resources into current and future students, but it has instead been neglected in favour of alumni relations.

What's worse, the loot bag the University is handing out to students this year is less fun than the dental floss, toothbrush, and dinosaur eraser that you get from your dentist: continued deferred maintenance, the ubiquitous yearly raise in tuition and residence fees, the attempt to remove Lister Hall floor coordinator and tower VP elections, and most recently the debacle surrounding credit card tuition payments. It's like getting those horrible wax lips or a pack of vanilla gum after you were forced to go to the party of the kid in class with no friends: it wasn't all that great, but you were hoping you might actually get something fun out of it.

Students are the lifeblood of the U of A, and it's disheartening that the University isn't doing a better job at including them in such an important milestone, especially considering students' tuition keeps the school running and is in that sense footing most of the bill for the centennial events.

So instead of watching my mailbox for an invitation for the U of A's birthday bash, I'm going to start watching for an acceptance letter from a grad school that respects its most important resources: its current, continuing, and future students.

RYAN HEISE
Deputy News Editor

Back to your potatoes

Patty's day is done
Now the Irish can resume
Being poor again

ADAM GAUMONT
Editor-in-Chief

LETTERS

SU was consulted, sort of

While we, as the Students' Union, felt that the consultation in this case was insufficient, I would be remiss if I didn't make an attempt to correct the statement regarding the level of consultation in your editorial "Students deserve some credit" (13 March).

It's not the case that there was no consultation whatsoever. The University has been consulting with us on this issue since last semester, but we felt, even as late as 1 March, that this was still an item of discussion with the University and that no definite decision would be made this quickly.

However, I should commend Mr Pierse for some keen observations elsewhere in his editorial: credit card payment relieves the cash-flow issues most students experience in paying tuition, and it allows the international students this institution so highly covets a reliable method of payment.

As your Students' Union, we're always pushing the University to be fiscally prudent, but never at the expense of accessibility. Eliminating credit card payment is just another thing making paying for your education at the U of A harder.

MICHAEL JANZ
Students' Union President

Credit cards = Air Miles

I'm a little concerned about the discontinuation of payment by credit cards and was wondering why the University would change a policy like this? Over the course of my degree, I paid roughly \$20 000 on tuition alone. I'm currently enrolled in the MD program and over the four years; I will be paying well over \$44 000 in tuition. Many students have credit cards in which they can accumulate points for travel, for grocery store gift certificates, and for car payments.

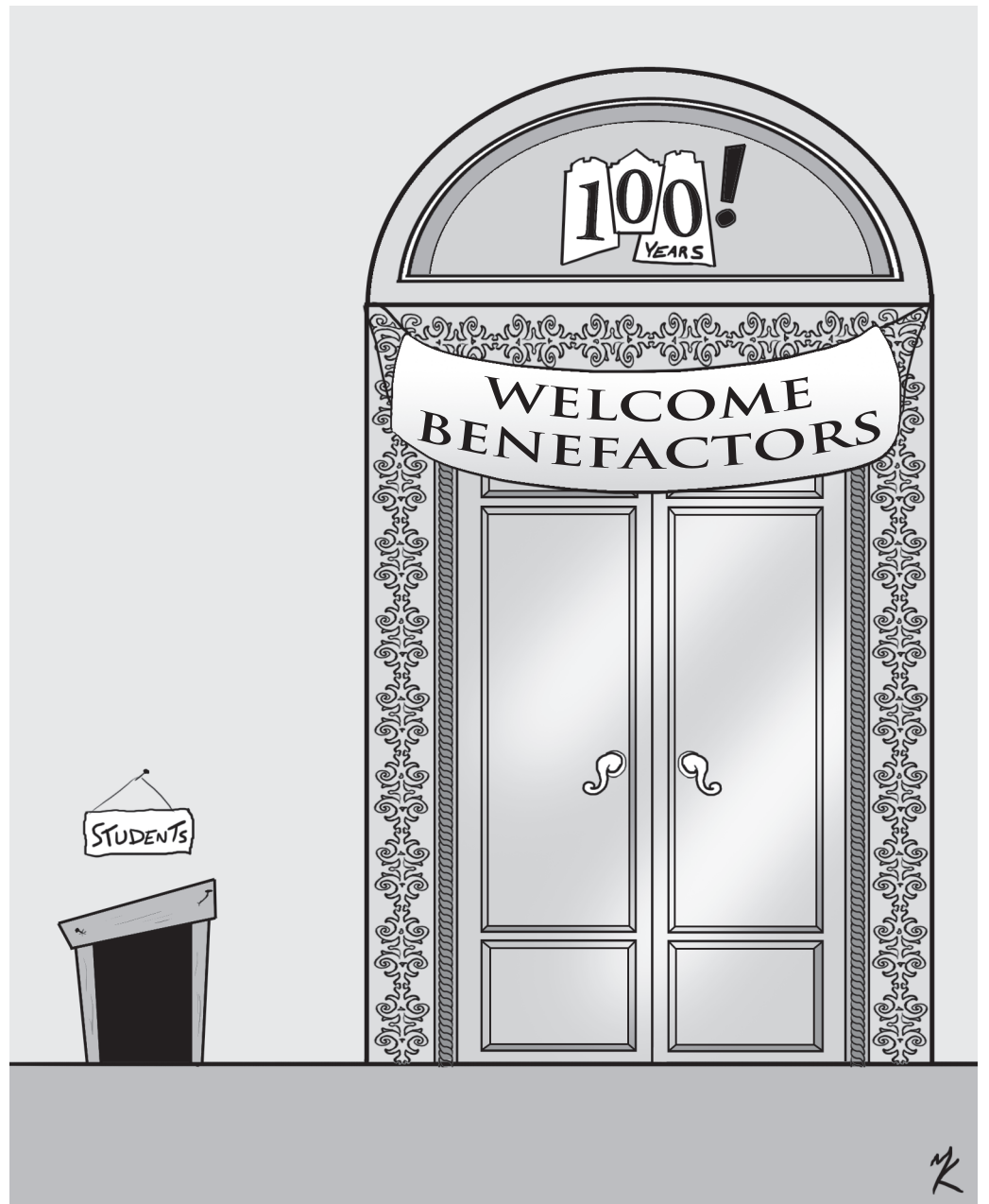
During the third and fourth year of Medicine, I'll likely be flying to other universities in order to do electives at these centres as well as during the Canadian Residency Matching Service (CaRMS) interview process. Over the eight years that I'll have been here, I should have accumulated at least 64 000 points from just tuition. This accumulation of points would have allowed me to make over four flights to other Canadian cities or one flight to Europe—something that will now be taken away from current and future students.

The fact that they will save \$1.3 million won't affect students on a personal level. However, losing this source of points will directly affect many, if not most, students at the University. I realize that the University wants to save money on the transaction fees; however in doing so, they are indirectly hurting students and masking it with a half-hearted attempt to increase student experience at the University.

CHRIS GERDUNG
Medicine I

U of A being inconsiderate

18 000 people, 50 per cent, any way you spin it, that's a lot of people that have a lot of power when it comes to this institute. That's also a lot more people that are going to have to line



MIKE KENDRICK

up to pay tuition once you can't use your credit card.

Sure there are other options to pay, but let's look at the reality of these methods. I'm sure many people out there don't actually own a chequebook, like myself, as in the modern world of electronic banking it's not necessary. Option two being the debit card—I know damn well that mine won't let me spend that kind of cash in a day. There's also cash, but I personally don't want to walk around with whatever next year's ridiculous price is for tuition. The list goes on and on with options that students will have, but they all mean the same things: more work for students to give too much of our hard-earned money to get an education.

The University talks of saving \$1.3 million in transaction fees. But how much of that is going to be spent on increased locations and employees to accept and process our money? Or do they really think that students will line up at the admissions building for several hours to pay our tuition? And it has been repeatedly stated it's only one third of a percentage point of the operating budget. Considering your personal budget, that's about the same percentage of money saved as one night at the bar.

Once again, [the University] isn't consulting the leaders that we choose to represent us, and instead placing changes to the way that this institution is ran based on what they feel is right. If they won't deal with the elected leaders on their own, then it's time to make them listen. It's time to again send the message that students have a voice and won't simply accept what's forced upon them.

I'm proposing at least a demonstration of a solitary voice because a unified student body can send a hell of a message. I'm calling for our

Students' Union President and other SU members to organize a peaceful demonstration of our resilience to change without being consulted.

ALAN STOYLES
Arts II

Where's the protest?

I wonder how much money the administration would save if all the parents paying online were to show up in person and just pay cash—after 3pm, of course.

Students are way too passive with this stuff these days.

JEANNE PHENE
Professional Engineer

Glad to see male feminists

I wanted to commend Greg Querayne, and the Gateway by extension, for the story on International Women's Day (re: "Women's rights improve nations," 11 March). As I don't volunteer for the Gateway, I have no idea how stories are assigned, or if Querayne was forced to do this piece on women against his will [editor's note: we don't assign opinion pieces], but the fact remains that a complete lack of attention is given to women's issues, and seeing a male perspective was both enlightening and encouraging.

As a political science student with a focus on gender politics, I'm constantly being labelled in class for my so-called "feminist" leanings, or that I'm a "crazy feminist bitch" for speaking my mind.

Why does it seem necessary to label someone who talks out about gender issues, female inequality, etc a "feminist"? Querayne's piece caught my attention because he

wasn't a "crazy feminist" writing about women's issues, but instead a masculine voice that had a chance to be heard by others before labels were put on his thoughts and dismissed—the same piece if written by a woman may not have received that same kind of openness.

The facts about gender disparity that Querayne presented made me sick to my stomach and made me wonder all the more why more focus isn't put on this topic in postsecondary study. I'm tired of having academics shove in a few sentences near the end of a textbook that attempt to acknowledge gender discrepancies (which help make them appear to be more politically correct)—these facts alone should be enough to prove that this subject needs serious attention.

So thank you, Gateway, for shedding light on a topic that is sorely overlooked by academia, institutions, and the media. I only hope to see more pieces on such issues without the benefit of having an entire day devoted to women.

ALLISON RUDZITIS
Arts III

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