

# gateway

Thursday, September 22, 1983

How did the Ancient Greeks separate the men from the boys?

With a crowbar.



photo Martin Beales

## Students pay for incompetence

by Ken Lenz

Students will have to pay for writing competency tests and subsequent remedial writing courses because nobody will take responsibility for high school graduates writing incompetence.

Writing competency tests were made mandatory at the U of A for all first-year students who do not have transfer credit.

Students who do not pass the exam which costs \$15 are required to take a remedial writing course that costs an additional \$60. This year, 44 per cent of the students writing failed the exam.

Students' Union VP Academic Barbara Donaldson thinks the Public School Board should pay for the program.

Says Donaldson, "I know that

Dave King, Minister of Education, has been approached by the administration of this University and has refused to fund the program."

"I think by funding the program they would be admitting their incompetency in the teaching of English."

University VP Academic George Baldwin said that some years ago the University approached the Minister of Education with regards to funding the program. The program at this time was only instituted in a few faculties and rotated to different groups of faculties every year.

Baldwin also commented, "the strategy of this University has generally not been to lay blame on any particular institution. After all,

we prepare the teachers so we may be partially to blame for the writing deficiency."

Baldwin added, "many departments are involved; the faculty, Public School Boards, trustees, Alberta Teachers Association, the teachers themselves and our own administration all recognize that this writing incompetency as a very serious problem in Alberta and indeed throughout the Western World."

The Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) Coordinator of Professional Development Dr. Mary Jo Williams is not sure that there is a problem with students writing capacities.

Williams comments, "there has been no documented evidence that the quality of

writing has gone down. There are more students entering into University now, and some of these students would not have entered into University before. Subsequently, the universities may be receiving a higher number of students who can not write as well as those in past years."

"There is also an expectation that students entering into University should have the ability to write at a fourth year level," says Williams.

The Department Of Education has introduced some changes in the secondary school system which may help alleviate the problem of writing incompetency.

Executive Assistant to the Minister of Education Rich Vivone commented, "we will be introducing mandatory High School Diploma Exams which will account for 50 per cent of student's final marks in all core subjects in January of next year. We have always had achievement tests in Grades 3, 6, and 9."

"Now we will be able to monitor the individual school systems and, of course the curriculum."

Barb Donaldson does not think that the new High School Diploma exam program will do much good.

Says Donaldson, "by re-introducing departmentals, Dave King is attempting to improve the quality of English of High School Students. I personally think that the quality issue should be addressed earlier than Grade 12, when they still have time to overcome the difficulties."

Dr. Mary Jo Williams of the ATA has some doubts as to whether or not the exams are a good idea.

Says Williams, "by and large our position has been that the teacher is in the best position to judge a student's abilities. Many teachers will simply teach for exams."

She adds, "let's face it, whereas much of the education in the past has been devoted to writing and literature, today this is not so. The needs of society have dictated the teaching of skills involving listening, viewing, and speaking without increasing classroom time to compensate for the time taken away from writing."

## LRT coming to University

by Mark Roppel

LRT is coming to the U of A.

City Council voted 7 to 6 on Tuesday to extend rapid transit to the University. But SU Housing and Transport Commissioner Paul Alpern says, "it's an agreement in principle... there are still a lot of things to work out..."

Alpern says the project will be completed in 1989 at the earliest.

The High Level Bridge will not be used for the LRT line. A new low level or mid level bridge will be built just west of the High Level Bridge to connect Government Centre with the University. The new bridge should cost about \$7 million. This is cheaper than the \$21 million that the city

estimates it would cost to upgrade the High Level Bridge.

The LRT will run under Garneau and the University to 114th Street. The line will then continue south for six blocks on 114th Street. Eventually it may be extended to the University Farm and further south.

The line will definitely be underground. This was the major concern of the University. All equipment will be brought through the end of the tunnel, so the campus landscape will not be affected. "They are not going to tear up Quad," said SU VP Andrew Watts.

There will probably be one main station fed by underground walk-ways from various parts of the campus.

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