

EDITORIAL

Fees not inevitable

The rising furore over the university's tuition fee plans provides a perfect context in which to examine the entire issue of fees: to question the assumptions of university officials that regular tuition fee increases are inevitable, and to question the very need for tuition fees as seen by work-ethic conservatives.

These conservatives (who, incidentally, control public policy in Alberta) argue that people value only what they pay for. Hence, free post-secondary education is diametrically opposed to the conservative ethic.

In fact, were these people not bound by their attachment to money and the market, they would be able to see that the most important benefits of education cannot be measured in monetary terms. For this reason, tuition fees should be abolished.

Consider the school system: Education is free and practically compulsory in Alberta to grade 12, for two basic reasons. First, our culture recognizes that many individuals will be happier and better able to lead useful, fulfilling lives if they have some degree of knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Second, a democratic society like ours (or rather like ours should be) rests on literacy and an awareness of more than subsistence needs. Ignorance breeds disproportionate respect for authority, and acceptance of abuses of authority.

Both of these benefits of education are even more true of university education, especially liberal arts education, than of high school education.

The conservatives would respond that the most important benefit of higher education is that it trains people for the job market. Therefore, because industry needs fewer university grads than high school grads to turn its wheels, access to university need not be as easy as access to high school.

This epitomizes the conservative myopia: if it can't be measured in money terms, it isn't a value.

These conservatives do not value the personal and social benefits of education. They don't much care for true democracy - the fewer informed, unfriendly people they face, the better. As for personal fulfillment, to the conservative this is just another commodity: If you don't have the money, you don't get the fulfillment.

Of course, these people have a lot of public support. The vast majority of Albertans favor tuition fees at the post-secondary level. And most U of A students no doubt favor tuition fees, if not tuition fee increases.

But these are unthinking supporters, for the most part. Imagine paying tuition fees in grade 10. Or grade one. Albertans wouldn't stand for it. And they shouldn't stand for it at the university level.

Post-secondary education should be a right and a universal one, not a commodity on the market. As individuals and as a society, we stand to gain immensely from free post-secondary education, just as we have, both individually and collectively, from free secondary education.

Mike Walker

the Gateway

If it happens on campus... it's news to us.

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Everyone thought the typhoon would get them, but somehow they survived. It was even more tense when the iceberg ripped their ship apart, but the Gateway staff were nothing if not strong swimmers. And as March passed into April their spirits soared. This time it was no illusion: there really was land beyond those reefs! So on they swam - Garnet DuGray, Elda Hopfe, Maureen Laviolette, Wes Oginski, Kent Blinston, Dick Hancock, Allison Thomson, David Orrell and (breathing hard but still chugging) Michael Skeet. And as they neared the beach, a totally inexplicable yet somehow appropriate thing happened: they broke into a sprint! Who would have guessed?

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"I promise you it won't be like the other times! Look - she's already knocked herself down; all you have to do is kick her a few times so she'll stay down."

A case of cultural myopia

Congratulations to Mr. Aytenfisu for his response to Terry Swan's letter and to that most opprobrious article on the subject of female genital "mutilation." Mr. Attenfisu's is the truly adult mind, one that is fair and objective, penetrating and considerate. Beside it, the diseased mentality of Lisa Volkov and the myopia of Terry Swan can only be seen in brighter relief.

Believe it or not, the phrase,

"Third World," when applied to Africa and many other "underdeveloped" parts of the world is absolute nonsense outside of the technological and economic context. For example, in taking care of the aged and giving them the compassion and company they deserve in their last days on earth, Africa is in no imaginable sense "third." To try and reinforce the "thirdness" of Africa and the Middle East by means of cheap

thrillers of the kind of Miss/Mrs. Volkov's is to expend effort in vain.

Our world is simply too various and complex to be correctly delineated by the pocket camera vision of Lisa Volkov and others like her. Failure to grasp this simple fact is one of the tragedies in human understanding in the multicultural society of our day.

Francis Aleba
Arts III

We worked hard: where's the plug?

As members of UACS (University of Alberta Computing Society), concerned students and faculty, we would like to bring to your attention two related and unpleasant items relating to your March 24 issue.

Firstly, those of us who worked so hard (some of us all night) to prepare and organize the Computing Science Open House, collecting material, writing programs and bringing out our own computers, are upset at the near-total lack of coverage given this University event. Over 1400 people from all over Edmonton attended this event. The Open House was held not only to encourage prospective University students to enroll in Computing Science, but also to promote goodwill for the University in the Edmonton community, and we feel that this is a goal worthy of some mention in the Gateway.

However, your reporting covered "more immediately pressing matters" than local events. Perhaps it is easier on your staff to use CUP stories about harassment at Carleton, referenda at Olds and office takeovers in Ontario than to have to write themselves. Or was the "filler" on page 12 (eight

column inches) an example of your staff's best writing?

Secondly, in using a photograph taken at the Open House to headline and lead in to a story on computer misuse at the University, you imply that our Open House (and possibly UACS?) was merely a showcase of criminal talent, a training school for future computer abusers. We resent that implication equally strongly.

Our goal was to educate the public about the potential for increasingly useful, direct applications of computers to their lives, and we believe we have

succeeded. Your photographic misdirection seems to be a "cheap trick" designed to allow you to print sensationalistic stories a la Sun.

We would appreciate an apology and an explanation for your actions (or lack thereof) in relation to these matters.

Duane Norton
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Jackboots in ed. faculty

STUDENT BEWARE!
TOTALITARIANISM IS ALIVE
AND WELL AND FUNCTIONING
IN THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION.

The rule of the faculty of education which prevents students - including those with acceptable academic records - from taking two courses in one term of the spring or summer sessions denies student responsibility. The authorities assume that they can assess the

limitations of the student better than he can.

Evidently only those students completing a degree at this university are judged to be capable of such intensive study. Complaints are ignored and protestations are rebuffed with rudeness. Policy interpreted as law and applied without equity - or courtesy - or recourse constitutes totalitarianism in my opinion!

Geraldine Erlert
Special Student, Education