

Leading U: Inspirational Stories from UAlberta Alumni & Students

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For those who have come before us,

And everyone that will come after us

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INTRODUCTION

Every year, more than 6000 incoming students arrive at the University of Alberta, ready to embark on studies ranging from history, law, general sciences and human ecology. If you're reading this, you're likely among these 6000 trailblazers. The first year often passes quickly, and the same is true of the years that follow. As I look back on my experiences, for instance, the first four years are a blur.

This book was conceived only several months ago, in May 2013. It is an attempt to provide a long-term resource for students looking to "enter the minds" of the University of Alberta's outstanding student leaders and its countless successful alumni. It is a joint project between four U of A young scholars, three of which are now alumni: Tori McNish, Kevin Pinkoski and Chelsey Van Weerden. All four of us hail from the university's Bachelor of Arts programme, and have made the most out of our years on campus.

Though the Students' Union Orientation is a wonderful two days of events for incoming students, I've always hoped that students can emerge from their first week of studies with something compelling that they may keep with them on their journeys. Leading U is an attempt to make this vision a reality. As an online book, it provides readers with a

platform that may be continuously updated, as new alumni share their university stories.

As you read through this book, you will meet students and alumni from a vast set of backgrounds. You will hear the stories of Don Fleming, an education alumnus and long-time Chair of the Edmonton Public School Board. You will learn about current Business student Jessica Ireland's travels across the world, as one of the university's great examples of the Study Abroad program. You will hear from Amy Shostak, the visionary behind Edmonton's uber-talented improvisors in Rapid Fire Theatre and a co-chair of the Make Something Edmonton task force. And these are only some of the essays; contributions from Jessa Aco of the Business Students' Association, recent Oxford MPhil recipient Nathan Pinkoski and The Wanderer Online Top 100 recipient Annika Palm provide philosophical reflections about the university experience.

On behalf of the editing team, I wish all of you a fantastic four years (or whatever the total happens to be!) on campus. If you're a finishing student or university alumnus reading this, then we hope these stories resonate with you. As obvious as this sounds, university is what you make of it. If you wake up each morning with a desire to make the day your own, to interact with professors, ask questions and involve yourself in something that you care about, you will graduate with experiences you never imagined possible.

- Emerson Csorba

RANDY BOISSONNAULT: OPENING REMARKS

On June 22, 2013, University of Alberta students organized Stand Up for Edmonton, a one-day conference where Edmontonians discussed topics related to the university's various roles in city life. The MC of the day was Randy Boissonnault, one of the university's distinguished alumni, a former Students' Union President, Rhodes Scholar and founder of Literacy Without Borders. On the strength of his message, we asked Randy to adapt his words from that day to become the Opening Remarks of Leading U.

As a proud University of Alberta graduate, an entrepreneur and a community volunteer here in the City of Edmonton, it is a great honour to be sharing this narrative and historical journey with you. Prepare to smile, to laugh out loud, to reach for some kleenex and to feel a stirring inside that will lead you to find a unique and special path within this University and within the City of Edmonton.

At a time when there is so much optimism and general frothiness in our city and in this region, the opportunity is upon us to reflect on the unique relationship between the University of Alberta and the City of Edmonton, which many alumni call home.

For many of us, the recent provincial budget cuts and their effect on the university and its need to thus make hard decisions feel like “déjà vu all over again.”

How can we as citizens of this city, and of this province, many of us proud graduates of the U of A, work in concert to preserve and enhance this gem on the banks of the river dedicated, as Henry Marshall Tory charged, “to the uplifting of the whole people?”

This book is an invitation from the Editors and from each contributor to challenge, to engage, to learn, to meet, and to dust off our bridge-building kits so that in the weeks and months to come we can see the evidence of thousands of bridges being built between two great engines of our economic, cultural, artistic, intellectual and civic lives here on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.

Perhaps our highest function while at the University and as proud residents of Edmonton is for us to unleash our creative minds. What do I mean by creative minds?

One of this City’s greatest philanthropists and one of this University’s most loved Chancellors, Dr. Sandy Mactaggart, used to answer this question by telling a story about a professor called in to mediate a dispute about a grade.

A student in a certain physics course had been asked to explain how one could determine the height of a tall building by means of a barometer. Her answer was given a failing grade, but the student objected that, on the contrary, the answer was perfectly correct according to accepted physical principles. When the outside mediator was called in, he had to agree that the student had a point. The answer given was: “Go to the top of the building, tie a string on the end of the barometer, lower the barometer to the ground and measure the length of the string.” Nevertheless, it was agreed that the student should be given a second opportunity to answer the question more straightforwardly.

After six minutes of the allotted ten had been used, the student had still not written anything on his paper, and the mediator asked whether he did not know the answer. “No”, the student replied, “It’s just that there are so many answers, I am trying to decide which one to give.”

Near the end of the time period, she quickly scribbled down an answer. This time the instructor in the course capitulated, and the student was given an A. The answer was: Take the barometer to the top of the building and drop it off. Time the fall and then by the well-known formula about the rate of acceleration of falling bodies and calculate the height. The mediator was fascinated with the ingenuity of the student and asked whether she really had other answers.

“Of course,” she replied. “Take the barometer out on a sunny day. Measure the shadow cast by the barometer and the shadow cast by the building, then knowing the height of the barometer, you calculate the height of the building. Or, a very simple and direct method, is to start along the walls to determine the height of the building in barometer-lengths. Finally, of course, the easiest method would be to go into the basement and find the office of the superintendent, knock on his door and when he answers, say to him, “Hello Sir. Here I have this fine barometer, which I will give you, if you will tell me the height of the building.” The student confessed, finally, that he also knew the standard answer but he didn’t feel that the function of education was simply to hand back memorized formulae and pat answers.

That is the type of creative thinking we need to address the challenges we face as a university community, as a engaged members of a Capital City, and as a province that has the capacity to lead the nation.

Make Something Edmonton is a creative, citizen-led approach to the perennial city conundrum of “What’s our Brand?” “Where’s our Tag-line?” As this dynamic exercise unfolds, we may well find ourselves so inundated with rich stories of real people doing interesting, funky, fun, creative things in our city that we may well say “Tagline? We don’t need no stinking tag-line!” In the same spirit of Make Something Edmonton, this book calls forth and records the rich stories and memories of some of our University’s most notable alumni so that we can all reflect on the power and diversity of experiences enjoyed at our alma mater.

As your university career unfolds here, we will need to call on your creativity, your goodwill, your openness to share your dreams and aspirations to continue to knit the University of Alberta and the City of Edmonton together.

The the personal narratives in this book will inspire you to live your University experience to the fullest, to make deep and lasting relationships on campus and to build bridges from our campus to our city. I, and the alumni whose stories you are about to read, invite you to serve as proud Ambassadors of our University and of our City.

Randy Boissonnault is a ‘91 alumnus of the University of Alberta’s Campus Saint-Jean, majoring in Sciences Politiques.

SEAN PRICE: FROM LISTER DAYS TO THE OILERS AND ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

This is the story of my experience at the University of Alberta – and is likely one of the most important stories of my life.

I entered the University of Alberta in the dead of winter, after starting my post-secondary career at the University of Victoria. I had been granted early admittance to the U of A's School of Business and made the change, knowing it would be a wise decision. But it had not been an easy one. I loved my first semester at UVic, made some great friends, and enjoyed the beautiful campus and city.

The one thing that made my decision to transfer to the University of Alberta easier was my love for the City of Edmonton. Most people don't grow up with a vision of Edmonton, Alberta as their own personal paradise, but I certainly did. My grandparents lived in Edmonton, as well as the rest of my mom's family, and we would visit every summer and many years at Christmas. My grandpa and I were extremely close and their home was probably my favorite place in the world. I grew up a fan of the Edmonton Oilers and Eskimos and dreaming of summer evenings in Hawrelak Park.

I knew only one person at the University of Alberta when I arrived, and had known her for only a matter of weeks. I was very shy by nature and was frankly terrified of moving into Lister Hall halfway through the year, when everyone else had already had the first semester to form friendships. How would they accept a newcomer to the floor, one who wasn't outgoing in the best of times? My acquaintance was an immediate help, inviting me to dinner each of my first two nights and introducing me to some of her friends. What was a bigger help was that, unbeknownst to me at the time, more than one of the guys on my floor was completely infatuated with her. All of a sudden, everyone wanted to be my friend.

One week into my time at Lister Hall, I knew that I was destined to be at the U of A. Friendships had never come easily to me in my life. My family moved often and I was always the new guy. But my time at Lister was immediately different. I had more friends after one week of university than I had ever had in my life. In fact, the friends I made in Lister would to this day still account for well over half of the strong friendships I have ever made. We faced the challenges of school life together, grew up together, met girls together, competed in intramurals together, pulled pranks on the other floors together and built confidence from being together.

Lister Hall certainly contributed to my success in school as well. The close proximity to class eliminated any wasted time commuting to and from school, especially during those rough Edmonton winters. Food was always available, another convenience for a young student challenged in the art of cooking. Friends became study partners and tutors. Study space was only steps away. Stress relief from studying was always available (sometimes too available). I can say with confidence that living in Lister Hall enhanced my academic experience - rather than just my social experience - exponentially.

My undergraduate career was full of meaningful adventures. I volunteered in multiple capacities with Campus Recreation, where I was mentored by the legendary Hugh Hoyles. Campus Rec fulfilled so many needs in my development. I competed with my friends in team sports nightly, gaining leadership and team-building skills. I organized sporting events for much of residence, providing me with the organizational skills I would need later in my career. I also had the opportunity to contribute to a successful student referendum, showing me that a group of devoted people can affect change at an institution as massive as a university.

I also enjoyed my classes, at least in my last couple of years. At first, I wasn't sure where my business education was going to take me. I wasn't interested in becoming an accountant or financial analyst, and wondered where to concentrate my studies. Halfway through my career I had a bit of an epiphany. I decided a general background in business, combined with my love for sports, would allow me access into a career in professional sports. Although there were hiccups along the way, this was exactly what happened.

I had some excellent professors, with one in particular standing out. His name was Dr. Allan Warrack and he taught a course in business and intergovernmental affairs. There is no single class from which I retained so many messages to take into real life. The one that resonates most to this day was the obligation that we have as university graduates, those having the privilege of studying at a great school and receiving the benefit of education, to take care of those in less fortunate positions. Somehow, messages like these seemed to make perfect sense within the curriculum of a course in business and intergovernmental affairs.

I can distinctly remember sitting in my final class in my final year of business school, when one of our more enlightening professors asked what we had gained from our university education. The majority of classmates were appreciative of their time in university, but not overwhelmed. They spoke of tangible educational benefits, of receiving a degree and now being able to move forward with their lives. My answer was very different. I simply said that I found myself – and it was the greatest experience of my life. Most of my peers looked at me bemusedly. One even cracked that I had wasted a lot of money for such little return. I disagreed, and do so to this day. I entered the University of Alberta as a scared, shy kid with little confidence and little idea of who I wanted to be. I left with hundreds of friends, confidence, a great education and the knowledge that I could use to take on the world.

Since graduation, I have lived a charmed life. I worked for the Edmonton Oilers for thirteen seasons, my days fueled by passion for sport. During that time I was able to take a year off to earn my MBA from the University of Notre Dame, one of the most inspiring schools in the world. In my greatest feat of pure luck, I married a girl I met in Lister

Hall, Kristine Johnston. I proposed to her at the exact location where we met in residence. Every table at our wedding was filled with friends from Lister Hall. I have become a father to three great kids. And now, I am responsible for alumni relations at the U of A, the school that has given me most everything I have in life.

In my leadership role with the university I often get the chance to work with current and prospective U of A students, many of whom ask for advice about their U of A careers. I tell them to take their classes seriously, to study in areas in which they are passionate and to pour their energy into their intellectual curiosities. However, I also tell them to ensure that their studies don't keep them from the experience that is university.

Research student clubs, become involved in ways that you have not in the past, provide yourself with exposure to things you have never dreamed. Make as many friends as you can, because you will never form friendships like this again. Don't be afraid to get to know your professors. And, when I put on my work hat, I tell students to stay connected after graduation, because your alma mater will help you in ways you never imagined for the rest of your life.

I would have lived a fabulous life if I had stayed at the University of Victoria. Of this, I am convinced. But I just can't imagine it being quite as it has been. The U of A changed my life, and I will forever be in her debt.

Sean Price is a '95 Bachelor of Commerce recipient in the Alberta School of Business, and is now the Executive Director of the University of Alberta Alumni Association.

PAULA SIMONS: LEAD YOURSELF TO WISDOM

I have what you might call a pathological issue with authority.

It's the sort of quality that makes me a good journalist – but a terrible employee.

The need for me to challenge those in control, to try to hold them to account is reflexive.

For this, I blame my parents. (Because really, isn't that always the easiest thing to do?)

My father is Jewish. My mother's family background is Mennonite and Lutheran. Their world views were formed by cultures with a long history of being oppressed by the state for their political and religious principles.

My own parents defied the social norms of the 1960s, when they married across religious lines. When my brother and I were growing up, our folks were generally more keen on teaching us to question rules than to obey them blindly. My father, in particular,

taught us to fight for justice, to stand up to bullies, and to defend those unable to stand up for themselves.

It is typical of my confrontation outlook about authority, I suppose, that having been asked to write an essay on leadership, I am now balking at the task.

In truth, I am never entirely comfortable with the words “leader” and “leadership.”

At the risk of sounding like an amateur neo-Marxist, the leader paradigm troubles me because it necessarily implies that leaders have followers - and follow-the-leader has never been my favourite game.

I’m not sure exactly what I learned about leadership in my time at the University of Alberta; what I absorbed, instead, were some extraordinarily important lessons about citizenship and the social contract.

I wasn’t uninvolved with campus life and campus politics. Unlike several of my friends, who served on the Students’ Union executive, or held paying positions with the SU, I didn’t take on a formal, high profile, leadership role. But I played a significant role in the rejuvenation of the U of A Debate Society. I served on a couple of Students’ Union and Arts Faculty committees. I co-wrote precisely one theatre review for *The Gateway*. I did enough extracurricular volunteer work that I somehow won the Eugene Brody Award for campus service.

Still, I was never a conventional campus “leader.”

Nor was I a blind follower – or worse, an apathetic cynic.

What I was, instead, was an intensely involved campus citizen. I read *The Gateway*. I listened to CJSR. I attended election forums and Studio Theatre productions and concerts at Convocation Hall. I organized debate tournaments and model parliaments. I sold tickets for Dinwoodie cabarets. I threw myself into the life of the university.

I learned a tremendous amount in the process – about myself, about my skills and my limitations, and about human nature. (Throughout my career as a journalist, for example, I’ve remained astonished at how closely power struggles in the PMO or the premier’s office or city hall resemble the friendship-ending fights we had in the debate club office over how to manage our limited funds.)

Yet in truth, though it might seem stuffy to say so, I actually learned the most about leadership, and citizenship, in the university classroom.

John Milton, John Stuart Mill and my beloved Voltaire taught me about the power of freedom of speech, the importance of standing up to state tyranny.

Jane Austen and George Eliot taught me about the morality of human relationships, about the importance of personal integrity in the building of community.

Charles Dickens and Wole Soyinka showed me how a writer could use words to expose injustice and inspire social reform.

Emily Dickenson, Franz Kafka and Andre Gide taught me the value of existential perseverance, in the face of an arbitrary world.

I was, as you might have guessed, an Arts student. But it wasn't only my English and history and comparative literature classes that taught me about moral leadership.

One of the most inspiring professors I ever had was David Cass, a botanist who taught evolutionary biology. In his lectures, I learned about the genius of Charles Darwin, and the importance of standing up for the principles of science, of not ignoring facts just because they're socially or politically inconvenient. Because of his class, I remain today, as a columnist, steadfast in my defense of science and rational thought.

So by all means, seize opportunities to get involved in campus life. Volunteer. Join clubs and fraternities. Run for office. Give back. Such activities will enrich your classroom experiences, make university more fun, prepare you for post-university citizenship and, most importantly perhaps, help you form deep sustaining friendships that can last a lifetime.

But at the risk of sounding like a mother – and I am a mother, even though I'm not yours – try not to forget why you're at university. You're not there to become a leader. You're absolutely not there to become a tame, mute follower. You're there to become a wiser citizen. You're there to learn how to think critically – and how to think for yourself. Whatever your field of study – be it nursing or engineering, music or forestry, business or human ecology, organic chemistry or classics – if you “do” university right, you will emerge a smarter human being, and perhaps a better one, too.

Lead yourself to wisdom. That's the best kind of leadership experience a university can provide. In your years on campus, you are laying the foundation for all the rest of your life to come. Collect the best construction materials possible – and what you build will endure a lifetime.

Paula Simons is an '86 Bachelor of Arts recipient (Honours English Literature) and an award-winning columnist with the Edmonton Journal.

TORI MCNISH: FINDING AGENCY IN PRAIRIESEEN

In 2011, I started my first blog. It was called Art Seen Edmonton, and I'm pretty sure nobody read it. I didn't even tell anyone about it, which might be part of the reason why. At this time, I was just finishing my third year of university (and second-last semester), and had just handed in my Honours thesis. I'm not sure where the idea of blogging came from, but I decided to start one because I was beginning to think of what exactly I would do when I officially finished my coursework in the coming December. I was interested in exploring writing about art in the public realm - as opposed to the academic - so I began experimenting with blogging.

My erratically-posted and little-read (as far as I know) musings continued throughout my last semester, but became more regular come January. It wasn't until a fellow Art History graduate, Chelsey Van Weerden (whom I'd met through working at the Fine Arts Building Gallery), and I had a conversation about the "post-graduate condition" that I began thinking of it as becoming more than what it was. As graduates from the Faculty of Arts, opposed to a professional program like Education or Nursing, we were struggling with how to keep our education relevant in the "real world." She knew about my tentative foray into the world of blogging, and was interested, as I was, in writing about and advocating for local art in the larger community. Since there are few opportunities for arts writers in Edmonton, especially those without experience (let alone a "duo"), we decided to team up and re-launch my fledgling "Art Seen Edmonton" blog. To celebrate our new partnership, we came up with a new name - PrairieSeen.

PrairieSeen has become more than I ever thought it would be. We began where I had left off, writing semi-regular posts about anything local and visual arts-related. But through a series of good ideas (two heads are really better than one) and happenstance, as well as a solid commitment from both parties, we nurtured PrairieSeen to where it is today. We no longer "just" write blog posts, but also act as an online resource on the local arts community, make videos (whether they be artist interviews or discussions), and host a wide range of events. None of these things were necessarily intentional when we founded the site, but they happened as a result of it, and in truth act as an extension of it. What we really wanted to do when we began blogging together was to start a conversation. Not between us, but within the larger sphere of Edmonton's visual arts community - and I feel like we're doing that.

For me, the success of our blog doesn't hinge on the number of hits we receive a month, the number of followers we have on various social media sites, or the number of retweets/likes/shares etc. we get. Just like with Art Seen Edmonton, if no one read our blog but my Mom, I would be OK with that. Of course I am happy that people read our site and come to our events, but whether that be 5 or 5000 is no matter - if we are reaching out to even one more person, that's great. This frame of mind would, of course,

make me a terrible businessperson, but that isn't why I wanted to start PrairieSeen, or why I continue to dedicate time and my own money to it.

This kind of motivation (or lack thereof, depending on how you look at it) means that I am consistently pleased and surprised with things that happen both as direct and indirect results of my co-founding PrairieSeen. An example includes writing freelance – legitimate, paid-for-my-skills writing. Some of it has come about as a direct result of work we've done on the blog; others because I gained more confidence in myself and my abilities and began putting myself out there more. I also feel more connected to the (visual arts) community, something that was lacking while I was in school (Art History is not the most popular, or sociable, major). The best part is, I feel a sense of agency in this. Instead of us waiting for that invite, that rare job offer, or that introduction, we made a place for ourselves in Edmonton's small arts community - and we did it by starting PrairieSeen.

Tori McNish is a '12 Faculty of Arts alumnus (Honours Art History), co-founder of PrairieSeen and completed a Smithsonian Institute internship through the University of Alberta in '11.

NATHAN PINKOSKI: CONTEMPLATING THE “LIBERAL” EDUCATION

This essay was originally published in UDaimonia Online.

In 1968, echoing a pattern rapidly spreading across Western universities, the students of Cornell University revolted. Demanding political and social change, as well as transformation to curricula and university admissions procedures, they occupied the campus and shut down all university activity until Cornell staff began negotiations. Most students either joined the protests or stayed at home. But in the midst of all this strife, a small group of students did not follow the path of the many. Under the tutelage of their professor, they met unofficially to continue their study of Plato's Republic.

Who chose the better part?

Such dramatic times have passed. There are, of course, plenty of persistent social and political injustices, the occasional unjust or daftly managed war, and occasional piece of legislation to which any right-thinking citizen would object. Every political event invites an opinion, and every student ought to consider expressing one from time to time. But there is an increasing segment of the university population which seems to believe that

every university semester is 1968. Seeing themselves in that spirit, they believe that their principal task as a student is to express opinions. The cost, as I shall argue, is the loss of the older task of a student: of learning the art of expressing informed opinions.

Let me be absolutely clear. I am not condemning students who hold political opinions or who decide to express those political opinions in selective public actions. Nor am I condemning the body of students whose extra-curricular commitments extend to holding executive office within the myriad of sound student organisations found across a university campus. Nor am I condemning out of hand the host of university graduates who use what they learned in school to take up positions in organisations oriented toward political action.

My quarrel is with students who put their academic studies in a very distant second place for the sake of devoting themselves to direct action. These are the inhabitants of the university campus, primarily arts students, who see their life as a “student” not as a chance to extend their horizons of understanding or have them reshaped by encountering ideas, but as a convenient nomenclature under which broadcasting the fashionable opinions of the hour becomes a kind of profession. Despite the good intentions of many of these students and their admirable political passion, they are actually harming the very vocation of the institution in which they thrive. That is the vocation of the university to provide its arts students with a real education, a liberal education.

By a “liberal” education, I mean the education that frees the mind from ignorance, prejudices, mythologies and popular misconceptions, all which plague an average young person, through an encounter with the great thinkers and books of intellectual history. The young first-year may have tremendous potential, but the only means to actualize it will be through expending the effort to learn new techniques, skills, and ideas within the next four years. Every graduate of a bachelor’s degree knows that many of his intelligent secondary school friends standing next to him on the graduation stage did not do as well as they could. There are disturbing pieces of information in this trend. According to the new book *Academically Adrift*, for example, the average university student in the 1960s spent 40 hours a week on academic activities (attending classes and studying). Now, they spend 27 hours a week. The university student is now spending less time on academics than he did in high school.

It is here where student activism is part of the problem. At Harvard, junior deans assigned to tutorial work often discover that the students who are having the most trouble keeping up their grades are those who are too involved in so-called “public interest” projects. Instead of actually learning and trying to acquire a praise-worthy credential, they are engaging in activism. Contrast that with Bill Clinton, who would read three books a day while he was up at Oxford. Politically active students today may

admire Bill Clinton, but they are en masse choosing something he never did. That is opting for ignorance over education. For Clinton's later successes were only possible because he was almost always the most informed man in the room. Would that this could be said about an undergraduate activist, even one in their seventh year of a human rights degree.

But education must be about more than amassing information. The act of expressing an opinion, it is clear, involves a prior act of informing the opinion, requiring the hard work of amassing facts and information. But before there is the task of amassing information, there must be the identification of the right subject, and—more importantly—the right question to ask of the subject. For as anyone knows who studied the Quebec referenda on separation, a particular question points in favour of a particular answer. Part of the goal of a liberal education is in learning to ask the right questions. Only by a protracted study of different thinkers—always a crucial feature of the liberal education—do we begin to realise that there are different ways to ask the questions. In realising the possibility of different questions, we begin the task of judging which questions are better to ask than others. This two-fold task, of reminding ourselves that there are alternative questions and weighing them against one another, has momentous consequences in public discourse. For it can serve to recover alternate conceptions of subjects that show the viability of other opinions and prompt re-examination of hitherto unquestioned assumptions. It slows down aggressive discussions by calling for another enquiry of the subject matter from a different point of view, fuelling political moderation rather than extremism. This is the only determinate way to really lead the mind out of ignorance and prejudice.

It is no doubt at this point that someone will point out that this vision makes a false claim for emancipation. No education, particularly one premised upon reading old books, can really free us, as they conceal their own prejudices. This is not the place to dispute the intellectual standpoint upon which one can utter this condemnation of traditional education. But even if a liberal education only taught prejudices, at least they are new prejudices. No student today enters university thinking that the foundations of democracy need to be carefully defended from its opponents, even if he properly manages to articulate these foundations. To suddenly have to take aristocracy seriously—as a good reading of the history of political thought will oblige him to do so—means he suddenly has to learn how to defend democracy. His prejudice will be that he will want democracy to be articulated and defended with good arguments, not simply touted as a rhetorical quip in a debate. “The government's reforms are undemocratic,” or, “That's an attack on democracy!” will no longer suffice as a *res ipsa loquitur*. He will demand instead a *quod erat demonstrandum*, a demonstration that this argument indeed holds true. That is a prejudice, and a frustratingly annoying prejudice to organisations wanting to sway the public through slogans. But it is, I dare to say, a prejudice worth promoting.

Nevertheless, this is a hard prejudice to acquire. It involves seeing the four years of undergraduate life not as a convenient institutional arrangement to vocalise one's previously present passions, but as a place in which we are called to set aside our intellectual hubris in order to pronounce: "I do not know." Then we are called—an even harder step—to hate our own narrowness. After that, we are called to the hardest task of all: overcoming our narrowness. But there are only a few years of undergraduate life to accomplish these tasks. When we students emerge, we shall be shaped for life. Some of us will have acquired a passion for more reflection. Others will have developed a passion to shape the world. But whatever we do, we shall have to draw from the well that is the short time we passed through the university: from the ideas found in the classroom and the library.

Time on the protest circuit is not an antidote for narrowness. One of the most disturbing trends in the West is the increasing polarization of political camps. Consider the American example. According to a 2012 study by the Pew Research Centre on American Values, the values gap between Democrats and Republicans is greater than any other divide (race, gender, age, or class). The partisan gap has doubled in the last 25 years. This gap is important, because it shows that in spite of the usual aspiration of the young to be a "free-thinker," political opinions are increasingly predetermined by what political party one supports. There is, moreover, an increasing lack of shared opinions and conceptions of the good across the political spectrum. What the U.S. is witnessing is political fragmentation on a massive scale. Statistically, Democrats are now less likely to understand why their Republican opponents hold the views that they do (and vice versa), meaning that cross-party dialogue, which relies on the logic of your opponent's views, is more difficult than ever before. The crisis here—and Canada is not immune—is that there are very, very few who are considering alternate ways to ask the questions of politics. One simply dismisses one's opponent out of hand. This, the refusal to dialogue, is merely an assertion of one's narrowness.

This is one of the disadvantages of a protest. No one goes to a protest in order to dialogue: the purpose is to act, to announce a view, to resist. This is at times important. But no protester ever leaves a protest having heard a thoughtful presentation of his opponent's views. Having not heard the alternative, he has not had his view challenged. The only place where this can happen is back at school, if he cares enough to allow himself to be challenged. University institutions, for their part, and their academics, have an obligation to meet. They can either challenge the narrowness of their students, or solidify them in it. Seventh year human rights majors with embarrassingly confused views on human rights do not happen by chance. Institutions help produce them, but it is the judgement of the nation whether the institution has combatted or confirmed their narrowness. If they only confirm, then a tremendous opportunity has been lost, to the detriment of the student, the school, and society.

There are still old battles to be fought along the fronts our parents would have been familiar with—battles over rights, wars, arms, and economics. There are times to act, but there are also times to reflect, as a liberal education should teach us. This is the way moderation comes into the political world, and the way to break down an increasingly zealous partisanship. Educational institutions are rapidly losing sight of these goals. Students deserve better: but they will only get better by the zeal of their study.

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GORAN MILETIC: I WANT TO BE EVERYTHING AT ONCE

After graduating from the University of Alberta with a degree in Sports Management, I found myself a little hard-pressed for the world I was about to embark in, so I decided to stay in school another year as I scoped out a couple of business courses and a couple of prerequisites that would enable me to apply for a business after-degree, and even possibly apply for an MBA that would cater to a career in sports and recreation management.

Now that the year is over, what have I accomplished? A number of things: I got a fantastic gig as an Editor for *The Wanderer*, specifically in the realm of culture, I applied for yet another year of coaching as part of the Alberta Sport and Recreation for the Blind, I decided not to return as Captain of the university's track and field team, and I continued as this year's President-Elect of the University Athletics Board (UAB). I was also part of a growing union of intellectuals who wanted to make a difference in the world of higher education; the PSE post card initiative is one example, a lively group of student-leaders from various faculties who came together as a result of a recent budget cut to our post-secondary institutions. Finally, I acquired a spot on the March of Remembrance and Hope Leadership Program, where I, along with 29 other Canadian students, will tour through various concentration camps learning about intolerance and equality.

Indeed, I met some incredible people and I've attended some fantastic fine arts performances; ballet, theatre, comedy and the like. I consider myself lucky and fortunate to have done the things I've been able to do this year.

At any rate, some may say that these aforementioned altruistic life garnering experiences and events are simply ways of procrastinating the inevitable, which is embarking into the journey of life with a real job and a real sense of self. Well I have something to say to that: here in Edmonton, with its lively and folksy array of living, with its insurmountable opportunities to immerse yourself in the world of arts, design, culture and beauty, and a strong education system, opportunities abound.

Edmonton is my home city and has been for 20 years, and I can't imagine anywhere else I'd rather grow up, learn, love, and laugh! However, in the midst of it all, I learned the most about myself, my principles, and tactics to lead me through the hardships and numerous life altering events to come.

I was asked to provide some context that will help someone reading this understand who I am and what I stand for. Like I mentioned, I am a recent graduate from the University of Alberta and I have a very strong predisposition towards leadership roles. It's not to say I generally love being the driver, because let's face it, more often than not it's much easier to take the passenger's seat (if only there were such a seat in life, but there isn't).

I think it started off when I was in grade 9; I just graduated from a fairly painful, yet chest-hair-growing experience. In junior high, I got the Athlete of the Year award, a good set of grades and won two gold medals in the city track and field championships. I was raring to pursue a semi-professional career in running, and high school was just around the corner. Sounds like a pretty spectacular runway to a bright and spontaneous future. Sadly, I tore a hamstring during a race because of a lack of discipline, I didn't work, and I slacked off in school, eventually hitting a breaking point where I wasn't even sure I'd attend a post-secondary institution. High school wasn't as bright and spontaneous as I had imagined; I didn't make it to any high caliber competitions wearing my nations colours, nor did I stay healthy. I kept tearing up my muscles and experiencing a serious dislike of my sport. I was upset that my body betrayed me the way that it did. I had no control and never trusted any particular doctor or therapist to take care of me. I didn't have the patience to wait for results nor did I want to keep spending my parents' money on doing so. So I took a hiatus from running for what felt like 10 years (it was only 3 in reality). I got back into the groove of things when I decided to run for the University of Alberta between 2009-2012.

Things were looking up for me: the year was 2011, my GPA had risen at a good rate and I was getting into the groove of things, which was especially evident in my racing performance. I hadn't qualified for CIS track and field nationals in any individual events that season, but together with three other comrades, I did well in representing my university in the 4x400, getting a bronze in the final. Indeed, things did seem like they

were going my way, but it was only a week after returning home where things started taking a turn for the worst.

My mom had been having frequent stomachaches, losing sleep and feeling weak. It didn't take long before my dad had to rush her to emergency, and within minutes of her being placed on a bed I witnessed her shivering, as if she was stranded in the middle of the Arctic with little to no clothing. She was trembling, scared and there was nothing I could do, and none of us knew what was going on. Blood tests showed that her pH levels were low, too low, and after an emergency operation on her stomach it was evident that my mom had a severe case of sepsis. Her entire cardiovascular system had been infected with pathogenic organisms, which was due to an operation she faced several years ago that was never retreated, leaving scar tissue to decompose and infect her stomach - which then led to an infection through her bloodstream.

My mom had always had a fear of doctors, a fear of not having control of any situation. She never let someone take care of her business; she had a family to love, to feed, to work for, and therefore in her mind she couldn't and she wouldn't take the time to treat herself. There was fear my mom held after her operation years ago, a fear that if she returned to get retreated she'd never come back. My mom was in the hospital for an entire month and in that month she went through seven operations - she fought as hard she could. Every night my sister and I would talk to her reminding her she needed to live and to not give up (keeping in mind at this point my mom had suffered a mini stroke during the operation and fell into an unconscious state).

On April 24th, my 22nd birthday, while my mother was still in the hospital showing relative progress in her health regardless of all the operations, my sister invited my girlfriend (at the time) and me over for a small birthday gathering. Right at that same moment that we stepped inside the house a phone call came from the hospital telling us to rush over because our mother wouldn't last much longer. She was nearing death's doorstep, her pale, practically lifeless face and skin was a sign to all of us that all the fight she went through had exhausted her. She wasn't entirely there, her eyes were rolled to the back of her head.

I remember how angry I was, the sheer fear and resentment that my mom would pass away on my birthday. I begged and pleaded for her to fight. The entire family was distraught, exhausted, emotionally and physically drained. It was as if someone or something took our hearts out of our chests and presented them in front of us. I was in the middle of my final exams during that period but I didn't care. How could I? I brought my books over to the hospital and stayed there in that desolate, eerie building with a sense of foreboding night after night until that one fateful day where I happened to leave the hospital to go home. On April 26th I got the call from my sister, screaming at me that our mom had passed away - she left us. I feel like it's not enough to say that my

mother's passing gave me a whole new insight into life; it wasn't so much that it was short, or that it was unpredictable, but it was how life can't and shouldn't be spent without rooting for yourself and fending for yourself. Let someone else worry about the particulars and specifics once in awhile and give yourself the room to find your wants, to stay happy so you can be the best you can be.

I know it may sound a little unconventional to say that my mother's passing meant that I needed to become more selfish and let someone else do the work for me. What I mean is that with all the experience I've acquired in all my leadership roles, I can safely say that looking back, a leader can't be defined by the gargantuan amount of work he/she can handle, how much can be done with so little time, how a leader did everything on his own. No, a leader in my mind, at that point in my life, meant that they were prepared to delegate work, to delegate responsibility; that they cared enough for the objective to think that collaboratively. Leaders can't wear themselves out by taking all the baggage; a leader needs to understand when enough is enough.

It was quite a balancing act after losing someone so close. This woman gave me my stubborn attitude, my analytical thought process. Although sometimes I've condemned her for her aggressive approach to solving situations, I think of them as almost fighting tactics to protect yourself and those you love, which probably explains why I win most arguments or at least leave my 'opponent' guessing. It's during times of unease, fear and depression that you really learn a lot about yourself. I was still in school, still competing, still living - my life didn't stall. I had my principles, my professed rule of action during difficult times. And that was to live, and connect closer with what you hold dear.

Running at this point in my life was a huge release, it was a part of who I was and it set me free, yet others questioned me. I had a lot of people approach me during my training hours on the track asking me questions like "Why are you still running?" or "If I was in your place man I'd be spending all my time at home just sobbing, you know" I know these quotes sound a little preposterous, but they were said and they were answered.

It is my belief that a leader needs to have principles they abide by, principles that guide their beliefs and their sensibility. They can be from written rules or through your own experiences, but have them there, especially at times of stress and anxiety. It can be very evident when someone has none of that. I didn't stop doing my regular routines because I resolved to live my life, the same way my mom would have wanted me to. I didn't have a strong sense of emotional attachment to most tragic events, and when I did I grieved in my own way. Running, track and field, whatever you want to call it, was my source of relinquishing any anxiety and pain I may be facing. That's something that calms me, I don't think it was anyone's place to tell me otherwise or question my methods.

Now, two years later, at the age of 24, I am a Marketing and Sales Coordinator (intern, mind you) for the Shaw Charity Classic, Calgary's own PGA Champions Tour stop. I've

moved to Calgary, and I'm extremely happy with the fact that I took a step in the right direction; more so because I am determined to apply myself in the career stream I got a proper education in. Coincidentally, a journalist writing for the Globe & Mail interviewed me this year. He was doing a project on higher education and wanted to hear stories from a few graduates across Canada on what they finished, how they felt about their education and what advice they can pass on to future graduating classes transitioning into the workforce.

The interview was very thorough, and I answered all questions with peace of mind knowing that I can pass over some experience, useless or not, to someone that was just as lost as I was only a year ago, and to NOT give up on the education they've received. I feel like the worst time university or college students face is the last year of their degree because at the point it really hits them; "Oh sh*t, what am I going to do once I'm done, I have loans, bills, interests on both!" That may not pertain to a lot of people, but I hear that a lot, anyway. It's always about payment of dues, or moving to cheaper rent or things like that.

Now, maybe finishing a degree in Physical Education or Science won't get you that high-paying job right off the bat, and that's when I see graduates turning to part-time jobs that are in no way related to the education they've receive - that can lead to a career you don't want. I received my internship through a lot of connections I have made in the past. I could afford to be picky. However; with that said I knew that there were some voids that needed to be filled in my education. So I searched high and low through Twitter, faculty e-blasts, career and job sources provided by my university, the city and other social networking mediums. I was very determined because I love sport, I love what sport represents in regards to teamwork, equality and union and striving for a common goal.

I made it very clear to the journalist that this notion of an easier escape for student financial woes needs to stop. Thankfully, it's diminishing and I have many friends who have graduated with a degree in Education, hearts set on being teachers regardless of the warnings they were given before about difficulties in the job market. But why did they keep at it? Because of passion, persistence and a hell of a lot of digging. I'll have friends work two part-time jobs and substitute for schoolteachers for that one day so that they may get a full-time renewable contract. I love seeing that! It gives people a sense of purpose.

I have shared with you some difficult moments in my life and an even greater variety of positive things that have happened. Each event, circumstance and emotion has meant something in particular and has added to my growing qualities as a leader, and especially as a human being. If there is anything to take away from this it would be: capitalize on the good times and don't have a short sight on life and love. You can enjoy

your role in whatever circumstance or situation you're in without treating yourself to what's good out there. Squeeze in a run, go see an art exhibit, play that video game.

While you're at it, let someone else take some of that load off - no leader in this day and age can rightfully see themselves as fit, controlled and organized without thanking so many people for their assistance. You're not alone in this world. Use those connections around you, take up an offer from a friend that's offering their assistance to you; trust me you'll be thankful. Nothing in life is for certain, and as my dear cousin would tell me on a daily basis: "You're not guaranteed tomorrow, who is guaranteeing you tomorrow?" No one is. Live your life, relax, and never give up on your goals (especially when education is involved), you'll notice things will eventually follow through for you.

Goran Miletic is '12 alumnus of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation (Sports Management), and was once the Captain of the Bears Track and Field team.

ALAN SHAPIRO: PERSISTENCE IN GEOLOGY AND LEADERSHIP

There's an art to being a student that transcends the confines of the classroom, the pages of the textbook, and even the aroma of a fresh pot of coffee. Being a student is a lifestyle – a full-time job in and of itself. Sadly, it's a role that comes with no job description and thus it is difficult to define what it truly means to be a 'good student.' While it is clear that learning starts in the classroom, it is much harder to define where it should go from there. In my eyes, it is the responsibility of every student to maximize the value of their education.

We are often led to believe, quite falsely, that degrees are all created equal. I couldn't disagree more. A degree certificate is nothing more than a pretty piece of paper to hang up on your wall; it is worth only as much as the associations, knowledge, and experiences that accompany it. The false perception ingrained into us by our educational system is that grades equate to success. The elusive hundred percent or 4.0 GPA is the golden standard to which motivated students strive, and yet what are they really worth? Grades are simply numbers – numbers that do little to convey ability and aptitude.

You've probably heard time and time again that most of the knowledge you need will be learned on the job. The purpose of an education is to lay the foundation, develop basic skills, and teach you to learn effectively. So if the focus isn't on the actual knowledge –

the formulas and textbook details – then how much do grades really tell us? I would argue that it is in fact the people and the experiences that define most of the value of a degree. Leadership, service, research, and relationships are what truly set students apart from one another. Students at the same school and in the same program build their own distinct portfolios of associations, knowledge, and experience. This pursuit of value and excellence in education is the definition of academic leadership.

It's taken me awhile to develop a philosophy - a unifying theme to tie together everything I do. I've always had the highest respect for driven people who are motivated by a distant, perhaps intangible goal or idea. Solving global poverty. Saving the environment. I've met students and young professionals whose actions, past and present, speak louder than their words ever could. I've never had that. Sure, I have my interests and hobbies. I could easily write a long list of things I don't want to do with my life. At the same time, I always need to be on the move. Doing something, and feeling like I'm going somewhere. And so, for the longest time, I was stuck swimming in circles like a goldfish, hoping with every loop that I was a step closer to finding what I was looking for.

Coming from a small high school community, it was easy to feel a part of the whole. I had the opportunity to be involved in every aspect of student life. In my graduating year, I was involved with the student council, organized the debate team, and tutored younger students. I knew everyone in the high school by name, both teachers and students. Even the principal sat down to chat once in awhile. I remember how quickly that fell apart upon finding myself in a lecture theatre of more than four hundred students in the first year of my undergraduate degree. I had heard the same terrifying prophecies as many other incoming students. I would be just a number. Professors would have no time for me. The mysterious 'curve' would determine how well I did in my classes.

I remember my first bad grade. It was just a quiz, but I had no idea what to do. In high school, I would compare notes with my friends or ask the teacher for help. Here, in a class of four hundred, I had no access to my professor. But I decided to give it an honest try. I looked up his office hours and arrived, expecting to wait in line for hours. But his door was open, and he was the only one there. I was shocked - it was such a large class, and we had just had our first quiz! I talked to him for the better part of an hour. He took me through every wrong question, explained the rationale behind the answers, recommended strategies for the midterm, and told me to come back and see him if I needed more help. Perhaps most surprising was when he told me that I was the first in the class to have come by, and he didn't expect there to be more than a handful of other students. Over my first year, I saw the same story time and time again; my professors were always there to help and always found time for me.

In my second year, I caught the med school bug that few science students are immune to. I took all the prerequisites, wrote the exams, and filled my resume with anything and everything I could think of. In retrospect, I had never given serious consideration to a career in medicine, but it was very addictive to be one of those ‘motivated’ students, expertly balancing school, community service, and extracurricular activities. My resume from the first two years of university was something of a patchwork quilt of disconnected opportunities – a very clear symptom of my lack of direction. While I cringe every time I think back to this phase in my life, on some level it’s hard to judge too harshly. I became involved in a lot of exciting roles and organizations and expanded my network considerably.

It was only in retrospect that I was able to find the common denominator among my involvements – mentorship. At the time, I served as an orientation leader; led study groups for the Interdepartmental Science Students’ Society; organized an annual conference to educate high school students on global issues; and tutored students from university, high school, and junior high. I had realized early on that I thoroughly disliked committees and student politics; I wanted to be on the front lines, working directly with people. And what better way to work with people than to form relationships and pass on my experience? I looked at it as paying it forward. Someone had always been there for me, whether friends, older siblings, parents, or professors, and I gratefully returned the favour.

Making choices was never a particular forte of mine. I had gotten along just fine by saying “yes” to most opportunities that came my way. But never saying “no” came with a cost – my schedule was a permanent traffic jam, planned a good two or three weeks ahead. But there was a greater cost that I failed to take into account. I became caught in the current – taken at liberty in any which direction. As a result, I had had little voice in my own development. Not to say that I had been standing still - my involvements spurred in me a genuine desire to work towards something greater and developed various skills to help me in this regard. But as I looked at my resume and my achievements, I realized that they were little more than lines on paper, neither reflecting who I was as a person, nor working towards some greater goal. Three years in, I felt no closer to where I wanted to be than when I’d started. My resume had grown, my network had expanded, but I still had no greater purpose or goal to strive for. This realization made it increasingly hard to drive myself forward.

You’ve probably heard the line “follow your passion” at least a million times, often from people you admire greatly. “Follow your passion,” referring not only to your career but in all your involvements, commitments, and interactions. That line has always bothered me. Not because I don’t agree with it, but because it’s just so vague. How do I find my passion? Where do I start looking? How can I tell it apart from interests or hobbies? It wasn’t until the summer of my third year, covered in mud from head to toe from long

days of landscaping, that I realized that I'd never really started looking. Saying yes to every opportunity that came my way had forced me to sacrifice time that I should have invested in my own development. And when I finally sat down and started asking questions, I realized that I had set a distinct double standard. I had always had an interest in environmental issues, particularly water and energy, but I had never pursued any work in that regard. I loved sharing and communicating science with others, but I had never looked for avenues to do so. I had always looked ahead to my career and dreamed about the ways in which I could make a difference, but neglected to do so in the here and now. My words drew one picture and my actions – another. And so, I decided it was time to open my eyes and try something new.

Early in my fourth year, I was approached with the opportunity to write for *The Wanderer*, an online student journal at the University of Alberta. Realizing that I was genuinely interested and excited at this prospect, I gratefully agreed. I had always enjoyed writing and the magazine gave me an outlet to share science with others, both within and outside the student body. One thing led to another, and I found myself writing for the Faculty of Science – at once an exhilarating prospect for me and an amazing opportunity to expand my professional network. The final year of my degree was rife with opportunities, due at once to the culmination of four years of experience and the fact that I was no longer waiting, but actively pursuing my interests: a position teaching a junior high debate program; conferences on environmental leadership; opportunities to present my academic research; a placement at the Pembina Institute, an Alberta-based environmental non-profit organization, and a chance to sit down with the department and optimize my degree program for future years.

I also began to send emails – to professors, professionals, government officials, and everyone in between. People whom I'd never met but whom I'd heard of, perhaps in my reading or research. I'd had this habit for a while – ever since sixth grade, when I emailed my favourite writer and received a reply – to my complete and utter astonishment. I figured it was worth a shot. In all likelihood, I'd get one email back for every ten I sent, but there was nothing to lose. I found motivation in every reply I received. There's something thrilling in hearing back from someone you've known only as a name on a book cover. Every reply reminded me that my mentors were real people, who had at one time or another stood where I stand now. And the advice I received helped at once to answer my questions and renew my motivation.

In April, I wrote my last exam and handed in my honours thesis. In a few days, I will have my convocation ceremony. If you ask me where I'm headed afterwards, I'll tell you the name of my graduate school and program, but in truth I have absolutely no idea. But what I can say is that I'm as ready as I'll ever be. I feel like I've gotten as much as I possibly could from my undergraduate degree. That I'm graduating with far more than a pretty piece of paper. That the relationships, knowledge, and experience I have formed

will guide me through the next chapter of my life. I feel like I'm miles ahead of where I was when I started (or even last year), because I've found a method in the madness. A philosophy.

If I could summarize everything I've learned in three lessons, it would be this: One – take the time to develop a philosophy. Figure out what it is you enjoy, where you want to be, and how you can get there. Plot your own course – don't let chance do it for you. Two - don't be afraid of rejection. The fact is, the most common rejection is silence. You make a phone call and no one picks up. You send an email and don't get a reply. But every professor you talk to, every professional or friend you meet will help you along the way. Advice is invaluable. Three – pursue relationships, not connections. When it comes down to it, it is your friends who will stand behind you. Friends do not have to be peers - friends can be professors, professionals, and mentors too. For in the wise words of Bradley Cooper: "It's not who you know, but how you know them."

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BRAD FERGUSON: EDMONTON'S DYNAMIC VISIONARY

This essay is taken from the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation and Brad Ferguson's blog post entitled "Commercialization Redefined."

It's convocation season ... that spring season when the University of Alberta commercializes 9300 new products into the Edmonton market ... all of which walk across the stage on two legs. Our new medical students can save more lives. Our new engineering students can build better bridges. And our business students can start new companies.

Everyone is excited about the possibilities ... except ... there is a quiet hush and whisper that surrounds the liberal arts graduates. Engineers become engineers. Teachers become teachers. Nurses become nurses. But arts grads ... what do they become? This is the question that stumps many of our elected officials, who are quickly swinging the education pendulum away from "intellectual exploration" and rapidly towards "technical training" such that our youth can immediately become ... as we say in economics ... factors of production.

So for the public policy pundits, whose vision for Alberta is to be the industrial engine of Canada and the Banana Republic of North America, I offer the following perspective for consideration:

- Not all liberal arts graduates work as baristas at Starbucks. This fact disappoints many who love to point to the liberal arts graduate as the poster child for unemployment ... but it is far from the truth. You see, only some liberal arts graduates work at Starbucks, and thank God they do ... because someone has to be responsible for weaving human psychology, anthropology, addiction and economics into a \$50 billion empire built on \$5.00 non-fat lattes.
- Not all graduates with history degrees are unemployed. Some are. Some probably should be. But some make a lot of money understanding that societal unrest in Chile affects the price of copper, and thus the price of electricity and the price of houses ... and they tend to make terrific long term investors. History grads also tend to understand that markets are driven by world events, and world events are driven by markets ... making events like the Arab Spring – Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain – highly predictable.
- Not all political science programs are the same, contrary to what some people might think. But what all programs teach in common is that empires always overreach and they always overspend ... and that politicians will always come up with ways to create more money while finding creative ways to avoid discipline. Political history shows that debt ceilings and quantitative easings are often a band-aid solution to a slightly larger problem called fiscal hemorrhaging.
- Not all fine arts students are street performers. Some work at Apple Computer ... because a guy named Steve Jobs believed that technology needs to be married with the humanities, and human beings need to interact with technology in ways that bring both joy and productivity. Not sure if Apple will remain as the most valuable company in the world, but I have a feeling it has forever changed the way the world sees industrial design.

The case for liberal arts education needs to be reframed. Not only is there economic return as shown through these cheeky examples, but there is massive societal return given that the root causes of our global challenges are often grounded in human behaviour ... and the understanding of how people live, think, co-exist, network and interact ... and frankly I'm not imagining a world where adding more engineers will help us answer the most important questions that seem to all start with the word ... why?

The public policy pendulum across the country is swinging, and I am gravely concerned with the narrow direction we are taking around technical training at the expense of intellectual exploration. It is not one or the other. We need both. We need the technically trained, but not at the expense of our need for interdisciplinary, liberal arts

graduates to help us shift from an industrial powerhouse to an intellectually curious city that embraces creativity, entrepreneurship, thought-leadership and democratic freedom.

Great cities, provinces and countries have great universities ... and our University of Alberta must continue to commercialize liberal arts students as part of the portfolio of youth that will help make us remarkable.

Brad Ferguson is President and CEO of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, and is a '92 Faculty of Arts (Economics) and '94 School of Business (Finance) alumnus.

EMERSON CSORBA: SAYING YES TO CHANCE ENCOUNTERS

Reflecting on the last four years at the University of Alberta has been a tremendously difficult exercise. To the incoming student reading this: the four or more years that you spend on campus will be incredible (though equally challenging), as long as you actively strive to extract as much as you can from each passing day. With that said, I'm going to attempt to share my story, however incomplete and fragmented it may be.

I'll begin with grade twelve in high school. As a student at Old Scona Academic, my high school experience focused considerably on academics. In high school, my mentality was "90% average or nothing," and along with many of my peers, the main goal was an ambitious one: Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, Chicago and other prestigious schools were all in sight. Following several rounds of the SAT and a lengthy application process, I was admitted to New York University; however, it was much too costly (\$50,000 per year). After receiving rejection letters from several of the other desired schools, I decided to enrol at Campus Saint-Jean, the University of Alberta's Francophone campus. In hindsight, this is likely the best decision of my life.

The last four years have been a whirlwind, whether it's serving as a Students' Union executive, presenting to delegates of the Tuning Process (a project within the European Commission), speaking at the United Nations, founding and coordinating several daily online magazines (The Wanderer Online and UDaimonia Online) and running marathons across Alberta's Rocky Mountains and Prairies. I'll touch on some of these highlights later on in this essay, but I want to start with Phi Gamma Delta and two men by the names of Ian Clarke and Sam Fiorillo. These two individuals set me on a course that has forever changed my life.

In the weeks leading up to university, I was nervous as hell. Having developed the involvement “drug fixation” (because achievement can be an addiction) in grade twelve of high school, my goal was to hit the ground running at the University of Alberta. Within my first year, I wanted several things: a 4.0 average and recognition as being one of the most involved and high-impact students on campus (the typical first-year goals for insecure overachievers). So before school even started, I contacted Sam Fiorillo, the President of Campus Saint-Jean's student association. Much to my good fortune, he replied. Several days later, I found myself sitting in the CSJ student lounge, talking with Sam and meeting the various members of his executive. I was delighted; university had yet to start, and I already knew several of CSJ's “movers and shakers.” Shortly after learning about a vacant “Vice-President First Year” position on their executive board, I set a goal to win this election. Yes, I was a keener. (As I look back, I'm proud of this. Be a keener, aim high and hit your targets. The only other option is mediocrity, which I view as settling for what is expected by others.)

At about the same time as I met Sam, I received a call from two university students, Dustin Chelen and Ian Clarke. Dustin was the coordinator of a “Johnathan Doody Memorial Scholarship,” named after a university student that passed away in a tragic car accident before he graduated. As a finalist for this scholarship, I met Dustin and Ian on campus, at Good Earth Cafe, for an interview in late August. The interview went well, and we returned to the “Phi Gamma Delta” house afterward, where I would meet several other members of the fraternity.

On the day before Orientation, this fraternity (also know as “Fiji”) invited me to a barbecue, along with the other scholarship finalists. In the span of several hours, Dustin and Ian introduced me to Rick, Josh, Pete, Nolan, Kevin, Kenway, Tristan, Roger, Sean and about twenty other university students. Several days later, I pledged to Fiji, and would initiate just a few months later, in January. I am forever thankful to Fiji, and strongly encourage all incoming students to pledge to a fraternity and sorority in their first year on campus. You will look back at the decision as one to be proud of. In all honesty, Greeks (those in fraternities and sororities) control much of campus. All five 2013-2014 Students' Union executives are Greeks, and the same follows for many of the influential student associations on campus.

But let's return to Sam and Ian. How did these two men influence my university experience in such a profound way? Sam, noticing that the Students' Union's student council position for Campus Saint-Jean was vacant, encouraged me to put my name forward. I did, and won the election. Ian became my “big brother” in Fiji, and provided guidance that significantly enhanced my first year on campus. As one of the Students' Union's most respected leaders, Ian showed me the ropes, making my first year transition as smooth as it could have been. And I cannot forget Dustin Chelen, for teaching me so much about the SU, and Kevin Thomas, for telling me about an

Orientation “Team Facilitator” position that I applied for and - much to my surprise - received. These men, along with another young Edmontonian named Michael Janz, changed my life. I am forever grateful to them.

Mentorship is one of those themes that we hear about in politics, business, education and other facets of society. And this is for good reason: the leaders that take young people “under their wing” make such a positive impact on these young people's lives. As you become a leader in your area, I believe that it is your responsibility to provide guidance to the young leaders finding their own way in life. In many ways, these youngins’ will probably become smarter than you and find solutions to the things you find challenging.

Overall, first year went well, and I made my academic and extracurricular goals a reality. To be honest, I was mesmerized by the thought of winning the Rhodes Scholarship: I wanted a 4.0 gpa, the packed CV, the sports background and everything else conducive to receiving one of the world's most well-known scholarships. This was one of the key drivers in my life, which is something that I look back on with amusement. I was without question one of those “keeners,” the kind of person that tells The Gateway Editor-in-Chief “ I will be the Students' Union President in three years” (true story). I look back at some of my actions with utter dismay!

As years passed, I became more relaxed on campus. Though my drive to succeed and pursue excellence has only increased, my approach is much different. It is truly difficult to capture all of this in a short essay, but I can say that several things have spurred this. First, I've found that university is about contemplation. It is a time where students can meet with professors, ask questions, pause and then reflect anew. Some of my best friends and greatest role-models, like Don Carmichael, Heather Kanuka, Connie Varnhagen, Claude Couture, Anne Boerger and Dalbir Sehmy, are professors. They have shaped who I am and have influenced my life in ways that I cannot describe. Second, I've become a runner. Long-distance running provides me with an outlet, where I can spend much of my energy outside on the river valley trails. During my second year, 5 k runs became 10 k runs, which soon became marathons. Third, more time in university just makes people calm down. By the time that second year rolls around, most students should be able to enjoy the ride, realizing that these are years that bring considerable personal development, new experiences, etc.

Second year was another fast-paced year, with plenty on the go. Throughout the two semesters, I balanced a full courseload with part-time work in the Students' Union, dating, plenty of running and executive positions in the Parkallen Community League (as President) and Fiji (as the Awards Chair, where I administered the same scholarship that helped recruit me to the fraternity). In March 2011, I put my name forward for

Students' Union VP Academic, and won in an uncontested election. The subsequent year was replete with rich experiences, and our executive team achieved so much together. One of the biggest lessons that I learned is that we need pace in our lives. Life is pretty damn long, and there's a lot that we can achieve in a single day. But the key is to care about personal health, be active, sleep well and make sure that these things aren't compromised because of a strong work ethic.

When most Students' Union executives complete their terms in office, they tend to take a step back and graduate, bringing an end to their university involvement. However, I ran for VP Academic at a young age, and was still 20 years-old when my term wrapped up. Because of this, I made it a point to build on the SU experiences, using a large social network to create meaningful projects and bring them through to fruition. The foremost example is The Wanderer Online, which has become a well-read Edmonton online magazine, with over 1100 articles produced in 14 months, approximately 100,000 unique readers and 75 writers from the University of Alberta. Another is UDaimonia Online, which brings together Canadian students to share high-calibre philosophical writing about higher education.

Working on several projects at once is challenging, but I recommend that you try it. In fact, I recommend that for at least several months, you “say yes to everything.” Since the day I was born, I was a loud, screamy baby that has (thankfully) been able to steer immense amounts of energy and intensity into productive activities. So this works - most of the time. Sometimes, however, this techniques fails. But the upside is that you learn much about yourself in the process: where you must learn to say “no,” how you react to pressure - all valuable lessons learned through experience.

My mentality at this point in life is certainly an entrepreneur's one: have an idea, build it, share it, get feedback, make adjustments, share, feedback, etc. This often works. It is the reason why several students built a “Post-Secondary First” project in April 2013 in response to the Government of Alberta education budget cuts, and why a similar group organized the June 2013 “Stand Up for Edmonton” conference. It is also why this book has been successfully published. I've found that smart people can achieve amazing things, particularly when one lights a fire under them and sets deliberately ambitious targets. (One of the assumptions with this mentality is that people are smart and talented. If you believe in people, then you open yourself to so many opportunities. This is because you allow others to share successes and use their talents together.)

For all of you university students, get going from day one on campus. You'll need to figure out what you care about (for me, this took several years... and I'm still very much in the “this is what I care about phase”). Part of determining what you care about involves doing lots and lots of things, reading widely and asking thousands of questions to your professors, parents, friends, etc. If you do this, you'll enjoy your university

experience. Just make time for walks, for activity, for friends and for introspection. And make sure that you share your successes with others, because they will do the same with you.

Emerson Csorba is Editor-in-Chief of The Wanderer Online and will graduate with a BA in Sciences Politiques at Campus Saint-Jean in April '14.

KAREN UNLAND: A GATEWAY TO IDEAS

I emerged from the LRT entrance on 87th Avenue a few days after my convocation in 1994. As I headed towards SUB, my eyes met those of Paul Davenport, president of the university, sporting a big grin.

“Karen!” he said, extending his hand. “I had no idea!”

This was the best back-handed compliment I have ever received.

Dr. Davenport had watched me cross the stage to receive the Médaille d’or des pères oblates, the top academic honour at what was then known as Faculté St-Jean, where I earned my B.A. in Canadian Studies. This was, in fact, surprising, given that I was an anglophone from west central Alberta whose parents had not graduated from high school, never mind university.

But he didn’t know any of that. That’s not why he was surprised.

He was surprised because he had known me only as someone from The Gateway, and thus as a troublemaker, or at least as close to a troublemaker as this goody-two-shoes had ever been before.

I’d been in some scrapes during my time as news editor and then as editor-in-chief, some I’m still proud of, some I’d handle differently if I had them to do over. All of them, I realize now as I think about that brief encounter, had left me a reputation that I did not know I had. For the first time in my life, I was known for something other than being a good student. And here was the president, confirming it.

The Gateway gave me many gifts — good enough clippings to get a newspaper job, lifelong friends, the man I would marry, some scars to keep me honest. I found my people there, and confirmation that journalism was for me. And it gave me something to be good at besides school. I needed that.

The school system had trained me to expect that being good and doing what I was told would breed success. The Gateway taught me there was more to it than that. And that made my university experience so much more rewarding than it would have been had I focused only on my studies.

I still did well in school. I did not know how hard I had to work to pass, so I went full-blast, and that was enough for a high GPA and some much-needed scholarships. Cramming a four-year degree into six years helped, too. But all of that extra time spent at The Gateway offices was an education in itself, as difficult and valuable as the academic education I also acquired.

So, here's my advice to those of you who are at university because you were good at school and it was expected of you or you expected it of yourself: Study hard, but don't just study. Find your tribe, the people who care about the same things you care about and challenge you to care about stuff you never knew before. Try things that are so hard you might fail. Take this opportunity to reinvent yourself. You'll never have a chance like this again. Transform.

And if you do, you won't need a chance encounter with the president of the university to know it happened. You'll think of the person you were going in, and see the person you are coming out, and you'll know the true measure of your education.

Karen Unland is the Leader of Capital Ideas Edmonton and served as Online Editor of the Edmonton Journal. She is a '94 Canadian Studies alumnus from Campus Saint-Jean.

KEVIN WEIDLICH: FIND YOUR NICHE AND FLOURISH

When Emerson Csorba asked me to write an article on my experiences as a student at the University of Alberta, I came to the shocked realization that it was 25 years ago when I first became an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Arts. It was so long ago that we used to handwrite our papers and pay a service to type them on real paper. Crazy.

I started fresh out of Spruce Grove Composite High. In 1987, you pretty well knew everyone in the school. It was a big shock entering some of my first classes as a Political Science student. Psych 101 and Art History 101 were ridiculously large. How on earth could you learn anything when you are in a hall with 300 other students? I know I didn't, notwithstanding passing those silly quizzes.

My poli sci classes were reasonable and I was able to handle those pretty well. But I have to admit it took me two full years to feel that I was part of anything. It was like being thrust into a big city without knowing anyone. Some of my old high school friends were on campus too, but we had divergent interests, classes and schedules, so we rarely connected. I felt so alone.

It didn't really occur to me to join any societies or clubs. In retrospect I wish I had, as it would have helped me to meet and make more friends on campus.

While I was in my first year, I learned of the Army Reserve. I was surprised that there was no Army Reserve presence on the U of A campus. I had heard of examples like the American ROTC program and I was wondering if something like that existed. It used to, but was shut down the year before I was born. The Army Reserve was recruiting and looking for students in particular, though not on campus. I found them downtown and I signed up. I entered officer training the first summer between my first and second years. I got fantastic leadership and military training and returned to the U of A the following September as a Second-Lieutenant in The Loyal Edmonton Regiment. This was the beginning of a very positive change for me.

I was astounded to learn that there were so many Army Reserve soldiers and officers all over campus. I began running into them between classes and at events and soon developed some long-lasting friendships. It really made campus life far more enjoyable.

It is also a happy coincidence that this year, the Canadian Armed Forces and the University of Alberta have partnered to re-introduce the old program that offers military leadership training to students. The program is called the Civil Military Leadership Pilot Initiative. Basically you do what I did, sign up for the Army Reserves (or RCN or RCAF) and while you are a student you will benefit from various programmes on campus and off campus. The new twist is that the program will be recognised by the U of A. It is the formalisation of what has been happening on campus for years.

Not all students are cut out for military service. That much is obvious; the university campus is a wonderful place for so many people with diverse perspectives and points of view. This is the great value that university life has. Once you find your niche you can flourish.

There are many organizations, clubs, societies, and employers that will suit many different kinds of people. Once I found my niche, I felt that I was part of something on campus. I used that connection to help me to foray into other areas of interest while still knowing that I had made many good friends. It allowed me to gain new perspectives and broaden my understanding of the world around me. It may seem counter-intuitive.

Join a group of similar-minded people to learn more about the world. Your niche group gives you a base from which to explore. You may find yourself moving to a different niche; you might choose to stay. Either way you will learn a lot.

Kevin Weidlich is the VP Communications of the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation and is a '92 alumnus of the U of A's Political Science Department.

DON FLEMING: CAMPUS ANTICS

My years as a student at the University of Alberta are now decades in the past but my relationship with the U of A began well before my student days. My present position as one of the Alumni representatives to the Board of Governors is a recent example of how I remain connected, but my history with the U of A is also rich with experiences as a neighbor, a student and as an employee. During my student years, I worked at the university as a parking booth attendant, provided after-hours building security patrols and spent several summers as a university groundskeeper. Like a number of other Edmontonians of my generation, it could be argued that my connections to the U of A can be traced back to the day I was born... at the University Hospital.

When I was a little over a year old, my parents purchased a house in Garneau on 90th Avenue just east of what is now HUB Mall. I lived there with our family into my late teens when the university expropriated most of the northern part of the community for campus expansion. That expropriation included a huge brick apartment building, the local grocery store, stately mansions and the demolition of entire blocks of established family homes. Those were dark days for North Garneau but I still think of how fortunate I was to be able to spend my formative years in a community so close to the university.

Garneau was a community like no other in Edmonton. It was a place rich with intellectual energy - a community full of optimism and hope. Most of our neighbours were connected in some way to the university. They were professors, artists, musicians, researchers, doctors, dentists and students. There were lots of kids and no-one seemed too concerned that we had a free run of the university and the river valley. There were fewer buildings on campus then and with huge expanses of green space and sidewalks we could freely roam about campus on foot or on our bicycles.

Frosh Week was especially exciting for us. It was a part of our fun to ride quickly down the sidewalks on our bikes and snatch the frosh hats off the heads of unsuspecting female frosh. We would then hold the beanie just out of reach and demand a few cents ransom. I gave up the practice after a male student intervened one time, returned the

hat to the young woman and gave me a swift kick in the rear end. Research orchards on 116th street provided additional excitement for us sneaking in through holes in the fence to pick apples and other fruits and vegetables. Another boyhood adventure was to slip into a building and go down through floor access panels into the network of connecting utility tunnels that run under the university. Once inside, we were free to explore a vast labyrinth of large and small tunnels and to come up into other buildings at will or, for the truly brave, into terrifying places like the morgue in the Medical Building.

I suppose it was always assumed I would attend the U of A, but after high school I went to work as a studio cameraman with CFRN television. It wasn't until I was 25 that I finally became a student and first enrolled in the Faculty of Education. The cusp of the seventies was an interesting time on campus. Learning and the pursuit of knowledge were almost secondary to the social experience.

There were few financial pressures for students as tuition costs and living expenses were low. When campus expansion stalled, the university established a committee to rent out some of the remaining houses of Garneau for student use. Within a very short time, Garneau became a community full of co-op houses with students sharing the costs of rent and food. Meals of brown rice and lentils and houses with more students than rooms kept costs to a minimum. There were street dances with local bands, Hare Krishna monks, Eastern mystics, US draft dodgers and a constantly changing cast of kooky characters who would appear and disappear within the community. Pretty girls, lots of fun and music, long hair, the "I Ching," granola. All that, and an opportunity to get a university education too!

I don't recall anyone ever being stressed out about the demands of being a student in those days. In the Arts and Education faculties, students would enroll in a program of studies, leave before the end of the program to go hitchhiking to California or some other destination and then return at the end of summer to re-enroll without concern.

I think that most people outside of Medicine, Dentistry and Law just thought of the university as a place to learn about the world and their place in it. But even some of the more serious students at the time took things to an extreme.

Engineering students were seldom known to be radicals, but Ken Bailey was the exception. Ken was working at the student newspaper – The Gateway - when an article was published arguing that the tradition of engineers nominating competing queens during Queen Week was sexist and demeaning to women. The engineers complained and wanted a retraction. Bailey refused. Determined to make his point, Ken nominated his own candidate – a mounted moose head - and then hung it with a banner out of reach on the Engineering building. In a series of escalating events he unsuccessfully defended himself with a fire hose before being captured and carried to the basement of the Engineering building where he was stripped, dunked in a tub full of blue meat dye

and paraded around campus. He recently told me that those are “memories that rarely come to mind.”

Ken’s opportunity for revenge came about a short time later when he managed to get his hands on the keys to the Engineering building. One evening he and a friend armed themselves with an ample supply of commercial glue, let themselves into the building and methodically glued all the doors shut as they made their way to the top floor Engineering Association office. From that office they phoned a local radio station and enjoyed an ongoing on-air conversation that lasted into the next day. Aided by reports on the radio of the progress slowly being made by Campus Police and their fellow engineering students, they made a last minute escape through an air conditioning vent.

A graduate student in the Department of Political Science named Conrad Morrow declared that he was determined to live his life as closely as possible to that of a wolf. He went about barefoot and in shorts both winter and summer and lived in the bush in a geodesic dome. In an Edmonton Journal article entitled “Home is a Dome on the Pembina” he described his philosophy as “symbiosis.” Unfortunately, at one point following the kidnapping of Patty Hearst by the radical Symbionese Liberation Army, he declared himself to be the leader of the Symbionese Liberation Army North and drew a great deal of attention from the authorities. The last time I saw him was on the CBS television evening news. As he was being pulled down from the White House fence and arrested for protesting the Vietnam War, I recall saying to a friend “Hey, look! That’s Conrad!”

No one I knew went to university to get a good job. There was a very cavalier attitude toward higher education. It was as if it was there for the picking if you wanted it. But it could just as easily be ignored. One of my friends upon completion of his Law degree and his articling used the occasion of his admission to the Bar to announce that he didn’t like Law, that he would never practice and that he was going to become a candlemaker.

Those years were a turbulent time in the United States and some of that turbulence made its way north to the U of A. There were campus radicals like Jon Bordo and Mort Newman prepared to bring revolution to campus but the wisdom of the day was that the university administration simply bought them off by offering scholarships to more prestigious universities in Eastern Canada. The Black Panther Party at that time was particularly active in the US in its advocacy for the rights of African Americans. In 1969, when the Department of Political Science brought in a spokesman for the Black Panthers to make a presentation to a small group of students, I attended.

The spokesman was a 21-year-old named Fred Hampton. Speaking to the Panthers’ conflicts with the police, he repeatedly stated: “A Pig is a Pig is a Pig.” At the time, “Pig” was the popular new derogatory term for police. I took exception to his generalization

and told him I thought it unfair for him to categorize all police in that way. He looked at me and said: “A Pig is a Pig is a Pig.” He returned to Chicago and a short while later, I read in the paper that police had broken into his apartment and that he had been shot to death in his bed. His pregnant girlfriend was also shot but survived. The article said he was reaching for a gun. It later turned out he had been drugged by an undercover informant that evening and was completely unconscious at the time of the raid. I think that event signaled the end of my political naivete. I suddenly realized that the violent world of Fred Hampton was anything but abstract.

Marks then were not as important as they are today. I recall someone recounting how they applied for graduate school a number of years after completing their first degree in the seventies. When told that their low undergraduate marks were a concern, the response was “If I had ever imagined I would want to go to graduate school, I would have worked much harder and got better marks.”

Political life was active and spontaneous in Garneau. Students frequently challenged established politicians in elections and sometimes the results were surprising. I remember one campaign run by a now prominent Calgarian attempting to defeat Don Getty. The photo on the poster showed twenty plus hippies crammed into a Volkswagen bus with the slogan: “A Little Pot in Every Chicken.” That particular campaign was unsuccessful but others were not. Ross Harvey, a local NDP candidate won election to Ottawa using a flyer showing him looking out over the horizon with his long hair flowing in the wind and a caption that read: “Can You Imagine This Man In Parliament?” I ran for election to the Students Union during one of my first years at university and was soundly defeated by a nephew of Peter Lougheed.

Student radio was another attraction for me at the U of A. During my years at CFRN, staff were regularly offered the opportunity to purchase duplicate albums and other music deemed too far out for family radio. I often took advantage of those sales and over the years managed to amass a personal collection of very obscure music. As a student, I used many of those albums to host a regular program of eclectic music on the campus radio station CKSR (now CJSR.) My show played to a very small audience as broadcasting of campus radio at the time was limited to the Students’ Union Building and the student residences at Lister Hall. Sometimes I was confident that absolutely no one was listening.

These are but a few of my memories. I realize that I haven’t mentioned very much about my professors or course content. I apologize for that omission but the memories that are most vibrant for me are still those of the people I met and the amazing culture of student life that I experienced. It has been my intent to try to convey to you a small part of that experience. I hope you enjoyed my stories. There are still many more to tell.

Don Fleming is a Faculty of Education alumnus and served as Chair of the Edmonton Public School Board.

RALPH YOUNG: FINDING MEANING IN COMMERCE AND EDUCATION

There is a certain mystique, solid character and simple beauty here in the Canadian prairies that has drawn and held me to this region for my entire life. I had lived in Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford, Winnipeg, Brandon and Minnedosa before moving to Edmonton, and Alberta seemed like the best of what the prairies had to offer – especially opportunities for future growth and prosperity. I think that is still true today...

My wife Gay and I made one of those decisions in the winter of 1968/1969 that became a turning point in our lives. I decided to return to university to pursue a new career direction. We were living in Winnipeg at the time where I had begun my career as an “Engineer in Training” and together we had already started to put down roots in the community. I don’t recall why I had specifically applied to the MBA program at the University of Alberta, other than that it offered a new beginning in the region where I hoped to pursue my career and life’s journey. The University of Alberta MBA program was relatively new and actively recruiting, and I was offered a teaching assistantship to help finance my education. The decision to pursue that MBA degree has turned out to be one of the best decisions of my life.

In August 1969, we packed up our modest belongings in a U-Haul truck and set out across the prairies to Edmonton and a new life. Our only connections here in Edmonton were a good acquaintance I had worked for one summer and several fellow University of Saskatchewan Engineering graduates.

I had only been to Edmonton once before to play a Junior football game in 1963. I had no idea at the time I would end up becoming close friends with several Edmonton Huskies players much later in life. We arrived in Edmonton to take up residence in a Whyte Avenue apartment. It was a bit of a rough start in our new home as the U-Haul truck struck the canopy over the rear door of our new apartment – much to the dismay of the apartment managers!

The Faculty of Commerce at the University of Alberta was a completely new and largely positive experience. One of the best things that happened was the opportunity to team up with a terrific eclectic group of MBA students from many walks of life and backgrounds: Jim Richl, Doug Allan, Bob Deagle, Milt Pahl, Roger Helal, Dick

LeMaistre, Miss Dinghra, Diamond Nasser, Mali Odwari-Mboko and many others (a small mix of international students on CIDA scholarships).

Most of us were housed in offices in the old Physics Building – we were a little isolated from most of our class, but we ended up creating strong bonds of friendship and collegiality. In our first year of assistantship, Jim Richl and I were teamed up with Professors Chris Janssen and Dale Bent to mark Management Science papers – and at the time Jim and I both had a very limited knowledge of Management Science. Fortunately Chris and Dale were fine professors and fine people who were fully committed to assisting the assistants.

Between MBA years, Gay and I also started our family with the arrival of our son Ross. The MBA program at the university was a rigorous degree with a focus on lectures, reading and team projects that were highly quantitative in nature. I remember the quantitative work at the time was more familiar to Engineering and Business graduates than Arts or Education graduates. We were challenged by bright faculty including Boyd Harnden, Glen Mumey, Charles Lee, Roger Smith, Rodney Schneck, Mike Vertigan and others who pushed us to our limits. The collegiality of the class and the “pulling together” of people with different skills and interests was extremely helpful in getting through what was for many an intellectually and personally challenging workload.

One initiative which several of us worked on to help create new connections with the outside world was a speaker series of Canadian leaders. We had difficulty attracting big-name leaders, but were fortunate to bring in W. Earle McLaughlin, President of the Royal Bank of Canada and Mel Hurtig, Publisher of the Canadian Encyclopedia. I was also fortunate to be voted President of the MBA Association and worked closely with Dean Ted Chambers, serving as a student representative on the Business Faculty Council. The experience on the Faculty Council left me with a very eye-opening view of university and faculty governance. Academics can be very tough on each other, particularly with the freedom to express divergent opinions which tenure provides. I came away with the sense that in most instances tenure is an important and earned honour for academic rigour and achievement.

Reflecting on my time as a graduate student, I still feel very grateful for the experience. I had assumed that graduate students would have a much clearer plan for their future careers than undergraduate; however, in hindsight, most of my fellow graduates ended up in careers that few foresaw. The good news is that most went on to very meaningful and productive careers, and much of the credit for their achievements is due to their own personal determination and their education at the University of Alberta.

I was fortunate to begin my career the day after exams were completed, which also led to a two-year delay in completing my thesis requirement, thus graduating in 1973 rather than 1971. Personally, I gained much knowledge and new skills in dealing with subjects

of which I had previously only superficial knowledge. I also developed further skills in personal discipline, critical thinking, teamwork and interpersonal communication. I became more adept at identifying problems followed by pursuing a thorough analysis and finally finding real solutions. I also learned to push my own limits.

A university education is only one of the ways to achieve these important life assets – but clearly one of the best for those who appreciate the privilege that the opportunity provides. I continue to believe that it is both a great privilege and a great responsibility to take and use our education not just for our own benefit but also for our families and our society.

Ralph Young is Chancellor of the University of Alberta, and earned his MBA in '71 at the very same institution.

MARY ROLF: AROUND THE WORLD IN 120 CREDITS

The most significant thing I did during my undergrad at the University of Alberta was leave it to study elsewhere. I may have taken it to the extreme - my official transcript includes credit from four universities. On the surface that might seem like overkill or indecision at its worst but I look at it as maximizing my degree. As a university student you've entered a new phase where you can make opportunities for yourself. The world is your classroom. For some this means joining a club, volunteering your time for causes you love, or participating in undergraduate research. I did all those things at one point or another during my time on campus and I enjoyed them, but what really sparked my enthusiasm was going abroad.

Of course, the bulk of the credit I earned toward my degree was from the U of A. I wasn't outsourcing my degree by any means. But 18 credits, the equivalent of just over a semester of work, is from elsewhere.

My first off-campus adventure took place as part of an academic exchange. I was accepted to study at the University of Leeds in Northern England. It was an amazing experience to say the least. I grew up in Edmonton about five minutes from campus, so this was my first time studying away. As an English major I was living my coursework; you can't go anywhere in the UK without passing a literary landmark. The university even had a copy of Shakespeare's first folio and my seminar got to go see it up close. It was incredible. I came home fired up by the whole experience and more excited about my English courses than ever.

A year later I was Skyping with one of my exchange friends. He told me he was applying to do a summer course at the University of Oxford and encouraged me to do the same. I worried it was out of my league, but I thought about it for a long time and decided I'd regret not applying. One of my professors, David Gay, very kindly wrote me a reference letter. The morning I was accepted was surreal. I had stayed up all night finishing a term paper and was totally overcaffeinated. I felt exhausted and excited and vaguely ill all at the same time. It was great.

Oxford was an extraordinary experience. I lived across the quad from J.R.R. Tolkien's old room. I drank a pint in the pub C.S. Lewis once frequented. I studied in the Bodleian Library. It was fun being an academic tourist, but it was the other students that made the program so memorable for me. There were undergrads and grad students as you'd expect, but there were also high school teachers completing the course for professional development. There were professors on sabbatical doing research. I met a woman from San Francisco who had applied because she was unhappy with her job in finance and wanted to try something completely new. Another woman was 73-years-old and doing it for the sheer love of her subject. I came home with a whole new perspective on learning and what it means to be a student.

My third foray off campus was at the tail end of my degree. I had one course left when I was offered a job in Toronto working at a startup company. I felt I could use some "real world" work experience so I arranged to take my last course through Athabasca and moved across the country. This was one of the most challenging parts of my degree. I was living in a new city and working with new people in an industry I knew nothing about. Suddenly I was in charge of my own learning. Outside the safety of the classroom I was now the only student, but it was the steepest curve I'd experienced so far.

The world is your classroom. Up until now these words have probably been nothing more than a cheesy phrase on a motivational poster. This poster probably had a rock climber or some other extreme sport enthusiast on it. It might even have seemed a little false at the time considering you had to ask permission just to go to the bathroom. Still, if I could tell my first-year self one thing it would be to take this advice seriously. Live it wherever you go. Whether it takes you next door or to the other side of the world, it will enrich your experience at university and beyond.

Forging your own path is exciting and hard work. You're climbing mountains, but it will surprise you how often those mountains are made of paperwork. The bureaucracy involved may nearly kill you, but trust me, it's completely worth it. I say that as both fair warning and unreserved encouragement. I'm contemplating a Masters degree and the idea of coordinating my transcripts from all these institutions makes me shudder. Thankfully, learning to navigate labyrinthine organizations is one of those necessary life

skills I learned at university. I like to think that I graduated with an English major, a Biological Sciences minor, and a black belt in red tape.

There will be a moment, probably the day before your flight, when you realize that you're heading for something so big and unfamiliar you can't really comprehend it. You understand in theory but it's impossible to wrap your head around the reality of it. This moment used to scare me. Now I've come to identify it as a sign that I'm stretching myself in a good way.

The thing is, you're actually in charge of your own learning all along. So take the opportunities that come your way and make the ones that don't. Apply for things you think you won't get. Surround yourself with people who are different than you and who encourage you and who are willing to put it in writing. Don't stop because you think you're too young or too old. If a 73-year-old from South Carolina can apply to Oxford, you can do whatever it is you're afraid to do. Get out of your environment as often as you can and see where it takes you.

Mary Rolf is a '13 University of Alberta alumna with a BA in English, and now works in the start-up industry in Toronto. She has also studied at the University of Oxford and the University of Leeds.

DOUG MCLEAN: ONE DECISION FOR THE ENTIRE CAMPUS

The University of Alberta has always been a beloved topic of conversation in our household. Heck, my grandmother and her 8 siblings are all graduates, not to mention my grandfather, parents, sisters and numerous aunts and uncles. If it was possible to bleed green and gold, I'm sure we'd be the family tested.

These discussions over the years, especially with my parents, always seemed to return to unique stories. We heard tales of the great friends, the yearly Jubilaires musicals they were in, trips for cinnamon buns to the Tuck Shop, my uncle's basketball and football exploits and the crazy events and experiences they were part of. Pulling those huge yearbooks off our bookshelf only confirmed and enhanced the legends. University for my family had been a time of fun, relationships, and memories (oh and yes: a class now and again!). There was never any pressure for me to attend the U of A nor for what to do once I got there, but these stories taught me that I wanted such an experience. The problem was I had no idea how to make that happen.

My first year in Business at the U of A was a bit slow. Think dipping a toe in the water rather than an inward 1 1/2 somersault into the deep end. By second year things did change. While I was getting to know more people in my faculty, it was actually a bus ride back to St. Albert that opened up a real chance to engage. A very close friend, then and now, told me he'd just returned from a meeting about Delta Chi, a new fraternity starting up on campus. As a relatively reserved individual, a fraternity seemed a bit out there. But despite that, something in me said "this is it." Not sure why but this seemed like the opportunity I'd been waiting for. I decided to check it out and went to a couple meetings. I found incredibly engaged, nice and fascinating people. It was something I did want to be part of. We had the chance to create an organization that suited who we were and what we wanted.

With lots of effort, we built an organization which continues strong today. I could go on to tell different stories about my experience but they probably won't mean much. Synchronized swimming competitions (yes, you read correctly), accidentally breaking a beam in another fraternity's house, performing as traveling minstrels, charity basketball tournaments, drives to Idaho and late night hangouts sharing our own life goals make up only part of what we did. Trust me, those times were great and I'll never forget them. They definitely tie me pretty closely not only to my friends and Delta Chi, but more than anything to the U of A. Instead of tales I actually think it's more important to discuss why this level of engagement was so important for me and what it's meant since.

Simply put, I'm a far better person today because I got involved. That's why engagement is important. I got the chance to meet all kinds of unique and interesting people. It thus taught me how to deal daily with unique and interesting people, which I currently do. It gave me the sense that I was capable of doing much more than I originally anticipated. Not only did people show great confidence in me, which helped, but they also expanded my horizons to other things I could do. The fraternity was really just an opening that led me to being involved with the Students' Union, the U of A Senate, the Interfraternity Council and other activities. These then opened me up to more people, more knowledge, etc. One decision on a bus gave me essentially all of campus. I recognized just how much was there and how much there was to gain. This message still lives with me now in terms of being active and involved.

With no disrespect to the great professors I had, in my day-to-day life I use more of what I learned in extra-curricular activities than I do from my textbook learning. The time outside the classroom is what you'll remember far more. It's not just about fun and games; you get to test yourself and your ideas in a safe environment that rounds you into a better, more employable individual. I was the President of our chapter for a year. Essentially I was running a small business. You don't learn that in the classroom. Heck, there are exercises from my fraternity days that I use now in work meetings where

they're equally applicable and have been met with positive response. I'm guessing you never thought fraternity time could be that valuable... heh?

Look, it's easy for me to sit and talk about how important it is to be involved since I've lived it. All I know is that it provided me the best possible university experience. When I wrote my last final exam in the spring of 1998 I was a touch sad, that's true, but I also knew I was walking away having fulfilled my goal of matching what my parents did. I lived the university experience to its fullest and I'm better for it. The decision long ago to be 'involved' was easily my best.

Doug McLean is Director of Account Management at Incite Marketing. He's a '98 alumnus of the School of Business.

AMY SHOSTAK: 5 HOT TIPS ON LOVING YOUR EDUCATION

Amy Shostak, one of the Canada's renowned improvisors, a Bachelor of Arts alumnus and the Artistic Director of Rapid Fire Theatre, takes us through a five-point university plan. Read it and weep.

1. Take your time.

It took me five years to finish my Bachelor of Arts degree. After the first year of doing five courses in each semester, I found myself doing my English homework in my EAS class and vice-versa. My only goal was to get a B or better. There is nothing from that year that I can remember. In struggling to keep my head above water, I was depriving myself of an opportunity to actually learn.

Starting in second year, I reduced my course load to four classes per semester, and in my fifth year, I only had three. It allowed me to execute projects with a higher level of quality, and to retain more experiences.

I'm not saying be lazy; I'm saying enjoy your education.

2. Be honest in your work.

I remember doing several projects in my first year that I can now describe as "Ass Kissers." Whether I was doing a presentation on my English teacher's favourite author (chosen not because of my love of her, but because of my English teacher's), or I was doing an artfuck nonsense piece in my collaborative theatre class because it looked an

awful lot like the last piece my instructor was in (facepaint and all); that's playing the game the wrong way.

In my fifth year, I did a self-directed course, where I set out to prove that the theatre was dead. For a fifth-year drama major, this was definitely a dark choice, but my advisor encouraged me to do it. Over a series of months, a lot of hard work, and an installation piece on Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, she asked me if I really believed my thesis. I didn't anymore. The opposite. In my struggle to want to abandon the art form I'd been studying for five years, it hit me; the theatre wasn't dead, just a lot of the artists in it were.

3. Stop thinking of your instructors as “teachers.”

Your instructors are there to guide you through your learning, and help you achieve your goals. They are inspirers, mentors, muses, critics, antagonists, and the biggest supporters you will likely ever have. They do not do the work for you.

4. Be humble.

If you're anything like I was at 17, I hated “the system.” I hated stupid library fees, I hated the red marks around my grammatical errors, I especially hated that I had to take a formal studies class. My advice to 18-year-old me: girl, just shut up.

Looking back, I should have been honoured to have access to such great resources. I'm thankful I understand the word “whose” now. And goddamn it, I'm glad I took *Linguistics 308: Morphology in the Lexicon* because I will never forget the turtle-necked professor, and how amazing it was to dissect a language I didn't know.

5. Want to be there.

I went to university to make my family happy. Probably many of you reading this did. I was too scared to even suggest taking a year off, fearful of the wrath of my father and the awkward Thanksgiving dinners where people asked me what I “was up to.” I went to school out of fear.

Act out of the necessity to do the thing you love.

Amy Shostak graduated from The University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a Drama major, and Art History minor in '07.

IAN MOORE: SOCIAL JUSTICE SAVANT

This is the story of an optimistic, 20-something student whose life for the past six years—and for the foreseeable future—has been shaped by the roller coaster of emotions associated with involvement in the sustainability and social justice sectors. Although working to address some of society’s most pressing collective problems—climate change, poverty, and gender inequality, to name a few—can be among the most rewarding of life choices, it also comes with risks to personal and relational health that too many young activists—myself included—discover too late along their journeys. By telling the story of what these risks have meant to me, and the ways my mentors have taught me how to cope with them, I hope to provide young leaders with a frank and early explanation of what it means to be an effective, committed, and healthy changemaker.

High school... and everything before that

Before starting university, my life was marked by many of the predictable moments that coming of age in a somewhat large, North American city entails. I grew up in a safe and relatively clean Millwoods neighbourhood (despite many of its younger residents preferring to mistake the “W” for an “H”). I attended elementary, junior, and senior high schools near my home. I was involved in a variety of extracurricular activities: from school plays, bands, and orchestras to nightly shinny at the outdoor ice rink. And I left high school with very little understanding of who I am, what I want to do, or how complex the world really is.

While high school certainly had an impact on expanding my sense of independence, my experience wasn’t a recipe for success I’d encourage other young leaders to follow in its entirety. Although I was academically successful, most of my time was spent with my significant other and video games instead of family, friends, and books. And although I enjoyed the extracurricular activities I got involved with—band being the most significant—they weren’t pursued with much depth, nor was I working in any way to improve the world around me. Despite this, my story can help clarify some of the misguided pressures high school students face when making the transition to university (or any other career choice). The truth is: you do not need to know at any specific time what you want to do or where your passions lie, and inspiration for these things can come at the most unpredictable of times.

My university experience

After a fickle first 12 months of university where I changed my major seven times, an eccentric professor of earth sciences forever altered the predictability of my life. Despite wonderfully exciting classes on dolomitization and karstification, this professor’s unique pedagogical style (I was once sent an email about climate change that concluded with a

wish for certain politicians known for their lack of climate leadership to “roast in hell for their actions”) and degree of emotion opened my eyes to the rapidly deteriorating state of Earth’s sustainability and resiliency. Looking back, it’s this class—one that I took to fill a degree requirement rather than a wholehearted interest—that planted the seed of passionate activism and political engagement that has grown and affected nearly every decision I’ve made since then.

After finishing this course, my university experience—friendships, classes, and parties—became increasingly oriented towards sustainability- and social justice-related issues. I took up a double major in Political Science and Human Geography. I enrolled in every related course that I could fit into my schedule. I began volunteering with the Environmental Coordination Office of Students (ECOS) and the United Nations Association in Canada. And I said yes to nearly every opportunity available to learn more about these issues and apply solutions to the communities and organizations around me.

Indeed, volunteering with ECOS turned into working part-time as one of its Associate Directors. Working as an Associate Director turned into working full-time for two years as its Director. And then this turned into a number of additional experiences—conferences, involvement in the creation of Edmonton’s environmental strategic plan, the Deliberation on Campus Sustainability—where my understanding of sustainability became increasingly complex, my appreciation for others with differing values and viewpoints more rich, and my political pragmatism more entrenched.

Without going into too much detail into what I’ve achieved (and failed at), a number of key lessons can be distilled from these experiences. Although these will be most helpful for people just starting their political, sustainability, or social justice journeys, the core themes—health, balance, mindfulness, and relationships—apply to all types of involvement.

Four lessons for being healthy and effective leaders

1. *Being an advocate for sustainability and social justice means always aiming for a moving target.*

A common practice for individuals, organizations, and companies is to label the things they do or create as definitively “sustainable.” While it’s impossible to deny that some things are less environmentally bad than others or certain decisions are more just than others, labels like “just,” “sustainable,” and “green” do not accurately reflect reality.

Reality, at least from my perspective, means sustainability and social justice activists’ goals will always be changing and becoming harder to achieve. Instead of trying to create things according to a standard that’s always changing, we should focus instead on the processes we use to fulfill our needs and wants. Although this complicates efforts to

address the unsustainability or unjustness of certain aspects of our world, reconciling this difference allows us to better appreciate our day-to-day experiences and the small wins that really make for effective change.

Put another way, the world will never be fully sustainable, equal, or just because these words do not represent achievable goals. They are instead the guiding principles by which we should work to improve the world. Indeed, for me, sustainability is a lifestyle and decision-making process that affects how I do things rather than what I do.

2. Working to solve problems that can only ever be incrementally addressed requires leadership that's integrated with self-care, mindfulness, and optimism.

My favourite book, *Zorba the Greek* by Nikos Kazantzakis, tells the story two characters—Zorba and the boss—whose friendship and adventures reflect the tensions we often find in our pursuit of a happy and fulfilling life. Zorba, on the one hand, is a man of many professions—lover, musician, chef, storyteller, dancer, miner, to name a few—whose unbelievable, yet admirably sensuous approach to life infuses beauty into every experience and love into every relationship. The boss, on the other hand, is a deeply philosophical and melancholy man who has come to Crete to live closer to the simple, working class men that he admires, but can never fully emulate. As the story progresses, the boss becomes increasingly mindful and spontaneous, while the sustainability of Zorba's lifestyle becomes increasingly questionable.

In this light, the journey of a sustainability or social justice advocate can often reflect the tension found in Zorba and the boss' relationship. Despite our desire to be happy and fulfilled, the seemingly insurmountable problems we face—for me, it's climate change—make us feel guilty for enjoying aspects of our life while other people are suffering. On the other hand, by ignoring the health of our bodies, minds, and relationships—as many young activists are wont to do—we become less effective at what we do and less passionate about why we're doing it.

There's no simple solution for reconciling this tension. Instead, it's important to take the time to prioritize your health, maintain warm relationships, and incorporate self-care into the work that you do. It also helps if you read *Zorba the Greek*.

3. Many of your friends, colleagues, and family members will change their behaviours and attitudes for the better for what you consider to be the wrong reasons.

There was a running joke during my tenure as Director of ECOS (now known as Sustain SU) that I also played the role of “Bishop of Sustainability” for my colleagues at the Students' Union. Almost daily, colleagues would come to me to confess their environmental sins (e.g. using Styrofoam, driving instead of biking or walking, etc.) or show me that they had done something “sustainable” that day. While in the end it doesn't really matter if the action has the same impact (or lack thereof), it used to bother

me that my friends and family would often be performing their sustainable acts for me instead of for a larger reason.

Working to effect change within any field will yield similar results. Some will share your values and principles and alter their actions for the same reasons as you. Others will express their love or respect for you by supporting the changes you're advocating for. And others will have an entirely different worldview altogether. All of these things are what make life beautifully complex, and as you get more involved in any of the causes you deem important (or life in general), I encourage you to embrace it and let go of your expectations of others. Instead, accept that the world can become better in different ways for different people.

4. Work to understand power and privilege.

Society's most pressing collective problems—whether you consider these to be climate change, terrorism, poverty, or something else—cannot be addressed in any genuine way without an understanding of the systemic reasons why they exist. In all of these cases, the concepts of power and privilege play a crucial role in perpetuating problems that have seemingly simple solutions (e.g. reducing our carbon emissions to scientifically-determined maximum levels of atmospheric concentration).

Because these ideas are much too complex to describe here, and because I wouldn't do a sufficient job describing them in the first place, I'll use this space instead to recommend researching them thoroughly and constantly, contemplating the roles they play in people's lives (including your own), and putting yourself into uncomfortable (yet safe) situations to better understand the things you don't know.

The first time I learned about power and privilege was at an anti-oppression workshop put on by the Sierra Youth Coalition. As a straight, able-bodied, white male who fits nearly every category of privilege in North American society, I struggled—and continue to struggle—with the notion that my successes are at least partially due to the systemic advantages someone like me receives. While I don't think the guilt I felt is abnormal, it's important to be prepared for it and to use it as motivation to learn more about these subjects and the ways they affect yourself and other people.

My approach to and experience with power and privilege will be different from others, and thusly do not speak for them. For those in similar situations as me, however, it's important to remember that because privilege isn't meant to be seen by those who have it, be prepared to dig deep.

Life after university

I've been fortunate to have the opportunity—since completing my last undergraduate course during the summer of 2012—to continue working in the fields I'm passionate

about. Between April 2012 and June 2013, I worked with Edmonton's Centre for Public Involvement and the University of Alberta's Alberta Climate Dialogue to help create the City of Edmonton's food and urban agriculture plan (Fresh) and its forthcoming Climate and Energy Transition Plan. And in September 2013, I'll be leaving Edmonton to pursue a combined MPA/JD at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

As someone who's been able to effect more change than I ever imagined, I look forward to seeing what I can do in a new setting. At the same time, as someone who's both neglected their health and experienced prolonged burnout, my health and the depth of my relationships will henceforth be integral components of the work I set out to do.

Ian Moore is a 2013 Bachelor of Arts alumnus (Political Science) and is a former two-year Director of ECOS (now known as "Sustain SU").

LINDSAY WALKER: UNIVERSITY AS SELF-ENLIGHTENMENT

Four years ago, I was worlds away from where I am today. I was deflated and lost, trapped in that awkward "paper bag" stage of life, listlessly tossed between self-judgment, comparison, and near-death-by-extreme-hairstyling. My life on the outside was really not very different than it is today. It was an internal awakening - a decision to realize the luminosity inside of me that us modern-day hippies call Spirit. After many self-helps and a lot of painful introspection, I realized that the whole purpose of this silly game of life is to be the person that I am meant to be. Plain and simple.

Besides having an affinity for blouses, lucky breaks and awful 90's chick flicks, I define myself as a textbook idealist (those two words together feel awfully ironic). This is perhaps why I am hopelessly addicted to Katheen Kelly's shiny outlook in *You've Got Mail*. My hope for you, and for this generation as a whole, is that you never discount the importance of constant curiosity. My advice for making the most of your 4 years as an undergrad is to determine how you want to feel and align every decision and action accordingly.

This really isn't as daunting a task as you might think. When you strip away expectations and realize that many of your dreams actually belong to someone else, you may come to find that life is simple. And clean. And really a lovely and enjoyable place to spend 100-odd years. Regardless of the chaos around you and the choices you make, your path

miraculously stays its course. There is something comforting in knowing that you can't possibly know it all, and reassuring in the fact that you are not obligated to defend your decisions to anyone. You do what you do simply because it fits.

Our generation is lucky; whereas many of our parents are realists by default - transactional and calculated - we have learned to be intuitive and to think with our hearts. We preach with conviction our intent to save the world. Rather than being movers and shakers of that which already exists, we are creators and explorers of the unknown. University is the perfect time to start (or continue) your road to self-enlightenment. Poke around a little and self-indulge. Get right down to the nitty gritty of your motives and true desires. Have the guts to claim your dreams without shame, the humility to question your ideals, and a dedication to creating a life that is an authentic depiction of who you are. We are lucky that true wealth is readily available to us all. Today's currency is no longer dollars; we trade in joy and in fulfillment.

In the words of ye ol' Saint Catherine of Siena, "be who you were meant to be, and you will set the world on fire." So go out there and let your freak flags fly, ladies and gentlemen. We are never too old or too young to start playing with fire.

Lindsay Walker will graduate in April '14 from the Alberta School of Business. She is one of the co-founders of the university's Network of Empowered Women, which hosted Canada's largest undergraduate women in business conference in 2013.

MICHAEL SCHLEGELMILCH: FROM AMP TO TED

I love TED talks. I must be getting close to platinum member status with the number I've watched, downloaded and shared. I enjoy all of them, love most of them, but only a couple have blown my mind right out of my face. I watched one of the B-side ones recently; a talk on education in slums around the world by Charles Leadbeater. He left me with a great quote: "your vantage point determines what you see." It is a great insight on perspective, which has become the theme of this piece.

I'm 23 now, with one degree and working on another. I'm six months from completing my Masters in Public Health in the Global Health Stream at the U of A. At this very moment, I'm completing my field practicum in Mombasa, Kenya – which is great. It's great because it's taking two equally valuable ways of learning, academic and experiential, and synergizing them into one experience. Both forms of education are

challenging, rewarding and equally worthy of one's time and effort. Just like the milk commercials... "Always Grow, Grow All Ways."

I've been heavily involved in student leadership, community service, or volunteerism (whatever you want to call it) for six years and have done projects in four continents. I've had the opportunity to work on projects that lasted an afternoon and some that developed over five years, each dealing with various issues such as health, education, environmental responsibility, homelessness, at-risk youth, or peer mentorship (I'm similar to that annoying guy at a buffet who holds up the line because he has to taste everything).

I got a head start on student leadership during high school, and when I moved into the first year of my Science degree at the U of A, I felt strongly about giving back to my high school while building a new community of student leaders at the U of A. I had a very positive experience in high school, and I wanted to ensure that other students did as well. I began brainstorming ways to enrich both the high school and university experience for students in Edmonton, founding the Alberta Mentorship Program (AMP) in 2008. AMP is an organization committed to providing accessible support to young adults to help them develop a global conscience and a positive sense of self through mentorship and personal connections. I'm proud to say AMP's team has logged over 3500 man-hours of service and has run numerous events and projects around the city since its inception. In 2010, AMP was honoured with a district recognition award from the Edmonton Public School Board for our service and contribution to the community. Most recently, AMP teamed up with the Strathcona Leadership Program to host thousands of students at the three-day Alberta Student Leadership Conference.

[I could give a detailed play by play of the whole experience of turning AMP from an idea into reality, but I'm not going to write about that. What I will write about is some thoughts on how to start thinking about leadership, volunteerism and choosing where and how to spend your time and effort. I would rather describe a broad goal or vision that I feel student volunteers should strive towards, rather than a precise road-map of how to get there.]

Effort

When it comes to volunteerism, as is the case with anything, you get out what you put in. It takes effort to grow. Anything in nature requires energy to grow. Trust me, I did really well in Biology 30. It takes effort to break the stagnant daily routine and do something different. Your comfort zone only stretches if you push it. I've been in many situations in different parts of the world where I've been over my head with work, commitments, expectations, and all kinds of challenges.

On my first trip to Kenya I was asked to help with a widows group, whose members needed to pool their resources so that they could open a bank account and manage their small farming business' finances. We met twice a week under a large mango tree in the yard of a church in rural Kenya. I had no knowledge of agriculture, banking in Kenya, constitutions, bylaws or Swahili, for that matter. I'll admit, I was quite nervous. But I offered what I could, which was English literacy, and slowly we made progress as a group. The widows group forged on but the steepest growth curve was in my confidence and comfort with handling new situations. It wasn't an easy start, but it was a satisfying end. When things are tough, I tell myself, "You don't have to see the end to be 100% confident that you'll reach it." I feel I've reached a point now where I'm excited by adversity and challenges because whether I succeed or fail, I will have learned something.

Variety

Experiment freely with different opportunities. On your search for ways to engage in your community, avoid gravitating to familiarity. Try something where you have to speak a different language, speak in front of people, play a sport, create something, tutor or mentor someone. Look for variety in your endeavors, but also look for variety in the outcomes. Ask yourself these kinds of questions: will I develop a new skill by volunteering this way? Will I help a new group of individuals or contribute to a new organization or community? For instance, two of my all-time favorite volunteering ventures in Edmonton were completely opposite. The first was running a day-long, amazing race style event with around 60 high school students going crazy bananas up and down Whyte Avenue. Each team had to race through a circuit of checkpoints, visiting businesses with a particular social responsibility or focus and performing outrageous team and individual challenges at each stop. The other was working in a small boardroom with two peers for many hours as we collaborated on drafting visionary documents and strategic plans for a student group designed to support HIV/AIDS peer-to-peer education in Uganda. Completely different sides of the brain were being put to use, but each was productive, rewarding and a valuable contribution to the respective communities.

Perspective

Remember my buddy Charles Leadbeater from the TED talk? He said this: "your vantage point determines what you see." Absolutely. I might only revise it slightly to say, "Your vantage points determine what you see." If you're a speed-reader you may have missed the difference, but it's important. Look at things from several angles. The point ties back to my main message: challenge yourself and put in the effort to find a variety of different vantage points. Even if you're happy with where you're at, shake it up a little, send out some feelers for something new.

When the Internet is at the tip of your fingers, any professional who can understand a patient, client or colleague as a person may have more to offer than one who has vast amounts of knowledge alone. I've had this conversation with many people all around the world and the most common answers are: people who are adaptable, well-rounded and those who have a global conscience. People who are people. I feel that the variety and combination of perspectives that I've gained in community service, student leadership and international volunteer work have contributed to this skillset. I know this entry is teeming with quotes and clichés and bite-sized, one-liner gems, but this one is my favorite of all time: "I once cried because I had no shoes, until I met a man who had no feet."

Be human

There is a concept called 'cultural intelligence' which requires knowledge to understand a culture, mindfulness to observe and interpret different situations and skill to adapt and behave. I was discussing this with a man from Cuba and he said to me, "I don't get it. Why do we have to understand a person's culture to understand the person? What about human intelligence?"

He is absolutely right. I feel that individuals are able to connect through means that are not dependent on language and explicit knowledge. There are universal access points to a strong relationship such as trust, respect, compassion, and generosity. Nourish your human intelligence. Seek the intangibles. If you have money, buy experiences, not things. If you don't - no worries, the best experiences are free anyway.

Michael Schlegelmilch is a '12 graduate of the Faculty of Science, and is a recipient of the prestigious Peter Lougheed Leadership Scholarship.

TOM YONGE: MAGIC

As I passed by what at the time was the Physical Education (PE) building weight room and exited out the west doors by the University of Alberta (U of A) swimming pool, I could see the lines of yellow busses parked on the north end of the Butterdome. The smell of greasy burgers and barbeque smoke filled my nostrils, top 40 songs boomed from a portable sound system and I could see the masses of other nervous first-year PE students huddling in tight little groups of two or three. Amidst the hundred or so obviously "new" students, were the older more confident senior PE students who were busily running around with clip boards and checking lists. They were easy to spot

because of their bright blue shirts, but in retrospect I realized they were more visible because of their swagger and not attire.

As a first-year PE student, only seven school days into the first semester of first year, the U of A with its 33,000 students felt like a fairly intimidating and paradoxically lonely place. I went from knowing everyone in high school, to knowing just one other person in my new faculty. Sure, I recognized some faces from past sporting events or friends of friends, but the reality was that I felt like a really small fish. The only other person in PE that I knew very well was Kajtek, my high school Polish friend. We had an unwritten, but powerful pact to stay close together. Our daily routine consisted of meeting at 8:00 am at the intersection of the soon to be Belgravia/McKernan LRT station, biking to the PE building, going to classes, eating lunch in a corner, checking our emails in the computer lab (yes, that was the only source of internet in 2000) and then biking home. However, today was different. Instead of biking home, we were about to board busses and head off for the infamous “Physical Education Rookie Camp.”

As we made our way over to the cargo van to drop off our backpacks and sleeping bags, I felt strong hands grab my shoulders: “AUGHGHGGHGHGHGHG!!! This is going to be so EPIC!!!” yelled a muscular third-year student, just inches from my face while he shook me back and forth. After what seemed like minutes, he put me down, grabbed Kajtek, lifted him up and did the same thing. As we stood there in shock and awe of his bulging muscles and popping veins, he turned, looked at us and said “My name is Jason. So glad you are here. This is going to be THE BEST weekend of your life” and then he disappeared into the crowd to find other new campers to give out more “welcome shakes.”

“Hi, what is your name?” asked a girl with a soft voice. Startled, I turned and saw an attractive woman in front of me. She had long volleyball player legs, blue eyes and a “girl next door” pony tail. I refer to her as woman because she seemed so mature and comfortable in her skin compared to the girls I knew in high school. I learned later that she was 20-years-old, but when you are barely 18, that is or at least did, feel like a big difference. I blushed as she stood there waiting for my reply.

“Umm, I ugh, I am Tom Yonge. I uhh go to the U of A. Hehe... Obviously...” I said as I trailed off and looked at my feet.

“Well, Tom Yonge, it is nice to meet you!” she said as she extended her hand for a handshake. “I am Carly and I am the president of the Student Council of Physical Education (SCOPE). Here, put this nametag on, okay? Welcome to Rookie Camp”!

Rookie Camp, the inaugural welcome to the Physical Education Faculty Team Building weekend, at the time, had a larger than life legendary reputation in PE, but not always a positive reputation amongst students in other faculties. I recalled hearing all sorts of

tales of activities at Rookie Camp that included everything from outlandish stories told around the campfire, to wild dangerous games played in the bush, to stories of “fraternization” during and after the dance, and to embarrassing hazing rituals performed by senior students. However, there were never many details of the stories or ways to test their validity. The only way to understand Rookie Camp was to go.

As soon as we were on the bus, we all had to take an oath. We had to swear to honour the oath or face stiff ambiguous punishment. The oath, which we repeated three times in unison, was the classic line “What happens on a road trip stays on a road trip.” Upon finishing the third repeat, we all let out a huge chorus of hollers and cheers! This simple act taught me the importance of creating anticipation when organizing student experiences. This is why restaurants often bring out warm bread prior to the meal. The bread is meant to whet our appetites. For us, the mere suggestion that what we were about to do would have to be kept secret, acted as the “warm bread” for our “appetites.” We could not wait to see what was next!

Aside from the oath, we had another connecting experience: we were all given white “rookie camp” t-shirts as we boarded the bus. At the time, the t-shirts seemed like just a nice gesture. However, as that t-shirt got stained with mud later in weekend and more stained as we wore it throughout our graduate years, each mark and rip became a reminder of moments during our time in the PE Faculty. Now, as a leadership teacher and coach myself, I know those t-shirts significantly contributed to group dynamics; the t shirts immediately showed us we were all connected. We were all on the same team. We felt connected and had a sense of belonging.

After the “oath,” we played a slightly inappropriate name game that served as both a surefire way to connect the forty-eight students on the bus. Lesson learned? Know your audience and find the “line.” I would never play this game with my own high school students now (if I want to keep my job), but students in PE are used to team sports and therefore the ribbing, jabbing and often offside comments that are often associated with a dressing room culture. For most of us, familiar with the “straight and narrow” behavioral norms and expectations of high school, this new accepted “jock” discourse was liberating and exhilarating. This same tone and language usually kept for the dressing room became our code and means of communicating for the next few years. Instantly, having a shared means of communication brought laughter and a sense of calm.

I am really tempted to share the details of everything that happened at rookie camp, but as I type, I remember that silly oath and worry that Jason will somehow track me down and give me another “shake.” Also, I believe rookie camp is still happening and although I am sure the experience has morphed and changed over the years, I imagine many of its core traditions still exist. I also know its best for first-year students to go in blind,

nervous and curious to get the most out of it. So I won't wreck the surprise(s) for them in this story. However, I will share a few more "safe" anecdotes of the weekend that impacted me then and still today.

The first is the importance of play. We arrived, got off the bus and before we even grabbed our bags or found our cabins, played a massive one hundred person game of hotdog tag. If the name games on the bus didn't officially "break the ice," hotdog tag certainly did. It sounds silly to be young adults playing hotdog tag, but take one hundred fired up PE students and it becomes a game that ends with being the Champion of the World! It felt like the weight of our nation was on our shoulders. It was competitive, high energy, dangerous and fun! Every other game we played that weekend had a similar feel. It didn't matter whether we were playing beach volleyball, learning how to wind surf, square dancing or playing capture the flag, each game was filled with energy, laughter and joy. Sounds obvious, right? It is clearly NOT surprising that a bunch of PE students enjoyed a weekend of play. But what is surprising, perhaps, is just how important play is to relationship building, group dynamics and individual creativity and yet how little it is valued in society after grade 6.

Since leaving the U of A, I became a PE teacher and found my passion in teaching for credit Student Leadership courses. I love teaching Leadership because I see each class like a team, and my students like players who need to come together to organize successful initiatives in the school and community. It is both a challenging and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Play has always been at the core of what we do in Leadership and what I believe would enhance the productivity of families, organizations, and businesses around the world, especially if it was done more often more intentionally.

The following quote captures my philosophy, "We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old when we stop playing." With this in mind, when my school hosted the Alberta Student Leadership Conference in 2013, we ensured play was a key part of everything we did. At one point we bussed all 1000 conference delegates to 13 elementary schools to participate in "Project Play" which was an afternoon of team-building, mentorship and activities. The afternoon was a tremendous success and both conference delegates and young elementary students said it was their favorite experience in recent memory. When asked what made it so special, one high school student said "It reminded me to always embrace my inner child." Another said "it allowed me to work with classmates I have known all year, but never really knew. Now they are no longer classmates; they are my friends." There were many other responses about the experience, but perhaps my favorite response came from a young grade 3 student with freckles and big glasses, who said: "I liked playing hotdog tag."

I came home from rookie camp and sat in my parent's living room and talked non-stop for three hours about how much fun I had, how many people I met, how the activities were set up (low risk to high risk) and how amazed I was at how quickly a sense of team could be built from just a single event. I feel fortunate to have had parents willing to spend three hours debriefing and listening to me while asking good questions to help me process and make sense of the experience. Perhaps, my experience at rookie camp was better than others' because I had the opportunity to properly debrief and cement those memories in my mind?

My mom asked me at one point, "Tom, what do you think was the key factor in making this weekend so positive for you?" Stumped, I paused and played with my teacup for a few moments. I then looked at her and replied with one word. Magic. She smiled and said "anything else?" Again, as I reflect now, having organized hundreds of similar team-building weekends for my students, I know what my mom was getting at with that question. Sure, it was evident that the weekend felt magical, but she was trying to help me break it down to the core components because she knew that if they could be identified, they could also be repeated. If I could answer that question again, I would probably say something to the effect of:

"The weekend was special because the organizers followed a recipe that works. They were well organized, willing to say "hi" to nervous campers, created anticipation and curiosity, made us feel connected (t-shirts), knew their audience (dressing room talk), let us play games (low risk to high risk) and then sent us home to debrief with our families so we could understand what it was all about."

On Monday morning, Kajtek and I made our way into our largest and most feared lecture hall for Anatomy 101. Just as we were taking our seats, a fellow first-year student we met at Rookie Camp stood up and started yelling a cheer we had learned around the campfire and all of a sudden ALL one hundred of us were standing on our desks chanting with him at the top of our lungs. That lunch Kajtek and I gave up our usual "corner" for the busy crowded couches in the student gathering area. From that moment forward, I didn't see the PE Faculty or the U of A as a place to go to, but instead as a place to be. It became my home away from home. A place to learn, laugh and grow. Speaking of growth, I had decided after high school that I was going to take a break from student leadership and not get involved in any more student governance or activities. I decided that because I was an adult, I should focus solely on my academics and play sports for fun and physical health. I wouldn't have guessed then that the field of Student Leadership would become my vocation.

Anyway, as you can imagine, this plan, thankfully, did not last long. In retrospect, I know that the moment I chose to get involved was the moment I met Carly, the President of SCOPE, when she introduced herself and said hi to me before rookie camp.

Her confidence and willingness to connect was inspiring and contagious. She didn't do anything grand and magnificent, but she did do something incredibly powerful. She made me feel good about myself. She made me feel like I mattered and was worth knowing. That October I applied to be on the SCOPE Executive and then became the President of the council the year after. During that time, our growth continued and we ended up abolishing SCOPE altogether to create a larger, more inclusive council that included the students from the Recreation Department. We called the new group Physical Education and Recreation Council of Students (PERCS). That year we organized a massive rookie camp for all the PE and Rec students and inspired the first-years to get further involved in their educational experience.

Before writing this story, I graded my last leadership portfolio of the year. The portfolio is an assignment that students complete in order to effectively make sense of their experience in the Leadership course. It is my way of "debriefing" with them, and though I ask them different questions, this year I asked each student to answer the same question my mom asked me after rookie camp:

"What do you think was the key factor in making your year in this Leadership course and your experience at the Alberta Student Leadership Conference so positive for you?"

There were many different answers, but the one that made me smile the most was the student who wrote just one word.

"Magic."

*Note: Some of the names in this story have been changed.

Tom Yonge is a '03 alumnus of the Faculty of Phys. Ed. and Recreation. He received Avenue Magazine's Top 40 Under 40 recognition in 2013.

ASHLYN BERNIER: "WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE?"

I attended the University of Alberta for nine years, and I wasted almost all of them being a student. Through a Bachelor of Science and most of a PhD in Medical Sciences, I focused on grades, coursework, summer research appointments, committee meetings and a thesis... This is what I believed being a student was about. And I thought it was working out pretty well. My GPA was admirable, I had excellent references for my

research skills, I was making great progress on my thesis project with only a year or two to go. However, about four years in to my PhD, I had some frightening insight into my behavior – everything I had focused on, the skills I had developed and the people I had come to know – were setting me up for a career I wasn't interested in. I realized that I didn't want the life of an academic, and that my personality and goals were majorly out of line with my pursuits and focus of the last 7 or so years.

So, I thought, now what? I was nearing completion of a PhD, with no desire to take the beaten path that so many before me had went down. I tried not to panic, but I was definitely feeling the pressure to figure something out fast. I knew a few people – other researchers, students, or people I had heard speak at random seminars I attended for free pizza – who I thought could potentially relate to what I was feeling. I reached out to them with a combination of shame and hope, wondering if they might be able to guide me as I abandoned the trajectory I had firmly placed myself on.

The first few cold calls I made took some confidence, and a healthy dose of “what have I got to lose” attitude. However, the first few people I contacted, looking for nothing more than to buy them a coffee and ask questions, seemed more than happy to sit down with me. I learned something that turned out to be incredibly valuable for the remainder of my time at U of A – I carried a special “student card” around with me that, although I couldn't use like a ONECard to buy lunch, gave me access to people and places that I would never have otherwise. I realized that most people that I wanted advice and guidance from had, at some point, been in a position not unlike where I was, and they were happy to help however they could. Also, because I wasn't really asking for anything other than their wisdom, and I wasn't offering anything except maybe a coffee or a beer, they received a kind of intrinsic reward for helping me out. I believe that they walked away from our chats with a feeling that they made a difference to someone - and they did.

The most common piece of advice I received during this period of consultation was to get involved. Spend less time studying and more time exploring the opportunities on campus. Spend less time in the lab and more time chatting with other students in the lounge. Put yourself out there – it's scary, but it will be worth it. So, I did just that. I quickly met other students who were dealing with similar questions as I was. It didn't take long for the conversation to drift to ideas on what we could actually do about this problem, not just for ourselves, but other students. It seemed that so many students were unsure about what their options were after graduation, aside from the obvious Plan A, and maybe Plan B.

So we started a student group that aimed to address just this issue. For me, this was completely new territory. Doing something that wasn't part of the “curriculum,” but was bigger and farther reaching, and to be honest, more exciting and challenging, than what

I was used to. It was an amazing thing to be a part of, and suddenly I began to feel like instead of blindly navigating my way into life after graduation, I was getting excited for it. The possibilities open to me seemed endless.

From this point, in 2010 or so, the opportunities just kept popping up. Once I was engaged and involved in something that was important to people, other ways to contribute seemed to appear almost magnetically. In the next three years, I completed my PhD, completed an MBA, helped plan a province-wide conference for graduate students, served as President of the Graduate Students' Association, and started my post-graduation career (finally), in an exciting and challenging role.

So, I am now beginning to find myself in situations where students are coming to me looking for advice and guidance, and of course I am happy to offer whatever help I can. My advice is simple: get involved. It could be anything from joining a student group, to running for SU or GSA executive, to volunteering on a committee. There are literally thousands of ways to be involved at the University of Alberta, and in Edmonton. And I promise you that if you take my advice, the opportunities will come, and the possibilities for your future will be endless.

Ashlyn Bernier earned her MBA and PhD in Laboratory Medicine and Pathology in '11. She is a former President of the Graduate Students' Association.

CIAN HACKETT: FOUR TIPS THROUGH THE ISSS

Coming from a small town in rural Alberta, I didn't know what to expect during my four years in the Faculty of Science at the University of Alberta. I thought I was reasonably engaged in leadership activities during high school, participating in a few school sports, helping to coach a local badminton club, and organizing activities as my school's Students' Union President. None of these prepared me for the endless involvement opportunities at the University. Between hundreds of student groups, intramurals and varsity athletics, committees, and off-campus activities, it is little wonder that many students aren't sure how to become involved, nor how to make the most of their university experience.

If you're reading this, you're probably already thinking about becoming involved, or perhaps more involved. Do it. Almost all of my best friendships began with volunteer commitments. Many of my leadership positions arose as a result of other involvements. A friend I made on the Board of Directors of a non-profit society told me that the

Amnesty International chapter on campus was in need of people to run the group. He and I became its President and Vice President. Later, I became involved on national committees with Amnesty International Canada. Another friend from the same Board introduced me to a group that hoped to found an association to represent all undergraduate science students, and I ended up as a co-founder and later President. Volunteering helps me to get up every day. It gives me social time while contributing to a community. It has encouraged me to be more efficient with my time, to explore who I am, and to figure out what matters to me most in life.

1. Join your community league

Community leagues are a network of neighbourhood organizations that engage in community improvement projects, provide a voice on community issues, and connect residents with social events and sports. After moving to McKernan in my second year of university, I received the McKernan Community League's monthly newsletter in my mailbox a few times before noticing that they were in need of a membership coordinator. I've spent the last four years helping a partner to manage the league's memberships. Involvement with your community league is invariably a flexible, light-time commitment, and most are keen to engage youth. Each league runs differently, and sometimes committee or board meetings might be tedious for a student, but you can choose positions that involve less meetings, from volunteering at fundraisers or community social events to coaching sports teams. In the moment, I felt fairly distanced from community issues, but over time I learned the value of a strong, vibrant community.

2. Get involved in student governance

Most students know about the Students' Union, but little is known about university committees and student associations that exist outside of the Students' Union. Each Faculty has its own Faculty Association that represents its undergraduate students. As a past President of the Interdepartmental Science Students' Society, I would encourage every student to become involved in university governance. At the University of Alberta, in addition to Faculty Associations, most Departments have a Departmental Association, and some Programs even have Program Associations. Many Faculties and Departments have committees that have student representation, and these student seats sometimes go unfilled. Arts, for example, can accommodate up to 35 undergraduate students on its Faculty Council. Student seats on General Faculties Council often lack candidates in annual March elections, run by the Students' Union. Besides the senior leadership of the student associations mentioned, most of these commitments are at most a few hours each month, and they allow students to understand university issues that affect their education, while networking with administrators, teachers and engaged peers.

The Students' Union is the granddaddy of student governance. I'm not saying that every student should run for an Executive or Student Council position, as these aren't for everyone, but there are many other student volunteer and paid positions available through the Students' Union. Hundreds of students volunteer for its events, services and committees. You'll find that the people you meet through Students' Union activities are, or will go on to, become Students' Union Executives, student group leaders, and high-achieving students. The Students' Union brings together a good majority of student leaders on campus, and you would be wise to browse its website and find something that interests you. It's small enough that you can email anyone and get a reply, yet big enough to do an impressive amount on behalf of students - who knows, you might end up as its next President.

3. Find your own balance

Nobody has time for everything they want to do. Nobody has time for everything other people tell them they should do. I believe that every person must find their own balance within life's chaos, yet don't be scared to upset "balance." Balance doesn't exist for most high achievers. Balance might mean having activities that let you relax, whether that is cleaning the house, baking, socializing, playing music, exercising or clearing out an email inbox (this is legitimately therapeutic for the workaholic in me). Only you can know the mix of activities that you find manageable and enjoyable. Almost everyone understands that a student's first priority is doing well in school, and if you need to slow down your extracurricular activities or take a break during busy times, chances are pretty good that the organization will understand.

4. Gain valuable skills

For years, I was jealous of the few peers around me that knew exactly what they wanted in life. They knew who they were, what they were good at, and what their life would look like for the next ten years. Thankfully, I could join the vast majority of students at university who had a murkier vision of self. You can choose leadership activities that you're comfortable with, but I'd recommend choosing those that allow you to explore areas of interest or develop new skills. If you're shy public speaking, join Toastmasters. If you always wanted to learn more about environmental issues or social justice, even if you aren't sold on the perspectives of these movements, join Sustain SU or a social justice club. These extremely low-stakes environments will only become more scarce later in life. If you don't like something, there is nothing wrong with leaving. At the end of the day, you'll have something to show for these activities – a new perspective, background knowledge on world issues, or a new skill – in addition to a mound of new friends. If you're looking to become involved for the first time, don't be ashamed of your lack of experience. There are many groups that are very welcoming of first-time volunteers. Personality matters as much as experience does when applying for

competitive leadership positions. Some of the best volunteers I hired have been those with little experience who were given a chance to prove themselves.

Most people will recommend that students follow their passions, rather than pad resumes. I don't disagree with this, but I'd encourage you to think about the goals of each of your involvements or potential involvements. Do they build a skill, or offer experience that will be useful to you later in life? Are there networking opportunities with peers, future employers, or decision-makers? Are you able to formally claim hours and position titles if you'd like to do so for scholarships, resumes or other applications? Don't choose a position purely based on the answers to these questions, but if you're putting time into something you care about, it's wise to think about how you can maximize the benefit to yourself. Spend some extra time talking to peers or leaders when you have the chance – you never know what kind of opportunities you might hear about, and you'll enjoy the activity more as you build friendships. Something this simple allows you to alter your extracurricular involvement without compromising your integrity, and could have large benefits later on.

Cian Hackett is a co-founder of the Interdepartmental Science Students' Society, and their President for the organization's sophomore year. He's a '12 graduate of the Faculty of Science and is now pursuing his MD.

ANNIKA PALM: CHALLENGING PERCEPTIONS

I'm not going to tell you a lot about what I did in high school or even what I did while at university. I hope that you aren't flipping through this book looking for people whose stories align the closest with your own or plotting out the same path in order to get to where you see someone in these pages. Rather than aspiring to be someone else, be inspired by these stories to forge your own path.

The reason I say this is because I truly believe it doesn't matter where you have come from: whether you had IB or AP in school or you didn't. Whether your graduating class was 800 or 8. Whether you had a leadership class in school or you had to take math by correspondence. Whether you have held the title of president or captain before, or not. Whether your parents and grandparents have university degrees or you are the first person in your family to pursue secondary education. Although I don't think I admitted it to anyone at the time, myself included, I entered university thinking this is a MUCH larger pond than the one I had been swimming in for the last 17 years, and therefore

there must be much more capable, creative, intelligent and experienced people than myself. I figured there was no chance I would remain at the top of my class or be qualified to fill a “leadership position.” It sounds self-deprecating, but that was honestly what I believed. It was a silly thing to believe.

In reality, the opportunities for self-growth, or to be a driving force behind growth of an organization or movement are just out there waiting to be seized. I was amazed by how accessible leadership opportunities were at the U of A. All you need to do is pay attention - read emails, posters, listen to announcements - and just say yes.

I would also encourage you to be open-minded and flexible throughout your time at university. It can be helpful to have goals set out that you would like to achieve, but you could miss out on a lot of amazing opportunities if you have a set plan and path that you try to stick to.

I ended up in the best places when I was pursuing what I am passionate about. Don't be afraid to try out different things, quit doing the ones that you aren't passionate about, and dive deep into the ones you are. For example, I started volunteering for an environmental organization on campus thinking that it related to my field of study as well as values that I hold as an individual. I thought it would look good on my resume when I was applying for environmentally related jobs. It wasn't a good fit. I wasn't at all excited about the work I found myself doing, and I didn't connect with the people I was working with. I finished the duration of my commitment, still putting in a good effort, but did not sign on for more. Had I stayed, I just would have been going through the motions, meeting my minimum commitment, and not challenging myself to learn much along the way.

I was realizing that although I care about the environment, my true passions lie with people and human development. Jumping headfirst into an organization that was better aligned with these passions, I found myself in leadership and challenging roles almost immediately. I had incredible opportunities to attend conferences and to travel to and live on another continent. I kept meeting people who I found extremely inspiring, and motivating on my own journey. I was pushed to question my worldviews and reflect on the person I want to be. Personal growth was rapid and is ongoing. Despite having a strong belief in this organization that shaped me so much in two short years, I don't think it is the organization for everyone. You have to find the place that fits with your passions and ambitions. For some of you that probably means building something up yourself, creating something new. Whatever form it takes, keep looking for that something that makes you excited to get up in the morning and make a contribution to your community.

I want to end by asking you to constantly challenge your perceptions of what it means to be a leader. My vision of leadership has evolved and grown a lot from where it was four

years ago or even one year ago. This is a piece I wrote for The Wanderer earlier this year, speaking to what I view to be one of the fundamental aspects to effective leadership: leading with compassion.

This essay is republished from the March 11, 2013 essay by Annika Palm. The essay was published as part of The Wanderer Online's Top 100 Most Influential Undergraduates of 2012 project, which recognized 100 of the most outstanding University of Alberta students, primarily in their third and fourth years on campus.

Dislocations

Strain hardening occurs when a material undergoes plastic deformation. As the metal deforms, dislocations develop in the material. It is the build-up and entanglement of those dislocations that give the metal strength. After strain hardening has taken place, it becomes extremely difficult to bend the material back to its original form; the material is changed.

People are like this too. A variety of experiences have shaped me into my form as I stand today. Sometimes I have chosen to stretch myself, seeking challenge and consequently dislocations that I knew would contribute to the person I am striving to become. Other times external forces and circumstances have pulled me, unexpectedly, harder and faster than I liked, and left me with dislocations I wasn't always sure how to deal with. These dislocations felt like loss, disconnection, failures and flaws. In these instances, I have often wanted to revert back to my previous shape, but have been unable to; I am changed. Dislocations can be formed through positive or negative experiences, but neither can be discarded.

The strength humans acquire through dislocations is different than the rigidity a strain-hardened material would exhibit. Strength is not perceived toughness. I am referring to an increased strength in character. Strength in character allows you to exude compassion for the world and the people in it. This strength comes from accepting all dislocations within you and within others, recognizing that the composition of dislocations is variable between people.

Leading with compassion is the most fundamental way to bring positive change to any community you touch. Leading with compassion means creating space for authenticity and vulnerability within groups of people and exhibiting those qualities yourself. It means being open-minded and accepting of differing opinions. It means placing the value of people above achievement. Leading with compassion involves taking the time to

invest in all of the members of the team. This can mean listening to or addressing their concerns, giving encouragement, sharing knowledge or taking the time to teach a skill. Leading with compassion brings together people who care about why something must be done - what is going to be done gets decided along the way.

Whatever broader change or achievement you are striving for as a leader, will be more wholly realized if it is built on a foundation of compassion. If you are able to engage others through their heart-space and not just their headspace, they become motivated and invested in the higher purpose of their actions.

Despite beginning with the parallels between materials science and human behaviour, I want to end with something that appears to be fundamentally human wherever you go. As people, we are seeking love and connection. If life isn't about injecting more love into this world then I have no idea what it is about. Leading with compassion is the most basic way to catalyze positive change toward a world driven by love.

FAAIZA RAMJI: THE BEST PART OF UNIVERSITY REVEALS ITSELF WHEN MOST NEEDED

The best part of my experience at the University of Alberta is something I would never have uncovered during my time there, and nothing I expected to later identify as the “best part of my experience” either. But it’s something I identified quite by accident a couple of years ago. The best part of my experience at the University of Alberta was the realization that I had learned how to learn; how to expose myself to and absorb ideas, and how to think in a non-linear way.

When I started my university life, I was extremely focused on one thing – getting in, settling into my chosen faculty (the School of Business, of course), taking every single course that could make me an amazing investment banker, and then getting out as fast as possible to conquer the world and start making my fortune.

I didn't end my university career quite as well as I started, and I was definitely less keen about maintaining Dean's List status, but I did take every advanced finance and economics class I could find, and a couple of advanced calculus courses for good measure. Four years after I started, I found myself with degree in hand, chest puffed up, and ready to turn down offers left and right for finance jobs. About 15 months after I

started working, I had my securities license and had accepted a job as an investment advisor assistant at a national investment firm in Calgary.

Two days into my move to Calgary and my second day on the job, I got this nagging feeling that this career just wasn't for me. It wasn't what I had expected or what I had studied, and I took a giant leap and quit. I didn't want to waste my prime years being miserable, only to waste the company's and my time and money just to quit when it was too late to jump into a better, more suitable career. So I packed up, came back home (suffered a lot of longstanding jokes from my friends and family along the way) and worked at my parents' Subway while I looked for a new career.

Since then, I have had the most amazing experiences: I have worked in almost every department in a new Top 40 radio station in Edmonton, developed and executed marketing strategy for a multi-national software corporation, helped launch a new, independent radio station in the most competitive market in North America, opened my own restaurant, and worked as an independent marketing strategist with some amazing clients!

None of this happened because of my Finance & International Business Degree. But all of it happened because I went to the University of Alberta. I was immersed in one of the most dynamic environments I have ever experienced. And whether I knew it at the time or not, it taught me how to absorb information and open myself up to learning. Going through an experience like attending university gave me the skillset I needed to become adaptable, and to think outside of a pre-constructed path.

I became addicted to learning, as cheesy as that sounds. Today, when I meet a new potential client, or I come across a new opportunity, it is my passion and ability to learn that helps me identify, approach, and seize that opportunity. My path has changed so many times since I left university, but thanks to that experience, it has never gone backwards – only forwards with the most interesting and unpredictable twists.

Faaiza Ramji is a '04 alumnus of the School of Business, majoring in Finance and International Business.

ROSS SWANSON: MULTICULTURAL LANGUAGES AND NOSOTROS

When Emerson asked me to be part of this book project on community involvement, I thought to myself, “Why is he asking me? I have barely been involved with my community!” But I caught myself there — that kind of negative thinking was the reason I hadn’t been involved for so long. Over the years I have found that it’s important to believe in your own abilities and in other people’s judgment. And to agree to do what you truly want to do.

Right now, I’m writing this as a recently graduated honours student with a major in Romance Languages specializing in Spanish from the U of A. I’m 23-years-old. For the most part, I have only been involved in the university and greater Edmonton community over the last year. My biggest area of involvement has been with a research project that I worked on this year with one of my colleagues investigating how cultural and political practices affected the formation of Edmonton’s Chilean community, which we did in cooperation with an organization from the Chilean community, the Memoria Viva Society of Edmonton.

Memoria Viva was preparing to conduct a similar project with the goal of building an archive for the Chilean community when we approached them, and so our project helped to get theirs off the ground and served as a sort of “test run” for the greater archive project. The project involved conducting hour-long interviews (more or less) with community members in Spanish or in English according to interviewees’ preference. We are now in the middle of analyzing the interviews and will be soon writing a paper on our research that we hope to publish. The Undergraduate Research Initiative (URI) —a great resource for undergraduate students looking to get involved in their community-funded the project.

But the roots of my involvement with this project go deeper. I knew I wanted to apply for a grant from the URI since early 2012, and in August I contacted a friend Dongwoo Kim to see if he’d be interested in working on the project with me. I had a vague idea of what I wanted to do... something that would involve investigating the presence of Hispanoamerica in Angloamerica. My original idea had to do with some Mexican-made westerns, but these movies were difficult to obtain. Dongwoo however came up with the idea of the Chilean community —he worked with a Chilean community member who would later become key in my experience. We agreed to move forward with the Chilean idea. In September, I was given the opportunity to participate in a CSL project for a Spanish course I was taking with Programa Nosotros, a Spanish-language T.V. program here in Edmonton. Lo and behold, who was the director of the program? The same guy that Dongwoo had told me about. I agreed to work with Nosotros and told the director, Rodrigo, about my idea. He was enthusiastic and agreed to help us out. About that time, Dongwoo had to pull out, as he was too busy. But I then approached another friend, and together we started the application process.

Working for Nosotros was one of the richest experiences of my university career. The CSL called for 20 hours of volunteering with the program, but by the end of the semester I had happily worked at least twice that amount. At first, I was given charge of running cameras at different community events. We went to the Stolen Sisters event at the City Hall, and later we also went to the Latin American Chamber of Commerce Awards Night, both of which were amazing experiences. My big project was a 30-minute segment on the program about the Civil War in El Salvador through the eyes of several Salvadoran refugees living here in the city. Rodrigo and I went to a community event commemorating the massacre of several progressive priests in San Salvador in 1989 by government soldiers. After the event, I interviewed several refugees who told amazing stories that I could hardly believe about their lives that had been turned upside down by the war. Many of them had been nearly killed on several occasions. I was so happy to have been part of bringing their stories to the larger public, and only wished that more people could understand Spanish to hear them. This experience was also a major motivator for me to carry through with the Chilean project. Later, Rodrigo invited my colleague and me to a Memoria Viva Society meeting to talk about our Chilean project. We were welcomed warmly, with open arms, and with a kindness and spirit of fraternity (or solidarity) that I will never forget.

Both the Chilean project and my work with Programa Nosotros opened my eyes to a different world, to another side of Edmonton that I (like most Edmontonians) was unaware of. Both the Salvadorans and the Chileans fled from oppressive and violent regimes in their home countries and, despite little support from the Canadian government, founded solid, rich and still-thriving communities in the city. As I met more and more people through my projects, I got a more complete picture of the community and the welcome extended to us from Memoria Viva was repeated from community members. I also became aware of the great contributions that these refugee communities made to our society and to our city, contributing to the political and social fabric of Edmonton and Canada. Theirs is a history that is too often ignored and I hope that my work will contribute to it being recognized by all Canadians.

As an honours student, my other involvement has been centred around my department, Modern Languages and Cultural Studies (MLCS). This year, I sat on the department council as an undergraduate representative. This was not too much of a commitment, as it just meant that I attended meetings and voted on proposals. Nevertheless, it gave me a better idea of how the department and the university at large work.

More important has been my involvement with the 4th Annual MLCS Undergraduate Conference in March, 2013. Here, I was part of a four-person committee, supported by the MLCS honours program coordinator. At our conference, we had a total of 12 presenters from across the Faculty of Arts presenting on questions of language, culture, literature and linguistics. It turned out to be a good success with lots of participation

and support from undergraduates, grad students and faculty. Although this sounds like a lot of work, it really was not. My peers and I got together a couple of times to decide on the particulars of the conference, to design and put up the conference posters and to go through abstracts and select participants. One of the organizers focused on the catering, our faculty supervisor booked the room in the Old Arts Building and put on a very helpful info-session for participants about presenting in an academic conference. Day of, in addition to presenting a part of my honors thesis, I helped to direct the different presenters and other participants, which for me was a pleasure. This experience was also extremely rich and the discussions that day were very stimulating.

As I said before, most of my involvement in the university and the community has been in my last year. During my first years, I had participated in minor ways in the University of Alberta Scandinavian Club and in the French conversation group, Francopains. I enjoyed these experiences, but in general I was slightly dissatisfied with my life in university and in general. Embarrassingly enough, a big part of my involvement was inspired by William Shatner's book *Shatner Rules* (I'm a long-time fan of *Star Trek*). The book was actually quite good. Shatner talked about his amazing career and about his philosophy of always saying yes to things. The man had got into all sorts of crazy stuff just from saying yes to invitations from different people, especially invitations that he had been skeptical about.

Shortly after reading this book, I went on exchange to study literature in Guadalajara, Mexico for 6 months. This too was extremely important for me. In Mexico, I met so many amazing students who were involved in all sorts of initiatives. One friend was involved in organizing a yearly film festival in Guadalajara. Another was writing articles for essay competitions all the time and was organizing an international conference on law and international politics! Another classmate was studying for two degrees at the same time! The other international students were just as inspiring —many of them were highly involved in their communities. What's more, I also met a cute Colombian (now my girlfriend) whose support was invaluable and whose enthusiasm for life was and continues to be an inspiration for me.

Being in Mexico made me realize as well that there needs to be more dialogue between the different countries of the Americas. We, as Americans, are very different from one another, but we also have so much in common. On one hand we share a history of colonial oppression whose effects are felt to this day. On the other hand, we have profoundly impacted each other's cultures, something that is not always recognized, especially in Anglo-America. My interest in this dialogue has been the impulse for much of my work this year.

For new students coming into the UofA, I have several pieces of advice. #1 – Don't be scared to try something new! You can do it. Most of these things are easier than they

look and people are happy to have your help and your contributions. Sounds cheesy, but believe in yourself —you're capable of more than you think. #2. – Shatner's got a point. If you don't say yes to anything, that means you're saying no to everything. That doesn't get you very far. #3 – Don't be a dummy like me and wait until your last year to become involved in your community! Get involved from your first day at university (or before)! #4 – Get inspired. Everybody's got something that they're passionate about. There's no use in dedicating yourself to something that your heart's not in. You won't enjoy it and it will just become a chore.

Looking back, now that I am finished my degree, I can say that I am happy with my undergraduate career. My biggest regret is having been scared and too lazy to participate in an important way in my community. I think about all the friendships that I could have nurtured, about all the happy memories that I would have if I had only left my comfort zone a little more. I am convinced now that being involved is the way to turn a great experience into an exceptional one.

Make it count!

Ross Swanson is a '13 alumnus of the Faculty of Arts (Modern Languages), completing his honours thesis along the way.

BLUE KNOX: THE BOUNDLESS RUNNER

This essay is republished from the March 15, 2013 essay by Blue Knox, originally posted on The Wanderer Online. Out of the online magazine's 1000+ articles, this piece is among the highest-read.

While many students spent their reading weeks studying, partying, sleeping, and resting, my sister and I were in Phoenix, Arizona for Tough Mudder. For three hours and a cumulative total of 11.75 miles of the South West American desert we: ran through live wires, clawed over massive mounds of mud, climbed over 12-foot walls, swam through a shipping container of ice water, ran through hip-deep mud water, crawled under barbed wire, and muscled our way through underground trenches - and those are just a few of the 21 military obstacles. Tough Mudder was not simply a race for us, it was the crowning glory marking how far we had come as sisters and as athletes in our fitness journey. This was our reward to ourselves for five months of physical and mental

strength training. The hours clocked at the gym lifting weights, planning meals in our kitchens, doing yoga in our living rooms, and running the stairs and paths of the river valley were not to obtain superficial physical goals; they were, and still are, a way to become sisters. Not merely by relation but by friendship, to achieve mental stability and to find a balance in our lives. This gave room for our mental health to grow and strengthen.

Recently we have seen a change in public discourse, and media coverage's approach to mental health. There has been a de-stigmatization surrounding mental health issues; slowly we are seeing the public recognize that being a healthy, contributing member of society means mental strength and well-being, as well as physical fitness and well-being. The de-stigmatization has manifested itself not only in the public's acceptance of the need to address mental health issues in an inclusive manner, but also in concrete funding and initiatives being taken by corporations, universities and governments.

On February 9, 2013, Bell raised \$4,813,313.30 for mental health programs through their Canada-wide "Let's Talk" campaign. Closer to home, we have seen UAlberta, and the Government of Alberta partner to invest in mental health support for students. In university you are extremely vulnerable as your success can rely on the sanctity of your mental health. I feel as though sharing my mental health journey over the past five months can show others that they are not alone in the struggle to find balance, and that it is normal to experience fluctuations in one's well being, especially under the stressful conditions of university. Mental health is not a static trait, it exists on a spectrum and where we sit on that spectrum can change dramatically depending on where we are in our lives.

What is the point of university? Sure you're expanding your horizons, and the degree waiting for you at the end of the four, five, or sometimes six-year program could potentially get you a job in a field you are passionate about. If you are lucky, this job will pay you enough money to repay all the debt you've accumulated to obtain the degree. However, have you ever tried explaining the value of higher education to a student who has papers, midterms, group projects, twenty-five hours of shift work, rent to pay, and groceries to buy – oh and that's just this week? University can sometimes feel more like a masochistic path to self-destruction than a path to success, and keeping your head above water can be difficult when odds seem to be stacked in favour of you drowning.

That was me in September 2013. Drowning. After an incredible summer abroad, then several weeks travelling to see family and friends in Canada, and finally coming home to a new one bedroom apartment, I seemed poised to start my third year of university on the right foot: invigorated from the fresh start. This is how it seemed on paper, but things didn't go according to plan. I was exhausted, lonely in my one-bedroom apartment, and completely defeated by my daunting courseload. There seemed to be no

light at the end of the education tunnel; I couldn't balance my work. My mental health was suffering. I couldn't get myself out of bed to attend classes, my employers were sending me home early time and again. I was exhausted and sad all of the time. I was like a shadow of my old self. Where was the motivated, driven, positive Blue everyone knew so well? I had to withdraw from one course and was seriously considering withdrawing from the entire semester. Every aspect of my academic and professional life was at risk.

What I needed was something that I could have control over, something I could aim for and work to achieve. What I needed were some goals. My sister Samantha and I sat down and decided that we wanted to be as physically fit as possible. So we made a routine for ourselves. We each wrote out a list of goals to post on our respective fridges. We each started waking up at 5:30am and exercising. We cut caffeine and alcohol out of our diets, for the most part. We changed our perspectives; eating food not simply for its flavour, but for energy. We looked at the grocery store like a gas station: the produce department is the fuel our bodies need to run as efficiently as possible. We shopped the perimeter of the grocery store instead of the middle aisles. Simple carbs and refined sugars now appeared in our diets sparingly. We both took up yoga, one of the few physical activities I have done that encourages physical and mental well being as well as life balance.

Samantha and I used social media as a tool to better ourselves, following a host of yogis, personal trainers, fitness buffs, and clean eating chefs on Instagram and Facebook who inspired us. We posted pictures to track the progress that we made and stayed as positive as possible on our Facebook and social media accounts. We texted each other pictures and were inspired by each others' progress, seeing muscle where they had never been before, screaming with joy in each others' apartments when we managed to do headstands after months of work.

I don't think either of us could have predicted back in October that we would end up where we are today. We began drinking upwards of three litres of water a day, and had to buy green tea in bulk, because that was our morning wake-up. The routine gave me my sanity, it gave me something I could rely on. No matter how much homework I had to do, no matter how long my shifts at work were, I knew I would be up at 5:30. I would have "me" time on my yoga mat, in the river valley, in the gym. I started seeing a psychologist to work out strategies to avoid ever getting back to the toxic headspace I was in in September. My family and friends were supportive and encouraging and my sister became my teammate.

The road has not always been smooth, as I mentioned before we all experience fluctuations in mental health – that's just how life goes. What is different is that I have very specific tools to deal with these challenges. In November, at a morning yoga class at

Lotus Soul Gym on Whyte, our teacher, Laeonie Ferguson, said something I will never forget: “You need to be able to recognize the difference between discomfort and pain. When you are at that place of discomfort, observe the experience; don’t be overtaken by it. Realize that yes, you are uncomfortable, but breathe, and know that it will pass.”

This mantra is not just for yoga, but all challenges in life. Through physical activity and nutrition, I have not just learned to become fit, but also to be more self-aware and recognize when I am struggling, without being consumed by it. I know there will be bad days, weeks, maybe even months, but I know too that they will pass. When I forget that I have friends, family, and teammates, yoga practice, the squat rack, the Glenora stairs remind me. This year I have seen first-hand that personal well-being requires a balance. You cannot address physical health while neglecting mental health; the two must be taken care of together. Through fitness and nutrition goal-setting, and becoming more self-aware, I have learned that “fitness” is a balance that addresses both your physical and mental self.

So at 11:00am, in the Arizona desert, when my sister and I crossed the finish line together, sporting our matching mud-soaked T-shirts that read “TEAM HARD KNOX” across the chest and “Arizona 2013 NO B.S.” across the shoulders, we were in disbelief. It was over? There were no more obstacles? Our hands were shaking, we were soaked in mud, we were hungry and thirsty, we did it. Five months and we were closer than we had ever been in our lives, we were stronger than we could have imagined, and we were unstoppable. Tough Mudder was just one achievement in the road to strength for my sister and me. There will be many more obstacles ahead of us, there will be many highs, many lows, but we continue to set goals and to achieve. We will not stop because satisfaction can never be reaped through stagnation. I am not the fastest runner, the greatest yogi, or the strongest woman at the gym, but I am trying, and I find strength in that. We will keep moving forward and pushing each other to be the strongest, healthiest, happiest women we can possibly be.

Blue Knox is Managing Editor of The Wanderer Online, and lead on the Top 100 Edmonton Women in Business project. She will graduate from the Faculty of Arts in April ‘15.

JESSA ACO: DEAR 20-YEAR-OLD ME

This essay is republished from the March 11, 2013 essay by Jessa Aco. The essay was published as part of The Wanderer Online’s Top 100 Most Influential Undergraduates

of 2012 project, which recognized 100 of the most outstanding University of Alberta students, primarily in their third and second years on campus.

The Alberta School of Business' 32nd Canadian Business Leader Award recipient Pat Daniel enlightened me last Thursday that the best way to reflect is to give a "lecture to oneself." So when Emerson Csorba asked me to write on any aspect of leadership or on any specific virtue, I took this as an opportunity to look back on my experience as Business Students' Association President and to impart some of my reflections to past, present and future leaders at University of Alberta. I will never expect everyone to agree with everything that I say (especially because I wish I put more time into writing this.) However, I do believe that once in awhile we should take the time to pause from our seemingly busy lives to think about what we did right, what we did wrong and everything else in between. We are all constantly evolving as better people and better leaders. If we don't look back, we risk making the same mistakes and we deprive ourselves of the appreciation that we sometimes need to keep going.

Dear 20-year-old Jessa Aco:

You must be really happy right now. You just became BSA President. I know you – you're idealistic, driven and you get way too excited about new projects you take on. But hold your horses girlfriend... you have a lot of work to do. I don't know if you realize this now, but you will be experiencing one of the most stressful, life changing and worthwhile years of your life. I have a couple of pointers for you. Take them to heart.

1) Leadership starts with your personal life. Don't just have a strategic plan for the BSA. Solidify your strategic plan for yourself. Get solid numbers: How are you going to fund your schooling now that a part time job won't be realistic? How many classes are you taking and what would they be exactly? What do you personally want to get out of the position? Tell your parents ahead of time that you won't see them as much. Make sure your friends understand what you do so that they can be extra lenient on you when you miss some important events of their lives. Because when you miss that family dinner as you spend the whole night preparing for your AGM and you have a Tax midterm the next day, you don't want them to think that you just did not care. Before you become a leader for others, you need to be sure of yourself. Take care of yourself. Eat healthy food. Use Gmail's vacation automatic response. Actually stay home and sleep when you're feeling sick. Exercise. Most of all, don't feel guilty when you're not working. It is normal to watch SUITS every now and then. Make sure you have time for yourself. Because if you don't, that fire in you will burn out.

2) Leadership is recognizing that not everyone will be your biggest fan. You are naturally a people-pleaser, but let me burst the bubble for you – you CANNOT

please everyone. It's a big cliché but it is easier said than done. Your stakeholders are a variety of people, but it boils down to who you want to be and how you want to be remembered. In this world of scarcity, you need to choose and realize you won't have time to do it all. Recognize this early on before you beat yourself up by trying too hard. It's a tough position but it will be worth it. In the end, as long as you have pleased yourself, you can sleep soundly at night. Stick with your decisions. Conflict is inevitable.

3) **Leadership is doing your work every day as if it's your first day.** A wise man once told me that you are never late on your first day. You are always trying to impress people on your first day. You don't slack on your first day. So from here on end, make sure every day feels like the first.

4) **Leadership means sometimes biting your tongue.** Listen. I know you talk too much. Don't even deny it. But remember that brevity is key and that it is more important to listen and read between the lines as opposed to talking the entire meeting. People tend to not say everything they mean so you need to figure out what makes each person in your team motivated. Learn whether they even want to do the job. If you take the time to do this at the beginning of your term, you will honestly have an easier time throughout the year.

5) **Leadership is not being superhuman.** You won't be right all the time. Swallow your pride and admit your mistakes. You have limits. If you try to do too many things at once, you will not be comfortable with the quality of work you deliver. You might disappoint others. Most importantly, you will disappoint yourself.

6) **Leadership is creating leaders around you.** Delegate. It is half a teaching job. I know you have problems with perfection. But accept early on that not everything will go the way you want it to be and that you should let people grow as leaders while you are President. Do your due diligence but for the most part, give them the playroom they need. If you give people tasks, all they do are the tasks you give them. If you give your team a goal, they will surpass your expectations. Obviously, this is given the fact that the person you're working with actually wants to do a project. Nobody will work hard on something that he/she doesn't want to do, especially for a non-profit organization. Will exceeds skill. Always.

7) **Leadership is spreading the love.** With over 30 emails (on a good day) and an endless to-do list, you may sometimes forget to appreciate some of the great work that is happening when you are not looking. Leadership is appreciating your team's work and making sure that whether someone has donated 15 minutes or 3 hours of their time for the BSA – that's still time that a person cannot take back. These individuals deserve some gratitude.

8) **Leadership is entering the correct address on the GPS.** Leadership is having a clear goal. No matter what road you choose to take or even when you make the wrong turn, as long as you know the direction of where you are heading, you'll be fine. You cannot do everything! So don't expect "budgeted" and "actual" to be exactly the same at all times. Form a clear purpose and pick your priorities. Take every opportunity you can get and accept the fact that the road can get a little bumpy. As long as you have entered an "address," you'll make it there.

9) **Leadership is courage.** You are not expected to know everything through turnover documents. This is a "learn as you go" kind of job my friend. As long as you are brave enough to tackle each obstacle with resilience and a smile, it won't be the end of the world. Just don't chicken out. It's not meant to be easy. If it were, everyone else would be doing it.

10) **Leadership is legacy.** Creating something that's sustainable. In every project you commit to doing, think whether the structure is strong enough to last awhile. If you see current programs that need revisions to be more effective, do something about it. Don't just leave it the way it is because "that's how it has always been." Make sure you leave a lasting legacy to the organization and to others. Leave the BSA better than when you first joined it.

With these 10 pieces of advice, I can honestly sum it up into one word: DISCIPLINE. I don't even know if that's a virtue or not but truthfully, that's the one thing that got me through the year. If you ask me to define it – when motivation and hard work made a baby, self-discipline is what came out of it. Jessa, you have it now. And that will help you get through your next year. Discipline is what will wake you up at 6:00 in the morning for a 7:30 meeting. Discipline is what will make you open your Tax book and not forget that "student leader" has the word STUDENT in it. Discipline is what will get you through the toughest of times and still stay positive for you and your team. You will be a better leader after all of this. Just remember my 10 pointers above. You'll do just fine

Sincerely,

21-year-old Jessa Aco

Jessa Aco served as the Business Students' Association President in 2012-2013, and now sits on the Alberta School of Business' Alumni Council. She will graduate in early '14 with a major in Accounting.

KYLE BRANT: GREEKS' GEM

I didn't always consider myself a leader. In fact, I didn't fully understand what being a leader even meant. When I thought of leaders, I thought of John F. Kennedy, Wayne Gretzky, and Bill Gates. How could I possibly be a leader? I was no president, MVP, or entrepreneur.

It took me a long time to realize that leadership is not a quality reserved for the famous and powerful people seen on television and in newspapers. Fortunately, this realization occurred to me while I was still in high school and allowed me to take advantage of all of the leadership opportunities available to me in university. My journey was not a short one and it has not ended. It has lasted my entire life, and while I wish that I could share the entire experience, it is sufficient to summarize it with a few specific events.

When I was young, I did not think that I possessed the qualities required of a leader. Yet, for some reason, other people seemed to see these qualities within me. I was repeatedly placed in leadership roles and given the opportunities to lead. The earliest example of this that I can remember was when I was in the second grade. My mom had enrolled me in Cub Scouts, which met once a week at a local elementary school where we learned basic skills that might come in handy at some point in our lives, such as knot-tying, orienteering, and fire-building. For every skill that was mastered and demonstrated before the scout leader, we would be given a badge to be sewn onto our uniform.

When I was in the eleventh grade, I discovered that by joining my high school's students' council, I would occasionally get to miss class to volunteer for various events, and that all members of the students' council received a free hoodie with their names embroidered on the sleeve. I had missed the students' council elections and was not eligible to run for a position until the following year, yet a friend and I decided we would show up for the meetings anyways. No one seemed to mind and we ended up being assigned to committees and helped plan events and fundraisers.

It was a good experience, but I was mainly in it to get out of going to class and get a free hoodie. A year later, nominations for the executive committee opened up, which was essentially a group of four students that assumed the roles of co-presidents and led the overall student body. I had no intention of running for the position as it seemed like a lot of work. After the initial round of nominations ended, many of my friends were disappointed in the nominations as they felt that there were no strong candidates. They decided that I should run for the position as they felt I would be a strong leader that could take a firm stance with the rest of the Executive Committee when necessary. I still did not intend to run for the position, but my friends nominated me anyway. I ended up receiving the most votes and was elected to the executive committee. The position turned out to be a great experience and I learned a lot about leadership. I had many

teachers acting as mentors to me and they provided me with excellent lessons about leadership and life in general.

Following high school, I chose to attend university so that I could receive a good education that would allow me to get a well-paying job. Leadership opportunities did not factor into my decision at all and I didn't even know that the university offered these opportunities. Throughout my first year of university, various student groups and clubs approached me, but I felt that I needed to concentrate on my academics first and could not spare the time for extra-curricular activities. After my first year, I became more familiar with how university courses were structured, I learned how to make effective use of my time, and I refined my study skills.

The first student group I ended up joining was one that I did not expect. One of my close friends from high school had joined a fraternity in our first year and he repeatedly pressured me into checking out some of their events. I kept telling him I didn't have time, but when the school year ended, I ran out of excuses and allowed him to drag me out to a barbecue at his fraternity house. I expected everyone there to be loud and annoying and to try and get me join, so I was prepared to tell them that I was not interested. When I actually showed up at the barbecue, everyone turned out to be really friendly and chill, and not a single person asked me to join. They gave me some burgers and chatted with me about cars, sports and so on.

I thought that they were pretty cool guys so I decided to check them out some more. After attending a few more barbecues during the summer, I attended their first meeting in the fall. This was the first time that I realized how the fraternity was structured and how it was so much more than a group of guys that hung out and talked sports. There were several officers and committees, they had an alumni advisory board, they took meeting minutes, and they reported to an international organization. This reminded me so much of my high school experience with students' council that I felt right at home. I knew that I wanted to be a part of this organization and that I wanted to run for president of the fraternity some day.

After the meeting, I asked my friend how to join and he explained the process to me. A few weeks later, I was officially an Associate Member and now had the ability to run for an officer position. I chose to run for the position of Fundraising Chair and, with my previous fundraising experience in high school, did so successfully. It was a minor role, but an important one, as the previous fraternity leadership had left the current group with a lot of debt that needed to be paid off.

The following year, I chose to run for the office of President of the fraternity and prepared myself by shadowing the previous president during his term. I won the election and was made President of the fraternity, which ended up being a full-time job. I was overseeing the entire operation of the fraternity as well as all of the officers

underneath me. I set lofty goals for the fraternity and mapped out how we were going to achieve these goals. I made each officer submit weekly reports to me so I could track our progress towards these goals. By the end of my term as President, the fraternity had met or exceeded all of the goals that we had set for ourselves and I was ready to step aside and let someone else take over leadership of the fraternity so I could set my sights on other leadership positions outside of it.

Joining a fraternity was one of the best decisions I made while in university, and the experience I gained from it has helped me grow and excel as a leader - preparing me for life outside of university more than any of my classes ever could.

After ending my term as fraternity president, I decided to join other organizations where I could apply my leadership skills to help them grow, while simultaneously gaining more experience in various areas critical to being a leader. I joined the Students' Union and university committees, I joined the board of directors for two non-profit organizations, I volunteered for several different charitable organizations, became the President of the InterFraternity Council, helping set the long-term direction for the entire fraternity and sorority system, and finally became a student ambassador for my faculty. All of these experiences have helped me to grow as a person and to develop and refine my various skills to become a better leader. I have used these skills to mentor other people so they, too, can become leaders and help contribute to whatever organizations they are a part of.

When I was younger, I never considered myself to be a leader, but that was only because I did not have the confidence in myself required to be a leader. By continuously taking on leadership roles, despite not believing that I could fulfill the obligations of these roles, I gradually became more confident in myself and in my abilities. Eventually, I began to consider myself as a leader and began to actively seek out leadership opportunities that would challenge me and test my skills. Through this process, I have developed into a leader that can face any challenge head on and I've learned how to inspire the best efforts from those around me to help in overcoming these challenges.

University is a place of higher learning, but the academic part of university is only one part of this higher learning. The other part comes from your experiences outside of the classroom, with friends, with student organizations, with work terms, with exchanges, etc. University offers many opportunities to learn so much more than just an academic curriculum, and this opportunity must not be wasted.

If you are lucky enough to attend university, college, or any other institute of higher learning, you owe it to yourself, and to society, to learn as much as you can and to experience as much as you can, because you will not get this opportunity again. If you do not consider yourself a leader right now, consider the story you have just read and know that you are a leader - you just haven't realized it yet. Do yourself a favour, go challenge

yourself to take on a leadership role - even a minor one - and you might just surprise yourself, like I did.

Kyle Brant is a '09 Faculty of Engineering and '13 Bachelor of Commerce alumnus. He served as President of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity.

STEPHANE ERICKSON: OUR COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE

“The importance of language rights is grounded in the essential role that language plays in human existence, development and dignity. It is through language that we are able to form concepts; to structure and order the world around us. Language bridges the gap between isolation and community, allowing humans to delineate the rights and duties they hold in respect of one another, and thus to live in society.”

– Supreme Court of Canada, 1985

My story is not entirely my own. It belongs, in part, to others, to a collective memory of many generations, to a rich history, to an evolving and persevering community. My story is shared, because without the other, without human collectiveness, there would be no story to tell.

This story is about being part of something so small yet so unique, and learning that being a minority is not a limitation to opportunity - it is a path to endless possibilities and true fulfillment.

Born and raised in Edmonton's French-speaking community, from an English-speaking father and Francophone mother, my passion for minority rights and memory stems from my early childhood. The very school I attended in Edmonton, École Maurice-Lavallée, resulted from a decade of political, social and legal struggles to obtain the constitutional right to self-run, publicly funded, Francophone education. In many ways, I consider myself a child of Canada's Charter, the product of a community's unyielding will to thrive, living proof that assimilation of the few by the many can be countered. To my high school self, this may have seemed overly poetic, but looking back today I know that my years spent in the Francophone education system molded my person and painted the portrait of my identity.

Identity. It's a scary, daunting, thing. Who am I? Who do I want to be? Who should we as society be? What should we value? Although such questions may only seem like a big deal when graduating from high school, be assured that they never go away. They keep coming back at different times, under different circumstances. University really is a great place to explore those questions, to which, in the end, you alone hold the answers.

My Bilingual Commerce degree was done at Campus Saint-Jean, the U of A's French-speaking faculty and pillar institution for Alberta's Francophone community, as well as at the Alberta School of Business. For the first two years I lived at Résidence Saint-Jean, where I worked for one year as a Resident Assistant (Floor Coordinator). Like it did for so many others, the "Fac" became my home. Not only because I lived and studied there, but also because it lived – it lives – in me; it became a part of my identity. Again, cheesy, I know, but nothing can be truer. The community fostered at the Fac is unlike any other. And no, it's not because "everyone knows everyone", but rather because everyone cares about everyone.

What's more, it's amazing that in Edmonton, Alberta, you have access to postsecondary education in French. Lest we forget that at one time the majority of the West, including Wild Rose Country, was Francophone, but, due to assimilation projects and policies like outlawing French education in the early 20th century, French speakers saw their institutions and culture dwindle, threatened, and in some cases lost over nearly 100 years. To me, Campus Saint-Jean represents the unwavering strength of the French language, a champion for minority rights, and a testament to my ancestors who overcame the impossible - a true survivor in spite of many challenges, which it continues to face today. For its story to be part of mine, and mine part of its, brings me both solace and resolve. It was at the Fac that I saw my passion for minority rights grow in both purpose and vigour.

Needless to say, my Francophone roots were the reason I developed such consideration for the underdog, such empathy for the oppressed, such need to speak out against injustice. I came to realize that democracy cannot be the rule of the majority, dictating as it will the rights of minorities. With this in mind, at the end of my second year, I felt it was time to broaden my horizons – beyond the borders of Canada. So how was I going to combine my passion for social justice, my love for language and my desire to go abroad?

Latin America was my answer.

Nowadays, international experience is a must – this I learned quickly at the Alberta School of Business. Going into University, I had already traveled to Europe, Latin America and Asia with my high school, but never lived, worked or studied abroad. My trip to Nicaragua in high school was humanitarian in nature, unlike my other two. There, I was exposed to one of the Hemisphere's poorest countries – poverty and

disparity that breaks the heart, tears the soul. So, in my second year, I applied to the Canadian Consulate Internship in Guadalajara, Mexico.

I didn't think I would get it, because they generally only accepted 3rd or 4th years. Shows you that it never hurts to apply. In May 2010, I moved to Guadalajara where I worked for the vice-consul for three months. Later during my studies, I also did a semester exchange to the University of Chile in Santiago de Chile, and an internship at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the Organization of American States (which is like the U.N. for the Americas) in Washington, D.C. By the end of my degree I had traveled all over South America, and done internships in Mexico and the States. I learned so much about human rights issues, about minority rights issues – indigenous rights, women issues, and LGBT discrimination – and was nearly fluent in Spanish. My Spanish professor at Campus Saint-Jean became one of my key mentors during my undergrad, and she is to this day a very good friend.

But sadly, in April 2012, undergrad came to an end. Yeah, you know that crisis mode you hit in grade 12? Well it comes back to bite you ten times harder when it's your turn to graduate from university. I decided to hide from the real world for another three years and go to Law School.

Time flies. It really does. I suppose that's what makes it precious, yet taken for granted, exciting, yet intimidating, thrilling, yet overwhelming.

Why Law School? Again, the idea was to tie in my international gain with my inner fire to advance minority rights in Canada and abroad. While raised in a Canada where the French language had more protection in both law and practice as opposed to that of my parent's generation, I was aware that the fruition of full rights for official linguistic minorities and actual equality of Canada's two official languages still had a long way to go. But the issue was even bigger than that. My longing to study law was about protecting the memory of my ancestors, the consciousness of my people woven into my own to be passed on to generations to come – not to be lost to the currents of time, to the forces of assimilation and forgetfulness.

Today, I am in the Programme de droit canadien at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law. Bijural and instructed in French, the program focuses on both the study of common law and civil law, embracing the heritage of Canada's two legal and international traditions gifted from the United Kingdom and France. As it is a Francophone program, we are particularly exposed to the issues faced by minorities in Canada and how Canadian values and law must be a refuge for those who seek protection against the majority's arbitrary pull. Incapable of hiding my nerdiness for constitutional law, I can't help but share another quote from our country's top court: "If equality rights for minorities had been recognized, the all too frequent tragedies of history might have been avoided."

As the program instructs its students in these two international languages and legal systems, the possibilities are endless. In my first year alone, I have had the opportunity to personally meet Canada's Chief Justice, the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, former Supreme Court Justice, the Honorable Michel Bastarache, former Governor General, Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean, my senator, the Honorable Claudette Tardif, and the list goes on. What's more, I have had the privilege to be a legal intern with the Parliamentary Office of my Member of Parliament, Linda Duncan, who is a lawyer, and with the Canadian Embassy in San José, Costa Rica, where the Inter-American Court is also located. In meeting and listening to these Canadian champions, they all seem to communicate one key message: In life, pursue what drives you; what gives you passion and fire to carry on and to thrive. Wise advice, if you ask me.

Money. Yes, I know, it's an unavoidable issue. I was fortunate to have the financial support of Alberta's Francophone community and the University of Alberta throughout my business studies. Apply for everything. Both Campus Saint-Jean and the School of Business are known for their support towards students. For Francophone minorities, the government also has funding. In studying law, I was fortunate to receive the Fondation Baxter et Alma Ricard Scholarship, a fund put in place to support official Francophone minorities seeking to study in their mother tongue. In my view, such financial support shows that Canadian institutions value the richness of the country's linguistic duality, and of what minorities can contribute to society.

As you can see, University is not merely an academic experience; it's human one. It's not an individual experience; it's a collective one. And it's not a kept narrative; it's a shared one. It's about identity: getting to know – getting to choose – who you are. University is about developing and growing, through your own experiences and through those of others. It's about learning to value what makes you, you, through a constantly evolving apparatus of new ideas and perspectives.

My story is not my own. It is intermingled with so many others – from Edmonton, to Guadalajara, to Santiago, to Buenos Aires, to Washington, D.C., to Ottawa, to San José and so forth. When you embark on your postsecondary adventures, it's important to remember that your stories will become part of a greater collective narrative. Mine was about the struggle for minorities, notably Alberta's Francophone community from which I come from. It was about protecting memory, while adding to remembrance, for both today and future generations. I found a narrative that gave me purpose, that gave me fire, of which I wanted to be a part of.

What narrative do you want to contribute to? What stories do you want to make your own? And, most importantly, what stories do you want to pass on to others?

Stéphane Erickson détient un baccalauréat bilingue en Administration des affaires de l'Université de l'Alberta ('11) et est actuellement un candidat aux JD et LLL dans le Programme de droit canadien à la Faculté de droit de l'Université d'Ottawa.

CHELSEY VAN WEERDEN: A WELL-TIMED TRANSFER

My name is Chelsey Van Weerden, and at the moment I'm a proud owner of a Bachelor of Arts in Art History with a minor in Comparative Literature (what can one do with a degree like that you say? Read on!). Currently, I work for the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Arts by day. In my spare time, I co-manage a local arts blog, PrairieSeen, I volunteer at local art galleries and events, and continue to be an all-around arts enthusiast.

I'm passionate about promoting Edmonton as a city rich in art and culture while at the same time, working to make art and its ideas accessible to everyone – especially those who otherwise wouldn't give art a second glance. Edmonton really does have a lot to offer in the visual arts, which is consistently evidenced by the extremely talented and dedicated individuals that help build our visual arts community. There are benefits to coming from a city that may not immediately come to mind as an art and culture destination – the people involved in creative fields here form a tight community of passionate, like-minded people who are furiously protective of the environment we strive to maintain. I care very much about voice of the arts in Edmonton, since I come from an observer's perspective – someone who dedicated their education to analyzing and writing about art, as opposed to making it. My education in Art History and Comparative Literature is what shaped this passion of mine as well as guiding me to better communicate it.

I began my post-secondary adventure as a Psychology major at Concordia University College in Edmonton. Although this university offers a cozy community with small class sizes, and was a valuable introduction to the post-secondary world for me, by the middle of my first year I found it just wasn't the right fit. Since I attended a rural high school, I thought a small university would be a better option than the stadium-sized first year classes at a larger school.

However, the once-appealing small size of the school soon felt limiting to me. In the aforementioned rural high school, opportunities to be involved in creative activities were limited. I always had an interest in art, and admired it from afar – but I didn't think it was something I could be a part of until university. Since I was feeling bold and

ready for a change, I jumped at the chance to transfer to the U of A, a place I believed would be the diverse, challenging environment I was looking for. In this new environment, I saw opportunity in the more diverse classes to choose from, and in extracurricular options as well. I found myself seeking out volunteer opportunities and student groups that I would previously shy away from.

When I was looking for volunteer opportunities, by chance I started working part-time at the FAB (Fine Arts Building) Gallery on campus. Here I found some great friends and within the U of A fine art community, met some of the most inspiring people I've had the fortune of encountering. When you're studying in a discipline that might not be what the school is best known for, you're forced to truly ask yourself the reason you're pursuing this particular path. This is where some great discussions and great ideas are born. When surrounded by others in the same community, you have to learn how to really think about why you do or do not like a certain artist or piece of work. As a result of these experiences, I developed an appreciation for certain pieces or methods of art-making I either thought I didn't care for, or hadn't thought about before.

One idea that's grown out of a good FAB Gallery conversation is a blog project with fellow Art History graduate and lover of the Oxford Comma, Tori McNish. With graduation nearing, we agreed that we both still had a lot to say about the art community in Edmonton, and about art and design at large. Although we were most certainly ready to be finished with assigned research papers and stressful final exams, we knew we would miss the daily engagement with art, the accountability that comes with being forced to defend an opinion, and the discoveries that go along with it.

What if there was an online space that featured local art writing and opinion pieces, a space that featured talented artists working in Edmonton within a more personal setting? With such ideas bouncing back and forth, PrairieSeen was born the following Fall. Our little newborn blog came in a very modest package, but with plenty of ideas that would come to fruition in later months.

I'd been an avid reader of many blogs for almost as long as "blog" has been a word. Over the course of my degree I spent countless evenings procrastinating writing papers and studying by patrolling my favorite online presences. Three elements would come together in a perfect storm to make launching our website possible: my undying love for the Internet, a passion for both art and writing, and an unsolicited opinion on just about anything. The people I've met through volunteering and working at the Fine Arts Building Gallery have proven to keep us inspired to come up with new content, and expand into other art-related events in the city. It's an exciting (and admittedly scary, at first) thing to have an online, public space dedicated to your passion. It keeps you writing (and keeps you accountable for it!), and provides a means to connect with other like-minded people in the community.

What I've learned through my time in university, and from the short amount of time I've been in the 'real world,' is that everyone has an opinion – but not everyone learns how to communicate it in a constructive way. Believe me, figuring out how to communicate an issue you're passionate about becomes an art in itself. Drunkenly cornering someone at a party and ranting about the shortcomings of post-secondary education today – maybe not the best way to rally people for the cause. Carefully constructing a well-written and well-researched article on how as a culture, we need to re-think how we attain and value diverse skillsets and educational backgrounds – good! Do more of that.

If you have something valuable to say and you hone your communication skills and present yourself in an eloquent way people will listen, I promise. The future can do nothing but profit from those who not only have the ability to successfully argue for a cause, but to look at that cause from all vantage points to come up with truly constructive ideas. The best way to hone this skill is to practice, practice, practice. Always keep the other side of the issue in mind when constructing an opinion piece or an argument. People will respect you more for it and your friends will stick around – it's a win-win!

I've also learned a lot about time management. I know that doesn't sound like an exciting, valuable life lesson but hear me out. When in University and on the other side of graduation, you'll find out very quickly that your spare time is drastically reduced. And that's okay! I've been the most inspired and productive when my schedule is the tightest. At my busiest, I found myself volunteering for events and getting involved in projects I may not have had a lot of time for, but it made me happy so I made time for them. Having a limited amount of wiggle room with your day-to-day schedule compels you to use the time that you do have in the best way possible. Occasionally this time will be used to watch cat videos on the Internet, which is a valuable and important way to unwind. But hopefully in other moments a full schedule will make you spend your time on what truly makes you happy – look at how you spend your time now – what are you doing, even though you don't have to? Chances are, your passion and talents are right there. Run with it.

My advice to those entering University is that if you're coming into a completely new environment like University life, always remember that there is a community for you – approach these people. In the first couple years of my University education, I was too bashful to approach people I thought were interesting, or galleries and museums I wanted to be a part of. Don't wait around for someone to give you permission to get involved, or tell you to do it because it's not anyone else's responsibility. Just go for it! More than likely, these groups will be happy to find others with similar interests who want to get involved. Once you break the proverbial seal, it will only be easier to be a part of something you care about. Do this even if such an activity might not directly

‘relate’ to the career you’re pursuing. You’ll expand your social circle with a new group of friends, and give yourself a diverse skill set that can only help you down the road.

Another important thing to remember is to not shy away from taking a certain class in University because you don’t think it’s your cup of tea. Over the course of a four-year degree, you’ll have to take a few classes that are neither your major nor your minor. At first, I resented these extra classes (why couldn’t I just take all my Art History credits and be done with it?), but in my last couple years of school, I started to embrace the requirements and take classes I would have previously avoided, even if they intimidated me.

For example, I avoided Philosophy classes throughout my University career, mainly because I was certain the kind of people who gravitate towards Philosophy were the kinds that try to overpower everyone else with their arguments. I imagined a classroom full of people talking over one another for three hours every week – no, thanks. However, in my last year of school I went against what I thought was my better judgment and took a Philosophy of Art class – I’m so glad I did. It wasn’t full of crazy, over-opinionated people like I was afraid of; I learned a lot and we had some great conversations that were respectful and not yell-y. The moral of the story is if you see a class you think looks interesting, register for it. I’ve gotten much higher grades in classes I cared about, even if that class came with a heavier workload than one I took to get an “A” in. Whether your passion lies in Middle Eastern history or soil science, if you think it’s a class you’ll be excited to come to every week, absolutely take it.

During your time in University I hope you will see it as more than just a means to an end, but as a valuable stepping stone that will help you grow in so many ways. It will be hard to appreciate it when you’re studying for multiple final exams, but savor the experience and take in as much as you can from it. Have fun!

Chelsey Van Weerden is a co-founder of PrairieSeen and ‘13 Bachelor of Arts recipient from the Faculty of Arts (Honours Art History).

SHANNON KRAICHY: FOR DANIELLE, A MUCH MORE COMMITTED LEADER THAN I

Recently, I’ve been involved with a lot of groups connected to the University of Alberta, where I’ve been studying Paleontology for the last four years. Not only have I made

amazing and life-long friends through my involvements, but I've earned valuable life and work experience with many opportunities opening up to me as a result. Being part of something bigger than yourself and contributing to a cause you believe in gives you a huge feeling of self-worth, and you never know how the friends and role-models you will meet on the way will contribute to your future. Stemming from a few involvements, I've been offered to be part of many more projects, this book on student leadership being just one example. The important thing is to find something that you will enjoy giving your time and efforts to.

I am writing this short list of lessons I've learned to help guide you in becoming involved in your community. Volunteering your time is rewarding in so many ways, and I only hope the other contributors of this book and I can help you take your first steps toward these rewards. My lessons work well for me, but I will continuously be adding and adapting them. One thing I've learned in life is that everything changes, so don't be afraid to change what you are doing if it stops working for you. Also, there truly are no failures, only lessons learned. I encourage you to start your journey of leadership, and add your own lessons to my list.

1. Start small.

I started volunteering early, or rather my parents volunteered me for things starting in elementary school. This involved things like singing in church choir at an old folk's home or helping build our community's new play structure. I believe this early start was influential in my future community involvement. Volunteering in small, low-risk and low-commitment ways allowed me to get my feet wet. It allowed me to try out different things, and if I enjoyed them or the opportunity arose I could then decide to volunteer more.

The first time I felt I was making a difference was in my grade 12 year of high school, back in Winnipeg. I was involved in starting up an Environmental Awareness Club, and became the president when our current one resigned due to too many commitments (I can sympathise – I find those who are involved often have too much on their plates!). Although we weren't going to reverse global warming, our small devoted group encouraged recycling throughout the school, planted a garden of native flowers, and organized awareness presentations and a lunch-time concert to celebrate Earth Day. I was also involved in the grad committee in my senior year. I planned and organized a pre-grad info day for the senior students, which involved having our school principal discuss logistics of the ceremony and dinner, and booths for rings, suit rentals, flowers, and dresses. I was incredibly proud of contacting all the organizations involved and ensuring the set-up, organization and clean-up of the event went smoothly.

This was excellent practise for my future program and event planning! In both the environmental club and the grad committee, I started small and became more involved

because I wanted to ensure we organized great events. The more effort I put into it, the more motivated I became to make sure I pulled it off. Find a way to get involved in something you enjoy doing where you feel you are really contributing and it won't be 'work' anymore; it will be fun!

2. Learn to say no.

This was my second lesson because I knew very well how to say yes. I love being busy and involved, but sometimes I bite off more than I can chew. In a way I find I get more done when I am under pressure and kept busy. However, there comes a point when you have to decide what is most important to you. That's when you have to learn to say no. You can't say yes to everything. Or maybe this isn't a problem for you - lucky you, skip to lesson 3.

When I moved to Edmonton for university, I had fantastical ideas to get involved in everything on campus. At a clubs fair in September, I signed up for more organizations than I can remember. Club fairs are excellent places to see the diversity of ways to get involved, and most universities or colleges should have one. However, be realistic about what you can do! I found the excitement of living on my own in a new city and the difference between high school and university to be overwhelming, so I only lasted a few weeks at the clubs I signed up for.

A big reason I quit was because I was not motivated. One club was doing great, meaningful things on campus, but I felt I was given menial tasks. Looking back, of course they didn't give the first-year student who just joined the club a really important job! Remember lesson 1: start small, attend events or volunteer in small ways for a while, and get to know the other members of the group or organization. Once you know you are dedicated to the group, then you should try to run for a position on the council, or get more involved in long-term or high impact events. I sometimes regret I didn't get involved on campus earlier, but clearly I needed my little 'fumble' of joining too many clubs early on so I could join organizations with more meaning to me later.

3. Learn to say yes.

I only really got involved in campus life near the end of my undergraduate degree. In January of my third year of university, an acquaintance I sat beside in class mentioned he was involved in the Aboriginal student group on campus, and they were looking for an executive member. Somehow, he remembered that I once mentioned I was Métis, so he asked if I would be interested in attending a meeting to see what they were all about. I had no clue what I was getting into when I said I would come to a meeting, more-so to avoid an awkward conversation than because I actually thought I would join. Little did I know becoming the Vice President Internal a.k.a. social organizer of the U of A Aboriginal Student Council would become one of the most meaningful contributions I

made on campus. Ryan Giroux, the acquaintance who got me involved, quickly became a close friend. I owe him so much for getting me involved with the council and all its wonderful members.

So next time someone asks you if you want to be involved in something, go for it! Remember my first lesson though, and check out the organization without promising a big commitment first.

4. Enjoy it.

For my last year at the U of A, I ran for a position on the Paleontological Society, since I thought it was about time I joined the group relating to my own degree. It was a bonus that the group consisted of many of my friends, since paleo is such a small field. I was nominated as Vice President External and as such was responsible for dealing with organizations outside of the university, although I helped contact other groups within the university as well.

I was extremely devoted to the year-end celebration for the Paleontological Society. Last year was our group's 25th anniversary, so the executive council and I planned to make it an extravagant event. I was already used to contacting organizations through ASC, so my role to reach out to possible donors for a silent auction for the event was a piece of cake. I wanted to make this event the best I could, so I also contacted many student groups, faculty and staff members to invite them to the celebration.

As the event neared, I volunteered to pick up most of the silent auction donations, design and distribute posters, invitations and tickets, and sell tickets and merchandise. The event was hosted in the exclusive Faculty Club (an invite-only campus lounge), and to my great surprise and joy we quadrupled attendance from previous years! At the end of it all, the silent auction raised over \$500 for the society, which is a big deal for such a small group. Even our special guest and founder of the Paleontological Society, Dr. Michael Caldwell said we organized the most successful event in the group's history. I have so much fun planning and organizing events that the 25th anniversary didn't feel like work to me. I loved contacting everyone and trying to make the night as special as possible. It makes me feel proud knowing I had a part in something so successful.

5. 'Failure' itself is a lesson. Don't give up.

I worked on many projects through my involvement, but the breakfast program with Aboriginal Student Council stands out because it really tested my patience and required a lot of effort. I put so much work into the project because I truly believed it was worth trying to help students who had trouble getting a healthy breakfast.

In September 2012, the council thought to offer free breakfast for Aboriginal students on campus, and I was chosen as the lead of the project as VP Internal. Little did I know

this would be one of the most influential projects I would work on, mainly because of the lessons I would learn. I had never undertaken a project like this, so I felt blind going into it. After drafting proposals and applying for numerous scholarships, help came in the form of the lovely ladies at the Office of Sustainability. We had applied for a grant through them, and they sat me down and ran through the strengths and the weaknesses of the project.

By the time this happened, five months had gone by, well past the time I had planned to start the project. I learned patience through this, and that if you want a project to be well done it will take time, often longer than anticipated. The ladies at the Office of Sustainability suggested I have a more solid idea of 'why' we were doing this project. In that way, we would know which direction to go and write better applications for grant proposals. At the moment, the council and I believed students couldn't afford breakfast or didn't have time for it, but a survey would help us determine if these or other factors were limiting students from eating breakfast. Also, we would try to gather as many partners for the breakfast program as possible. With new goals in mind, I drafted up a survey (not as easy as it seems!

There are so many ways you can unintentionally direct respondents to a certain answer...) and gathered information and partnerships from many organizations: U of A Health and Wellness Team, Aboriginal Student Services Centre, Campus Food Bank, Alberta Health Services and the Office of Alumni Relations. I learned so much about healthy eating, and so many great ideas for educational components and community spirit.

However, the biggest lesson I learned from this project was that even with the best intentions, things may not turn out as planned. The survey was sent out to Aboriginal students in March, and the results were extremely surprising. Over 70% of respondents had no problem eating breakfast or otherwise wouldn't come to our breakfast anyway (for example, would sleep in instead). Almost 8 months of hard work seemed like a waste of time to me at that point – we didn't even need a breakfast program, so why did I try so hard!? I felt like giving up. Luckily, my fellow council members and the partner organizations made me see that my work was still important: the survey results also showed that over 40% of students wanted a greater sense of community. That was interesting, since the main purpose of Aboriginal Student Council was to create a sense of community among Aboriginal students on campus.

The council and I now know to focus on harbouring community and creating a gathering place where everyone can feel welcome. Although I am graduating, I have grown close to members on next year's council and will be there for them in all their pursuits to make their goals come to fruition.

Both the breakfast program for ASC and the 25th anniversary celebration for the paleo society were projects I put a lot of time and effort into, and although their outcomes were different I feel they were both successful in their own ways. If and when you get really involved in a group, just try your best and follow through with what you said you would do. Whether it is a success like the paleo event, or a drawn-out project with an unplanned conclusion, follow through on your commitments.

I could have just given up on the breakfast program when the survey showed results I didn't expect, but I was made to look at it in a positive light. Maybe we won't put on a breakfast program, but now we know we need to go back to the roots of the council's purpose and create a better community for our members. Looking back, I don't regret for a moment all the work I put into the breakfast program. I love working on things that mean so much to me; the project quickly became 'my baby'. Plus, I would never want to lose the valuable lessons I learned planning the project.

6. Network! Being involved leads to more involvement.

Another thing to mention, as you volunteer and get involved with different organizations and people, you'll be growing your network. You never know what doors will open, and I have found that the more you get involved, the more opportunities appear. This book is a great example of that: I was asked to write this because of my involvement with Emerson Csorba via an article in *The Wanderer*, an Edmonton online magazine (a great way to get involved for aspiring journalists!).

I met amazing, motivated people who make a difference in their community through all my roles and involvements. You never know when someone will hear of a great opportunity and pass along your contact information. Even just knowing I have this amazing network of friends and role models to support me if I have questions or want to start a new project is so encouraging. Being involved with different groups and being committed to what I love has led to so many opportunities for me. Whether Edmonton, Winnipeg, or wherever you find yourself, there are many ways to get involved in a leadership role. Leadership doesn't mean you are the boss of someone; it means that you ensure your job gets done to better the community around you. Lead by example, and inspire those around you. Find something you are passionate about, and start leading!

Shannon Kraichy is a '13 alumnus of the Faculty of Science (Paleontology). She was recognized in 2013 as one of the Wanderer Online's Top 100 Most Influential undergraduate students.

MAGGIE DANKO: NURSING ACROSS CANADA

After high school I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew that I wanted to go to university and that the healthcare field really interested me. But outside of this, I didn't know what the end goal was. I decided that enrolling in the Faculty of Science at the U of A would be a good place to start. I could get a taste of university, and hopefully find something that inspired me so I would have a clearer direction.

My favorite part of U of A orientation was the clubs fair. I remember being so excited by how many different groups there were to join, and I signed up for probably close to 40 mailing lists. Unfortunately, none of the groups really inspired me to get involved, and the shock of transitioning to university got the better of me, so I ended up involved in nothing. My first piece of advice stems from this: don't let yourself get overwhelmed by the possibilities. Choose one or two things that really inspire you, and go with that.

After about a year as a science student, I considered nursing as a potential career path. The more I researched nursing, the more I realized it was exactly what I wanted in a career, as it fit perfectly in line with my hopes and aspirations. Two years into a science degree, I went back to square one and began a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree at the U of A. From day one I decided to be involved in the nursing student community in some capacity. At my orientation, the Nursing Undergraduate Association announced that their first meeting would be the next week, and was open to all nursing students. I marked it in my calendar and decided that no matter what else came up, I would attend and become an engaged member.

The situation changed in early December. An email was sent out from the Nursing Undergraduate Association (NUA), advertising for the position on the NUA council of "Canadian Nursing Students' Association Associate Delegate" or CNSA AD, for short. This position is the link between CNSA (the National Nursing Student Association) and our U of A nursing students, and involves travel to conferences. As a slight travel addict, this caught my interest immediately and I started doing my research. The more I read about the CNSA, the more I thought this would be an incredible association to be involved in.

Despite being stressed and busy with final exams, I found a few spare minutes to put together my application. A month later, I was in Quebec City attending the CNSA's National Conference as the U of A's Associate Delegate (AD). Luckily for me, each school sends two delegates, an Official Delegate (OD) who is the main voting member, and an AD who is there to assist the OD and act as a backup. This conference was a life-changing experience. There were 12 students from the U of A at the conference, none of whom I knew beforehand, and all of whom I came to consider close friends by the end of

the conference. Within the U of A delegation, many of the students were involved in leadership roles within the CNSA. I was motivated by their energy and accomplishments.

While the conference was incredibly overwhelming and involved upwards of 14 hours of meetings every day followed by social events, homework assignments for my missed classes, and very minimal sleep, I somehow came home feeling energized and inspired. I distinctly remember introducing myself to the past president as well as a couple of board members and being intimidated by their astounding leadership. I had so much admiration for these strong student leaders who were all so supportive and down-to-earth. Many of these individuals have come to be my mentors, and I keep them on speed dial for those days when I need a sounding board.

One year later I traveled to Hamilton, Ontario for the next year's conference. I couldn't believe how excited I was to see all the amazing friends and colleagues I met the previous year. When I walked into the conference center, it felt like I found my niche. The second year wasn't nearly as intimidating, and I had moved up into the role of the Official Delegate for the U of A. At this conference something interesting happened, which I consider a defining moment in my personal leadership journey. At our national meetings, there was a very contentious governance change on the floor. The schools in four out of the five regions (my own Western Region included) opposed this change; however, one region held the majority of votes, and was able to pass the change.

This had catastrophic repercussions for the West Region, which was very small and relatively new in the association's history. I couldn't believe what I had just witnessed, and this lit a fire within me. This was not democracy, and I couldn't believe that a systemic issue had caused such serious repercussions for so many schools. At this point, I decided to run for the position of Western Regional Director on the board of directors, with my goal being to recruit enough new member schools to ensure that one region could not outvote the other four. The next three days were a complete whirlwind of campaigning and speeches, culminating on the last day of the conference with my successful election into the position. I knew that I couldn't go back on my goals, and that I had my work cut out for me.

During that year, I worked incredibly hard to raise awareness of CNSA in Alberta and BC, and managed to nearly double the number of chapter schools represented in the West Region. In addition to my responsibilities as Regional Director, the host school for our annual Western/Prairie Regional Conference had encountered some unanticipated issues and four months before the conference, notified me that they could no longer put together a conference. Appalled by the thought of not having a conference for students from Western/Prairie Canada, I started talking to five of my colleagues at U of A, and we decided that we could pull this off. By the Fall of 2011, with four months and no

potential financial support, myself and 9 other dedicated individuals put together the largest and most successful CNSA West/Prairie Regional Conference in history.

Through this experience I learned a few important lessons. First of all, having connections pays off and often leads to more connections. I was fortunate to have multiple friends who had been involved in CNSA and were enthusiastic to be involved in the conference planning committee. Yet, it was the people who my friends brought along to the first meeting who really solidified the team. Through colleagues of friends, I met some amazing student leaders who became integral assets to our team and some of whom I have continued to work with over the last two years, long after the conference wrapped up. I also learned that regardless of how many people say that you can't do something, if you have the motivation, the skill set, and a supportive team, you can accomplish anything. While it was definitely a busy summer and semester of school, in the end the final product was worth every moment of it.

Over the course of my term as Western Regional Director, a number of my colleagues had asked if I had planned to run for President of CNSA the next year. At first, I laughed at them, thinking they were ridiculous. I couldn't possibly have what it takes to lead a national student association. Where would I find the time? But as the year progressed, I couldn't shake the idea. About a month before the conference, a very large nursing issue had erupted in Canada and the CNSA had been advocating very strongly on this particular issue. Most importantly, students had been treated unfairly in this situation and I knew that the CNSA needed a strong voice to speak on this issue. So come January, I hesitantly put forward my nomination form to run for President and within the week, I nervously accepted the position.

To say that my term as President of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association was a whirlwind is an understatement. I learned a great deal about leadership, made amazing connections, got the opportunity to work in influential working groups, and lead a strong and inspiring board of my fellow nursing students through significant changes and some turbulent times. I worked alongside incredible nursing leaders, met with MPs on Parliament Hill, and had the chance to speak on behalf of the 28,000 Canadian nursing students.

So where am I now? I just graduated from the Faculty of Nursing with my Bachelor of Science in Nursing Honours Degree. I am a Registered Nurse and will be starting my career at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Pediatric Cardiology, an area of nursing practice that I am absolutely in love with. I sit on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association as the Past President, where I have the privilege of mentoring and transitioning the next group of amazing nursing student leaders. I am contemplating graduate studies, but also enjoying my time off school to solidify my nursing practice. I also believe strongly in creating work-life balance, and do this by

spending time with family and friends, reading excessively, doing lots of yoga, and traveling anywhere and everywhere.

Perhaps I've bored you, rambling on about my journey through student leadership. Well here's the important bit: anyone can be a leader. Considering the shy child I was, I never could have imagined I would go on to tackle major leadership positions. In my opinion, the key to becoming a good leader is finding something you're passionate about and letting this motivate all actions. For those who are in high school or entering university: it's ok if you're unsure about what to do for the rest of your life. Sometimes you have to find comfort in the unknown and take each day as a new experience.

Whether it is obvious or not, everything you do and every person you meet will be a building block in your personal and professional growth. Your path will change a million times, and that's fine. Take in every experience you can and let these shape your passions. Find mentors. This is really stereotypical advice, but I can't stress how important it has been to me to have strong mentors: Professors, fellow students, people I have met at conferences, and past CNSA leaders have constantly supported my decisions and provided a sounding board when I need someone to vent to.

While I admit to be a bit of a Type-A personality, and LOVE planning, I am coming to terms with the fact that I don't know where I will be in 5, 10, and 50 years. Six years ago when I was graduating from high school, I would have laughed if someone told me where I would be today. I wouldn't believe them, because never in my wildest dreams did I think this would be the path I would choose. Yet I have no regrets, and have had the most amazing journey through my undergraduate career. So don't close any doors, don't be afraid of change, and enjoy every minute of it.

Maggie Danko is a '13 alumnus of the University of Alberta, from the Faculty of Nursing. She served as President of the Canadian Nursing Students' Association.

AARON MARCHADOUR: EMBRACING UNCERTAINTY

Student leadership was never something I planned for. It was never a goal that I set my sights on achieving. My experiences since starting university four years ago have helped me grow as a person and as a leader more than I ever thought possible. My journey is far from over but here is the story of how it began.

When I was in high school my only objective was to do well in my courses and wait for my graduation day. I only saw high school as a stepping stone to my career. My career aspirations at the time were influenced by only one criteria: to be “successful.” All this meant to me at the time was to make big money. So, in grade 11 I made it my goal in life to become a dentist based solely on the possible earning potential.

For the remaining two years of my high school life I was focused on this end goal. My hobby reading consisted of the University of Alberta calendar and the Canadian Dental Association website. I had my first two years of courses planned out by the time I entered Grade 12. In my spare time I wrote DAT practice exams. (Sounds exciting, doesn't it?) It never even occurred to me that my life would follow any path other than this one that I had so carefully planned out.

Coming to the University of Alberta was great but I was still focused on fulfilling my plan. I remember hearing about different clubs and activities at the U of A when I first started my degree. But as far as I was concerned, if they didn't fit with my future goals, they didn't matter. I spent my first few months of my initial semester just putting in time like I had in high school. But it felt like something was missing. I was becoming bored with what I was doing. Then it dawned on me. I didn't like ANY of the courses I was in. I found my science classes boring and realized I didn't have any interest in working with teeth for the rest of my life. I definitely had an “OMG WHAT AM I DOING WITH MY LIFE?!” epiphany towards the end of my first semester of university and I'm glad I did. I was doing myself a disservice by trying to decide on a life for myself without even knowing who I was.

Three years ago I decided to leave sciences and enter the Alberta School of Business. But this time I entered the faculty with a new mentality. Rather than trying to fulfill some long term life plan I entered with the idea that I would take on new experiences as they come. I would not be so quick to turn down opportunities, even if I was unsure of what exactly I was getting myself into. Now I have begun to love uncertainty rather than fear it. Taking risks and stepping out of my comfort zone has taught me more about myself than following some well-planned life map ever could have. I think it can do the same for others as well.

So when I say I never planned on being a student leader I am sincere. All I did was learn to say yes to new opportunities even when I was unsure of the outcome. It all started when I reluctantly signed up to attend a first year business retreat (currently called Ignite) with 100 people I didn't know. I thought camping with a group of complete strangers could be total a total disaster (not exactly the outdoorsy type here) but I decided to take a chance and attend. Am I ever glad I did!

It's because of the great experience I had this first time I truly stepped out of my comfort zone that I have joined several groups, clubs and committees. I have competed in several

local, national and international business case competitions. I have made amazing student and business connections through the conferences I have attended. I have worked in rewarding jobs that I could have never seen myself doing a few years ago. Sure there are times that I think, “what have I gotten myself into?” but I can honestly say that there’s not a single thing I’ve done during my time in the U of A that I haven’t benefitted from in some way. It’s because of my attitude change, my openness to new ideas, and my willingness to embrace uncertainty that I have been shaped into who I am today.

I am in my final year of university and still unsure of where I see myself working after I get my parchment. But this doesn’t worry me as it may have in the past. I am confident that the experiences I have gained throughout my degree by being open to the unknown and trying new things have made me a more desirable graduate than simply following some predictable path. So please, take some chances while you’re in university and embrace the uncertainty that comes from stepping outside of your comfort zone. I truly believe you’ll thank yourself for doing so.

Aaron Marchadour will become an Alberta School of Business alumnus in ‘14. He is currently the lead for the school’s Business 201 programme.

JESSICA IRELAND: UALBERTA’S GLOBE-TROTTER

When asked to write this essay, I felt incredibly honoured and I began to reflect on my time at the U of A. In the last five years I can honestly say that I have grown so much and I can’t thank the U of A enough for the opportunities it has given me to follow my passions. While I could write my university life story, I thought it would make more sense to discuss the four major lessons I have learned throughout my degree.

1. Be open-minded and get out of your comfort zone

After two years in the Faculty of Science, by the time I had gotten into the BComm program, it felt like it had taken forever. My focus was to finish my degree as quickly as possible and catch up, because in my mind, I was way behind the rest. Twenty-year-old me thought getting involved with student clubs would be a waste of time. While working two jobs to pay my way through school and taking a full course load, the concept of working for free didn’t seem very smart.

As someone who was always interested in traveling and learning languages, I began researching the opportunities available to me. I became incredibly interested in international business and studying abroad, and decided to apply for a position in the Business Exchange Association. By finally opening my mind to student involvement, I found the club that sparked my interest. This became a defining moment for me. It was the moment that I had found my passion and that my goals in university and in life began to change. This idea of being involved in university rather than just attending it became one of the most important decisions I made throughout my time at the U of A.

I began planning for exchange. First stop: Japan. I chose Japan as an exchange destination because I knew almost nothing about it. I wanted to go to a country where I could learn an incredible amount and truly push myself out of my comfort zone. Japan did just that. I lived in the city of Nagoya for almost four months and I can honestly say that I was learning each and every day. With no prior Japanese language study in a city with very little English, I learned to use my non-verbal skills and adapt to each situation I found myself in. This experience contributed to my International Business minor by giving me practical knowledge and experience on the subject. This type of knowledge is invaluable to my degree and to my life.

2. Grab hold of the “right” opportunities and learn to say “no” sometimes

By my second year in business, I had gone from being the student who never wanted to get involved, to the President of the Business Exchange Association, a Student Ambassador for the Dean’s office, and on the cover of Lazy Faire Magazine. In all honesty, this was very stressful. All of a sudden, I felt the pressure to be incredibly successful and the best leader I could be, with very little experience. I was intimidated.

As students in our generation, it is incredible to see the amount of opportunities we have at our finger tips, especially in Canada. As soon as I got involved with one student club, I had realized how many other opportunities for involvement there were. Particularly when you are in a position of student leadership, you will often be asked to volunteer or contribute to different projects. It can be easy to get overwhelmed. However, I learned very quickly how important it was to have a balanced lifestyle and choose not to take on too much. It was crucial for me to look at every opportunity I was presented, and ask myself “Will I enjoy this,” “What will I gain,” “Who will this help,” and “Do I find value in it?” By asking these questions, I could decide which opportunities were right for me.

While time-management is very important, I never asked myself whether or not I had enough time to take on another project. I am a firm believer in prioritizing. It became important to assess my current projects and responsibilities to avoid spreading myself too thin. However, no matter how much time something would take, I knew that if I really cared about it, I would make the time. If an opportunity is right for you, take it.

As a Management and Organization major, I learned far more than I ever could have in the classroom by truly experiencing the concept of management and what it takes to be a leader.

3. Learn from others and build relationships

One of the major lessons I have learned throughout my degree, and continue to learn daily, is how to work well with others. This is crucial not only in business but in any faculty. We all have our horror stories of group work in university but these experiences are some of the most important learning opportunities I have had throughout the course of my degree. By learning to work through these challenges and function effectively as a team, it truly is amazing what a group of students can accomplish. I learned that it is important to assess all situations from the perspectives of others, as well as your own and to realize that your team members have different values, skillsets, needs, and motivations. As a leader, it is important to know these differences amongst your peers in order to effectively produce value.

In business, we are constantly taught to network. In my first year, I thought this concept seemed impersonal; as though collecting Facebook friends and LinkedIn connections would make me successful. However, this is not what networking is about. I learned very quickly that networking is about building relationships with people and helping one another when you are in need. Always ask yourself how you can help someone else before asking how they can help you. It is honestly through my network that I have been presented the majority of amazing opportunities I have had and I am forever grateful and willing to help and support my peers in return.

4. Follow your passions and stay true to yourself

This is by far the most important lesson I have learned through my experiences at the U of A. By learning all of the lessons above, I have been able to follow my passions and concentrate on projects and ideas that make me happy.

I often tell students that I have never met anyone who regretted going on exchange, only people who regret not going. University is a time for development both personally and academically. Take advantage of opportunities like studying abroad. It is truly amazing what you can learn. International Management is my passion. When I found out I could go on exchange, I decided to go to both Japan and Austria in the same year. No one had done this before, but that didn't matter. If there isn't already a club, group, or activity that centres on your passion, create one. Innovate, think outside the box, and be ambitious.

People often ask me, "How do you do it all?" I am fortunate to have two jobs that I love and be involved with clubs that truly mean something to me. I make sure not to compare my workload to others and to find the schedule and routine that works best for

me. University can be competitive but don't let that competitiveness stress you out. Stay true to who you are and do what interests you, because when you are happy and enjoy your work, others around you will feel the same and look to you for guidance. Before you can lead others, you must be confident and content with your own work.

Jessica Ireland is a student in the Alberta School of Business, majoring in Strategic Management and Operations. She has been recognized as a Wanderer Online Top 100 Most Influential undergraduate, and has travelled to Japan and Austria, among other countries.

JIMMY: TEAMWORK, THE BACKBONE OF ALL THINGS

I had an epiphany in my graduating year of high school. As the student body president, I was in charge of organizing events at my school. Our group of nine elected students would meet every week to decide which event would take place. Because of my ego, I was determined to have a Sports Day on the last day of our school. None of the council members approved, but I decided to push for it regardless. Compared to other events organized by the council, Sports Day turned out to be a total disaster. There is only so much one can accomplish on their own, however, I recognized that a strong team and a collectively-set vision can bring ideas to the next level.

During my interviews with Kavis Reed, the head coach of the Edmonton Eskimos and Patrick LaForge, the president of the Edmonton Oilers, I asked the same question: "What motivates you to do what you are doing?" Without hesitation, they both answered that it was the team that they are working with and the fans that supported them. Even established professionals at the top of their field needed a team and a group of supporters to maintain their level of excellence. When Jesse and I started *ProStory* (the reason why I interviewed Kavis and Patrick), I faced obstacles that were far too great for me to overcome myself. I had no idea how to build or market our website effectively. Tasks that would have taken months were accomplished with ease as a team.

It is no mystery why many of the entrepreneurs that come on *The Dragon's Den* are willing to give chunks of their business up. Although they make a sacrifice, they are willing to acquire a partner with a wealth of knowledge and experience. On the other side of the table, Arlene Dickinson (one of the dragons on the show), mentioned in her book *Persuasion* that she cannot invest in a business that sells good products if the owner lacks honesty and authenticity. Whether one is an entrepreneur or an investor, people look for teammates that can help maximize the potential of their businesses.

And it is not just in business where teamwork is needed. Medical doctors like Dr. Paul Kantor, Chief of Pediatric Cardiology at the University of Alberta Hospital, values teamwork as the profession's vital component. Saving a child's life is not done solely by

one doctor, but a team of medical doctors, surgeons, nurses, childcare specialists, and families.

Are teamwork and collaboration really necessary for students to perform well in school? The answer is - absolutely! I entered university thinking that I could attain high grades by studying alone. I was dead wrong. My grades increased in courses where I studied with a group, compared to courses where I studied on my own. Second semester finals went by much smoother and yielded better results compared to first semester finals, because I was with a group of motivated students, focused on studying instead of talking. School became easier: I gained extra time to rest by studying with dedicated groups for shorter periods of time without distractions.

Accordingly, a study conducted by Stanford University in 1999 shows that students who worked together in a small group learnt material better and retained the information longer. Not only can you ask your friends questions on subject matter, but you become more driven and feel less isolated simply because of their presence.

Our egos can get in the way of forming great teams because we naturally tend to seek sole recognition. What we need to recognize instead, like the entrepreneurs on Dragon's Den, is the potential to take something from mediocre to extraordinary when collaborating. One of the great things about being a student is that we are at a stage where we can choose whatever we want to do, and whoever we want to work with. The CEO of Transceive Communications Inc. told me, "When you are managing a business you have two choices. One, you can choose to make one million dollars with two people or you can choose to make ten million dollars with ten people." Which one would you choose?

Networking: the beginning of all things

I was provided a chance to ask a couple of questions to successful business owners and CEOs at a conference I attended in Vancouver called OKTA. I asked about the particulars of their recruitment process. They told me that if it is not an entry level position, many big companies will not even look at recent graduates' resumes. CEOs were hiring their employees based on the referrals they got from others. Whether we think it is fair or not, that is how the business world works. Therefore, it is critical for students coming into university to spend a great deal of time networking, not just studying.

One of the CEOs at the conference told me that a lot of students put their heads down and focus purely on studying to be a lawyer, or a doctor, or to get into their dream company. Statistically speaking, only 10% of students achieve their short-term career goals immediately out of university and most are left in a situation where they are unemployed. We think this will not happen to us, but there is a 90% chance that it will. We cannot afford to forget about the importance of building connections - medical schools, law schools and other graduate programs all weigh referrals as an important variable in the selection process.

We often see friends gaining positions in companies you never would have thought possible. They were performing on a lower level in high school and in university, but they managed to get a job when some higher performers did not. Why do you think that is? While many were studying, and spending free time relaxing as a reward for all studying accomplished, they were going out, meeting people, and networking. The CEO of Foreseeson managed to raise 1.3 million dollars in one day for his company while he was first starting his business. It was all because of a phone call one of his employees made to a relative, who knew an investor, who knew a bank manager. We often undermine the importance of just shaking a hand and exchanging contact information, but that small connection as Dr. Meg Jay put it, in her book *The Defining Decade, Why Your Twenties Matter - And How To Make The Most Of Them Now* can help you get that dream job you always wanted.

When I started *ProStory*, one of the things that concerned me was not being able to secure interviews with people that would attract many readers. But that worry diminished very quickly when I started asking for referrals from the people we interviewed. We ended up securing interviews with people that we never dreamt of talking to. Finding people to interview is the last thing I worry about now. Networking only puts you only in a better position, so I encourage you to make that phone call, or send that email you have been holding back on.

Giving back: true leadership

My home, Abbotsford, British Columbia, conveniently produced a booklet with a list of scholarships available for all graduating high school students. When looking through them last year, I was greatly disappointed: I wasn't eligible for many because of the school I attended. I wanted my high school to be known as a philanthropic institution where successful alumni would donate money to help deserving students in their post secondary endeavors. After pondering ways to encourage our alumni to give back, I received a \$1000 leadership scholarship that I did not apply for from my school.

I decided to give that money, which I did not deserve, back to the students who were younger than me that have exemplified tremendous leadership qualities in their cities. I was shocked as the first year's winner was a grade 9 student who managed to raise over \$50,000 for an organization called Run for Water. I never would have expected her to win, as the scholarship was targeted to the senior grades. When I came back the next year, Run for Water became one of the main fundraising event at my high school. I believe these exceptional students need to be recognized by their peers and rewarded for their hard work. What matters for me is the fact that young kids - who would otherwise go unnoticed - are recognized and rewarded for their service and leadership.

My Uncle Ron Suh, and The Honorable Yonah Martin always mentions giving back to the community, whether that is through money or through service. It is the most rewarding way in which one can leave a mark on society. You can leave a legacy behind if you find something you are truly passionate about. And not just for the sake of money, fame or selfish motives, but for the sake of helping others. I wish you all the best on all of your future endeavors.

Jimmy Kang is a second-year student at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Science. He is a co-founder of The ProStory and represents his faculty on General Faculties Council.

NIKITA-KIRAN SINGH: GROUNDED IDEALISM

Ironically, the driving force in my acquisition of leadership experience was my reluctance to do so.

I wasn't naturally drawn to leadership roles; in fact, I often found myself wanting nothing more than to recede from the spotlight. Attention made me uncomfortably vulnerable, when I longed to be safely guarded. I only began to invest myself in idealistic causes once I had garnered some sense of what it meant to positively affect people. I realized that the potential gain of working tirelessly for my beliefs was worth any temporary uneasiness I felt.

And therein lies the most significant challenge I have faced as a leader – I dislike drawing attention to myself, but I need to draw attention to my cause.

In the second grade, I was so soft-spoken that my teacher encouraged my mother to instruct me how to speak at an appropriate volume. Only last month, a girl who saw me dance told me she was shocked I came out of my shell. I could list a multitude of similar anecdotes with one related theme – the mistaking of my quietness for weakness. Although growing up I was private and reserved, I also had a penchant for expressing myself through other means, including piano, painting, dance, and most importantly, writing. As time passed, I began to learn how I could use my passion for the arts for good.

My parents encouraged me to read from an early age. My father taught me the Hindi alphabet alongside the ABC's. My mother treated me with a weekly trip to the bookstore, where I first found comfort in the stories of Clifford, the Big Red Dog. I began to read voraciously – C.S. Lewis, the Nancy Drew series, Roald Dahl. I discovered I was drawn to stories with a social commentary, and I think literature reinforced the idealistic streak ingrained into my essence.

Given a notebook to practice writing exercises in the second grade, I instead used the blank pages to write short stories. The notebook was my constant companion, and I wrote every chance I could. These stories were largely fantastical (including one about a girl named Sapphirina because she was born with a sapphire in her hand), the product of my overactive seven-year-old imagination. However, they all possessed a commonality – an inordinately idealistic heroine.

It wasn't until the fourth grade that I first encountered a real-life example of the type of heroines that existed on the pages of my notebook. My mother purchased the commemorative book "Diana: the Portrait," a compilation of images and memories of people affected by Diana, Princess of Wales. Reading insatiably through the book, I discovered that Diana's darkest hours enabled her to understand the very people she affected so profoundly. Her ability to relate to others, and make them feel important, illustrated her ingenious comprehension of the human essence. I was captivated by her refusal to let other people's fears interfere with her objective of helping others. More than anything, I was moved and intrigued by the story of a woman whose compassion for others overpowered her inherent reticence.

This marked a transformative moment of my life. I no longer simply dreamed of making a difference – I began to think of how I could.

My first real bout with leadership arrived a mere few months later, when I organized a fundraiser at my elementary school for the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. I realized that although my voice was not the loudest in the literal sense, it could be figuratively. Later that year, I also began to volunteer for Free the Children upon attending a presentation given by Craig Kielburger. I now found myself curiously drawn to poignant causes, longing to give as much of myself as possible. There was something indescribable about being a part of a compassionate movement – I felt as though I was simultaneously my natural self, and a part of something larger than myself.

Throughout middle school I continued to learn as much as I could about global issues, including human rights, gender equality, and extreme poverty. One year, as a Christmas gift, I received the written accompaniment to Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Within the book I uncovered yet another vision with which I became fascinated – the reversal of climate change.

My willingness to spend hours on end reading or thinking about ways to change the world made me feel disconnected from my peers on more than one occasion; in fact, I felt better understood by adults. I often engaged in thoughtful political discussions with my grandfather, a man respected within my family for leading an incredibly principled life. Through his unyielding support of my idealistic dreams, my grandfather instilled in me a sense of validation, encouraging me to believe that I was capable of initiating some kind of positive change, no matter how seemingly small. It was comforting to confide in a fellow shameless dreamer.

As I became more passionate about my ideals, I also became increasingly confident in expressing myself. A dancer for nearly as long as I could remember, I earned the position of Teaching Assistant at my dance studio in the eighth grade. I was ecstatic; teaching dance combined my love for children, learning and self-expression. It was during this time that I first began to realize the unforeseen potential in relating to

people – an idea I had first encountered when reading about Princess Diana. I discovered that it was the time I spent listening, rather than talking, that best allowed me to connect with my students. The very quietness that people had misconceived as a weakness was now a source of empowerment for me, the foundation of my ability to empathize with others.

As I entered high school, I had a better sense of who I was, and who I wanted to be. Instead of rejecting the very qualities that made me feel different from the people around me, I embraced them, understanding that these traits allowed me to comprehend people. I was fortunate enough to attend a high school filled with innumerable opportunities for everyone – athletes, artists, humanitarians. Although I knew my interests were quite different from those of the typical teenager, I knew that there were people who would always aid me in my efforts – my teachers and my family.

There were a few student groups in particular that fostered my natural interests. The School Reach Team allowed me to share my passion for trivia with other students in an amusingly competitive environment. As student editor of the inaugural student literary magazine, I had the unique opportunity of collaborating with other students to create a book of writing, photography, and artwork. There were even opportunities to travel for fine arts and modern languages students. In the tenth grade I traveled to New York City, where I partook in dance workshops. The next year, I participated in a two-week exchange to France, an incredible experience of learning and traveling.

In my final year of high school, I worked with several fellow students to give presentations to local businesses with the purpose of securing funding for our Solar Panels Project. By the end of the year, we had raised \$28 000, and our goal of seeing solar panels on our school roof was financially feasible. When I returned to the school that summer to see the solar panels, the tangible realization of our seemingly naïve goal, I was overcome with a sense of joy. That was only a week before I began my classes at the University of Alberta.

I was absolutely terrified to begin university. I had loved high school, and I now had to adapt to a much larger, far less intimate environment. Fortunately, I soon discovered that there were even more opportunities for me to discover my niche at the post-secondary level. Now that I have completed my first year studying biology and philosophy, I realize that I have grown more in the past year than I had ever imagined was possible.

Before I had even begun classes, I joined The Wanderer writing team. Being given the freedom to write about any of my interests nurtured my creative process. My articles have ranged in topic from a satirical recounting of the International Criminal Court's conviction of a war criminal, to a review of the Alberta Ballet's production of Othello, to a political article about the increasing access to medicines in the developing world. In

continuing my passion for writing, I have been able to share my views on the issues most important to me with the rest of Edmonton.

I remember walking through Clubs Fair in the Butterdome the day before I was to start my university career, awestruck at the diversity and breadth of student groups. In search of a group related to global issues, I discovered Make Poverty History, and signed up for the mailing list, as I did with at least twenty other groups. After attending many introductory meetings within the first two weeks of school, I chose to become a member of Make Poverty History, impressed by the group's sense of community and depth of knowledge pertaining to poverty. I began to learn about the link between poverty and a reduced access to essential medicines, eventually petitioning for legislation to increase access to medicines in the developing world. I recently joined the Make Poverty History executive as Vice President Internal; I look forward to working with students to realize the alleviation of poverty in Edmonton, and throughout the world.

As a lifelong dancer, I knew I had to learn more about the university's dance group, Orchesis. Upon discovering that one of the teachers was choreographing a routine about the oppression of women, I was committed. Combining my love for dance with my dedication to human rights issues was absolutely exhilarating. The opportunity to speak through dance was one I will forever cherish.

To say that the experience permanently altered me is both obvious and superficial. I've attempted to describe how my perspective has changed more substantially on several occasions, yet the more I've tried to accurately describe my journey, the more I discover that it is nearly ineffable. The lessons I learned cannot be merely conveyed from one person to another, but must be individually experienced. However, I have pinpointed the most valuable lesson from my time in Ecuador to this: there is always more for us to learn from others than we can ever possibly give of ourselves. The greatest error I've encountered discussing global issues with others is the assumption that "we" must have greater knowledge of how to live life than "them" by virtue of having a higher standard of living. We must remember, however, that there is zero correlation between quality of life and wisdom.

I've discovered that the best leaders, the ones who have most inspired me, are the ones who don't view themselves as such. They do their best to bring out the best in people, but don't make the mistake of assuming they have the power to change them. This mistake is one rooted in arrogance. Outstanding leaders are modest enough to recognize that an individual cannot be coerced into realizing change, but must instead realize the change internally.

The more I began to delve into leadership endeavours, the more I began to appreciate the human capacity for intuition. If you wish to initiate some sort of change, strive to

understand yourself – it's the first step to understanding people. Ask yourself three important questions:

What do you truly care about? When choosing a problem to conquer, ensure that the issue is important to you. If you aren't passionate about a cause, you will never have the drive to successfully realize its goal. Leadership epitomizes the delicate complementarities between work and play. Investing myself into the causes about which I was truly passionate felt natural, although it did entail a substantial amount of effort.

Who guided you along the way? Practicing gratitude keeps one grounded. In myself I find a combination of my father's passion for knowledge, my mother's passion for service, and my grandfather's passion for philosophy. I also remember my childhood role model - when the time came to write a scholarship essay, Princess Diana was my subject of choice.

Why are you doing what you're doing? The answer to this question must be strong enough to drive you whenever you question yourself. One's intrinsic motivation to make a substantial contribution to the world is infinitely stronger than the longing for fame, fortune, or any other superficial incentive.

More than anything – be humble. Be equally honest and critical of yourself as you are when relaying the flaws of others in your mind. The single greatest threat to growth is a lack of introspection. The instant we criticize flaws in others that we fail to see in ourselves, or when our actions fail to align with our beliefs, we become unwitting frauds, unaware of the pervasive hypocrisy stifling our attempts at authenticity.

Frequently, it is suggested that idealism is associated with a lack of realism. To be idealistic is to have one's head in the clouds, so to speak. I wholeheartedly disagree. To equate idealism with a lack of realism is to establish a false dichotomy, hindering collaboration between people with differing, yet essential, strengths. The key to successfully realizing idealistic goals is to combine vision with practicality, which does require a fine balance. Maybe it is more accurate to think of people as idealistic realists or realistic idealists (I would fall into the latter category). We are an entanglement of messy contradictions; the more willing we are to embrace this aspect of ourselves, the stronger we become.

Nikita-Kiran Singh is in her second year of studies at the University of Alberta, in the Faculty of Science (minor in Philosophy). She is among the university's all-time largest recipients of incoming undergraduate leadership scholarships.

CLOSING

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We hope that you enjoyed these stories as much as we do. The construction of this book started in May 2013, with Tori, Kevin and Chelsey all spending countless hours on recruitment, editing and many rounds of revisions. Hallie Brodie did outstanding work with the cover photo, Randy Boissonnault wrote a fantastic opening and the 30+ contributors all brought their own personal touches to the work.

If this leaves you inspired to lead an engaged University of Alberta career, then we have done our job. The U of A is a wonderful institution, one that has everything needed in order to change your life. To make matters even better, Edmonton is growing faster than ever: we are, as Don Iveson states, North America's most underestimated city.

Take advantage of the opportunities. Start today. With persistence, you will achieve what you set out to do.