

# the insider

A newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

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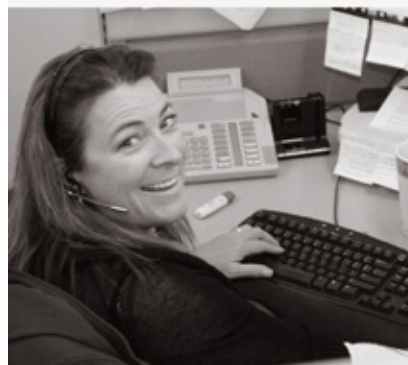
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#### A BUSY TIME OF YEAR

As usual, the Information Centre was busy during the first week of January. Call volumes typically nearly double after the holiday break. Information Centre team members include (clockwise from bottom left) Francine Thompson, Jennifer McCauley, Frazer Andrews, Barbara Keith, Boby Beattie and Cheryl Millington (See page 6).



Info Centre



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<https://landing.athabascau.ca>

Athabasca University

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# Kennedy Family Supports AU Community Service

IN DECIDING WHERE TO DONATE HER TIME and money, Open Our World Campaign chair Heather Kennedy looks for organizations that enhance lives in ways that match her values. She supports what she believes in, and she believes in AU.

"I am a fan and cheerleader, a volunteer, a Board of Governors member and now a donor, Kennedy said. "I am a proud member of the AU family and hope to be so for some time to come."

The recent Heather Kennedy and Family donation of \$50,000 to the Open Our World Campaign is reflective of that pride. The donation will support community service, one of the four priority areas of the campaign.

Fostering collaboration, leadership and innovation through strong, healthy communities is a cornerstone of AU's approach to post-secondary education. Expanding the number of community partnerships and joint projects will create additional research and learning opportunities.

The other Open Our World Campaign fundraising priorities focus on supporting research, student awards and learning innovation.

Kennedy said she agreed to act as campaign chair because it was clear to her that so many people will benefit from the effort. "I was honoured to be asked, that's for sure," she said. "The role of campaign chair is a mix of bringing the experience that I have to bear, wanting to work with members of the campaign cabinet, making a difference and allowing me to learn and grow."

As the Open Our World Campaign is AU's first major campaign, the goal is not only to exceed our \$30 million target but also to set ourselves up to be successful at sustainment and with future campaigns, Kennedy said. "We are going for an extremely diverse and broad base of donors, and donors are usually very specific about which of the four key areas they want to support. As the chair of the campaign, I have a role to keep all of those goals in perspective."

Both as a member of the campaign cabinet and as campaign chair, Kennedy sees her



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*"I am a fan and cheerleader, a volunteer, a Board of Governors member and now a donor. I am a proud member of the AU family and hope to be so for some time to come"*

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role as being to help steward the work. "A successful campaign needs several pieces working together," she said. "In our case, we have excellent staff, the university senior leadership and Board of Governors, the AU family, our donors and, since last year, we have our campaign cabinet to help open doors and be ambassadors about the university and the campaign. With the great people we have, my role is mostly to get out of the way and celebrate our successes."

Kennedy's donation was motivated largely by her increased awareness, since the campaign started, of the breadth of AU's contributions to society, she said. "On the one hand, AU has a strong northern presence and commitment to the region; on the other, it is a global post-secondary

leader, making a difference worldwide. On the one hand, we remove barriers so that people in remote communities, aboriginal peoples, WHL hockey players, women who have to squeeze education in between so many other commitments, to use a few examples, can take a course or a degree; on the other, we have a rather amazing group of students who could go to any university but choose AU. On the one hand, we are out there in terms of learning via distance and online technology, but our students seem to value us most for the personal touch we bring to each and every one of them."

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# AU Nominated for Alberta Business Award



AU IS A FINALIST FOR THE 2013 ABORIGINAL Relations-Best Practice Award, one of the *Alberta Business Awards of Distinction* sponsored by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce.

The nomination recognizes AU's leadership in removing barriers to post-secondary education for aboriginal students.

The Alberta Business Awards of Distinction were created by Alberta Economic Development and Tourism in 1991, merging the former Alberta Export Achievement Awards and the Alberta Small Business Owner of the Year Awards.

In 1996, the Alberta Chambers of Commerce took over the management and presentation of the awards.

In 2011, AU received another of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction, the Export Award of Distinction, in recognition of its achievements in exporting knowledge and education.

The 2013 awards will be presented during a March 8 gala at the Marriott at River Cree Resort and Casino in Edmonton.

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## Herbicides on the Beaver Pond



IN THE VIDEO *SCIENCE IN ACTION: Studying the Effects of Low Concentration Herbicides on Aquatic Biofilms*, assistant professor of chemistry Dr. Lawton Shaw (foreground) walks the viewer through an experiment on biofilm growth that he is conducting with environmental science student Ahmad Mibayyad.

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***How do herbicides like Roundup affect the biofilms that grow on ponds?***

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# Chemical Exposure and Women's Health

JIM BROPHY, TUTOR FOR SOCI 348: Sociology of Environment and Health, and Margaret Keith, who with Brophy is co-author of the upcoming SOCI 331: Environment and Aging, contributed to "*Chemical Exposures of Women Workers in the Plastics Industry with Particular Reference to Breast Cancer and Reproductive Hazards*", a companion piece to their breast *cancer study* reported in the *December 10, 2012*, issue of *The Insider*.

The article, published in *New Solutions* [Vol. 22(4) 427-448, 2012], focuses on the chemical exposure of women working in automotive plastics plants and presents strong evidence that these women, who make up a high percentage of the workforce, are at increased risk of breast cancer and reproductive abnormalities.

Brophy and Keith note that the study's synthesis of scientific findings on carcinogens and endocrine disruptors is one of its most important contributions. "The review of the bio-monitoring literature shows that workers

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*"The review of the bio-monitoring literature shows that workers in this industry have high body burdens of hormone disrupting chemicals such as acrylonitrile, styrene, BPA and phthalates,"*

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in this industry have high body burdens of hormone disrupting chemicals such as acrylonitrile, styrene, BPA and phthalates," Keith said.

From extensive interviews with workers and a review of available government and industry hygiene reports, the study found

that exposure controls and government enforcement were virtually non-existent in many workplaces. The research was funded by Health Canada through a grant to the National Network on Environments and Women's Health at York University and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation – Ontario Region.

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## ARDN Research Bootcamp



THE ALBERTA RURAL DEVELOPMENT Network is hosting a *Research Bootcamp* for students and new researchers at Grant MacEwan University on February 5. The seminar will cost \$105, and only 30 seats are available.

In this informative one-day seminar, experienced researchers will cover topics of interest in an atmosphere that encourages discussion and interaction among Alberta's new and student researchers.

Topics will include developing a research project, writing a funding proposal, managing a research project, and writing a report and paper.

The ARDN is hosting the workshop in partnership with Medicine Hat College, the University of Lethbridge, the University of Alberta, Grande Prairie Regional College and Grant MacEwan University.

For more information, contact *Paul Watson* at the ARDN or go to the *Research Bootcamp web page*.

# Research Buzz

## Enriching Adaptivity

DR. SABINE GRAF, AN ASSISTANT professor in the School of Computing and Information Systems, has succeeded with her submission to the Mitacs Elevate Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.

Graf's project, Advanced Adaptivity and Personalization in Learning Systems through Collaborative Recommendations, aims to offer rich adaptivity by providing personalized recommendations based on the learner profile (e.g. levels, goals, learning style, cognitive abilities) to increase efficiency, performance or learner satisfaction.

Adaptive and intelligent learning systems (e.g., WELSA, AHA!, INSPIRE, ILASH) already exist; however, research aimed at combining information from a learner's profile with information from the other learners sharing common interests and at providing adaptive and personalized recommendations to learners is still in its infancy. The outcomes of such research could significantly improve the overall quality of education by providing personalized learning experiences to learners with different learning characteristics.

## New Researcher and Research Assistant Rates

THOSE WORKING ON GRANT APPLICATIONS, should make note of the new pay rates for researchers and research assistants. A link to the new pay schedule is posted at the bottom of Human [Resources' Payroll Schedules web page](#).

## Grant Application Deadlines

UPCOMING GRANT APPLICATION deadlines are posted on the [Research Centre website](#). For internal deadlines and processes, contact [Jill Calliou](#).

Applicants to the Mission Critical Research Fund and the Academic Research Fund are encouraged to submit their applications as soon as possible rather than waiting until the February 15 application deadline. Applications must be submitted electronically to the [ARC Committee secretary](#). Guidelines and application forms are available on the [Research Centre website](#). Late applications will not be accepted.

## Graduate Student Funding Opportunities

GRADUATE STUDENTS INVOLVED in major research projects or theses are eligible to apply for the Mission Critical and Disciplinary categories of research awards available through AU's Graduate Student Research Fund. Awards can cover research costs and the cost of dissemination of the research results.

The application deadline is February 10, but because the deadline falls on a weekend this year, applications will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Monday, February 11. More information is available on the [Graduate Student Research page](#) of the AU Research website. Contact GSRF Committee secretary [Alice Tieulie](#) (phone 780-675-6651) with any questions

## Upcoming Events

**INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE RESEARCH WORKSHOP, ADAPTIVITY AND PERSONALIZATION IN INFORMATICS** (EDMONTON, MARCH 23 TO 24): IGRW 2013 aims to provide learning and networking opportunities to advance research on the innovative paradigms, architectures and implementations of wireless applications and systems for individualized and adaptive learning. Topics covered in the workshop will include adaptivity and personalization concepts and approaches, advanced learning analytics, context aware learning systems and technologies, mobile and ubiquitous learning, and social interaction technologies. More information is available on the Research Centre's [Upcoming Events web page](#).

### EDTECH INNOVATION

(CALGARY, MAY 1 TO 3): THIS NATIONAL conference, to be hosted by AU in Calgary, will bring together start-ups, researchers and technology purchasers and venture capitalists and profile innovative research being conducted in Canadian universities and start-ups that are developing new technologies, products and services. Connecting researchers with start-ups will enable new forms of innovation and partnership opportunities in Canada's growing educational ecosystem. Two hundred attendees are expected. An open trade show will allow the general public to see new educational tools and techniques. For more information and to register, go to the [conference website](#).

### ISLAND STUDIES: WEST COAST CANADA AND BEYOND: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

(THE HAVEN, GABRIOLA ISLAND, B.C., May 10 to 12): For more information, contact [Gloria Filax](#).

## Lunch 'N' Learn

ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, DR. NANCY Parker will present "20 Years of Graduate Outcomes: A Mirror on the Mission of Athabasca University."

During the early 1990s, the Government of Alberta instituted a number of performance indicators through which it sought to encourage the post-secondary sector to respond to particular policy initiatives. Graduate employment and satisfaction were two key indicators drawn from biennial graduate outcomes surveys.

Although the design of the surveys themselves illustrates the orientation of the university's political masters, a number of different dimensions in the questionnaires speak to the social mission of the university. The alumni responses highlight some of AU's unique characteristics during its evolution into a comprehensive academic research institution.

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# Information Centre Team Handles January Onslaught



Information Centre staff members (left to right) Barbara Keith, Boby Beattie, Carla Yeaman (co-ordinator), Cheryl Millington, Carla Trudeau, Joanne Weldon, Shylah-Rae Fitzel, Frazer Andrews, Marj Whiteley, Francine Thompson and Jennifer McCauley (Missing from photo: Linda Ungarian, Kelly Hindy, Wendy Carswell, Kimberly Eves and Nicole Nason).

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***“We were in good shape to serve students for our peak volume week of the year.”***

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IT WAS ALL HANDS ON DECK IN THE Information Centre during the first week in January, a week during which call volumes typically double after the holiday break.

Due to the number of part-time staff members in the unit, it is rare to see almost everyone at work at the same time. The group pulled together to handle the increase though, with many staff members working extra shifts to maintain excellent service to callers.

“It was very unusual for the Info Centre to have 16 people working at the same time,”

centre co-ordinator Carla Yeaman said. “We were in good shape to serve students for our peak volume week of the year.”

Normally, eight to 10 staff members are scheduled to cover the phones, handling an average of 500 calls per day. During the first week of 2013, staff members answered an average of 848 calls per day. “The spike in calls can be attributed to the fact that we are closed between Christmas and New Year’s,” Yeaman said. “Also, January is a higher month for registration, and we field a lot of exam calls.”

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# 2013 Alberta Services for Students Conference

## FINAL DETAILS FOR THE 2013

Alberta Services for Students Conference, to be hosted by Lakeland College on its Lloydminster Campus, are coming together and will be made available on the [ASSC website](#) over the next few weeks.

Speakers at this year's conference will include Ken Steele, co-founder and senior vice-president of Academica Group, Canada's largest market research and marketing consultancy for higher education, and Calgary climber and teacher Andrew Brash, who has climbed challenging mountains all over the world and come within 200 metres of the summit of Mount Everest.

ASSC award nominations will also be open soon. Please consider nominating one of your deserving colleagues for an award. [Nomination forms](#) are available online.

The Dean Stetson Service Award recognizes a person's long-term service to students (10 years or more) and outstanding contributions to the development of excellence in student services in Alberta. Nominees will have demonstrated exceptional service to students, significant achievement in innovation, research and leadership and the student service culture, and continued professional development.

The Russ Guthrie Contribution to Student Services Award recognizes a person or

group that has for five or more years (full-time) demonstrated leadership in student services at an Alberta post-secondary institution. Nominees will have demonstrated significant contributions to program and service improvements, teaching and research, community service and professional participation.

The Marion Vosahlo Outstanding New Professional Award is presented to a person with less than five years of full-time student services experience at an Alberta post-secondary institution. Nominees will have made significant contributions to innovation, professional activity and involvement and have demonstrated leadership potential.

The conference provides a relatively inexpensive opportunity to network with colleagues, to meet new people, to learn about what others are doing, to share what you are doing and to have some fun.

[Karen Thompson](#) is AU's representative on the provincial planning committee.

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# Project Team Receives Award of Excellence

THE REDUCING SOCIAL ISOLATION for Rural Deaf Albertans Project Team, in which the *Alberta Rural Development Network* is a participant, received an Award of Excellence in Community from the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities in December 2012.

The ARDN is a not-for-profit partnership of Alberta's 21 public colleges, universities and technical institutes, including AU, working together to support rural communities.

The award-winning team consists of the ARDN, which is co-ordinating the project, the Alberta Association of the Deaf, which first identified the need for the project and is supporting its adoption in the rural deaf community, the University of Alberta, which is doing the research, and the Ministry of Health, which provided funding.

The goal of the project is to reduce the feelings of isolation and improve support for rural deaf Albertans through the use of services and technology that will facilitate

communication among them. It will provide deaf persons with the opportunity to live, work and play in rural Alberta without the added barriers of isolation and extremely limited communication.

The Award of Excellence in Community is awarded annually to a person, team or organization that has made a significant contribution to a barrier-free, inclusive environment within their community.

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*... to reduce the feelings of isolation and improve support for rural deaf Albertans through the use of services and technology that will facilitate communication among them.*

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# AU Student News

## Gale Publishes Christmas Story

TAMMY GALE'S SHORT STORY "A BLUE Christmas" was published in the December-January issue of Our Canada magazine, a Reader's Digest Canada publication.

The Georgian, published in Stephenville, NL, *reported* that the AU Bachelor of Management student learned an important lesson about life and dealt with her feelings toward her mother's death by writing the story.

Her mother had insisted on using only blue lights to decorate for Christmas, a preference which Gale had never shared. Even so, she decided to hang blue lights on a tree next to

her own house after her mother died of cancer in 2008. The story details how her changing perception of the blue lights helped Gale deal with the loss of her mother.

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*Her mother had insisted on using only blue lights to decorate for Christmas, a preference which Gale had never shared.*

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## Open Access Door Prize

MAIS STUDENT LESLIE LINDBALLE won a door prize, an AU hoodie, after signing on to one of AU's noon-hour webcasts exploring major issues and opportunities in open access that were presented to celebrate Open Access Week last October.

AU has enabled Lindballe to indulge in her wanderlust while completing her program. She started in China, where she learned the rudiments of rock climbing and investigated China's first Liberal Arts university, then moved to India and became a musician and recorded a CD. After returning to Alberta for a while, she took her books and her tunes to Montreal and then to Lima, Peru, with friend and reggae musician Auresia.

"Maybe it's the food, maybe it's the weather," Lindballe said, "but Lima has steadied these wandering feet for a moment." Speaking of her door prize, "I shall enjoy it on the chilly nights here," she said. Lindballe took part in "Open and Closed: Getting the Mix right. Who gets to Decide?" a presentation by Dr. Jon Dron, Dr. Terry Anderson and Dr. George Siemens.

Siemens later came into her MDDE 611 presentation in Blackboard. "As a student, it was exciting to speak directly with someone

who wrote a theory I was investigating," she said.

"His theories of connectivism have been foundational in my investigation into

digital education, and his presence in the virtual world has made him one of the digital educators I would like to emulate."



Leslie Lindballe

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# Wellness Committee Sponsors February Events



THE WELLNESS COMMITTEE will sponsor two events at AU Athabasca during February. Those attending both presentations are welcome to bring along their lunch. Refreshments will be provided.

## Enhancing Your Well-Being

REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGIST DR. JUDI Malone will present Enhance Your Well-Being in the Woodlands Room on February 5 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The presentation will cover understanding the symptoms of depression and anxiety, identifying patterns of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), practical ideas for enhancing mood and increasing emotional resilience and coping skills, and guidelines for lifestyle changes that avert SAD times.

## Dealing with Conflict

THE ART OF MANAGING CONFLICT, THE second session in the three-part presentation series Dealing with Conflict, will be held in the Governing Council Chambers and through Adobe Connect on Wednesday, February 20 from noon to 1 p.m.

Anyone who was unable to attend the first session in this series, Dealing with Difficult Personalities, on January 16 can view the *recorded session* and provide *feedback* on the presentation.

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## FOLLOW US



Athabasca University's Facebook page has almost 3,000 likes. Check it out at [facebook.com/Athabasca.University](https://facebook.com/Athabasca.University). If you would like something posted onto the AU Facebook page, please contact *Michael Shouldice*.



*The Insider* is published for AU faculty and staff members and other members of the AU community by the Advancement Office.

Please send any information or photographs for inclusion to the *co-ordinator*. If a photo opportunity presents itself, please contact *Blaise MacMullin*. Due to FOIP regulations, a release form must accompany all photos. Please contact *The Insider* co-ordinator for a copy of the release form.

The next edition of *The Insider* will be published on February 11, 2013. The deadline for submissions is February 1, 2013.

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