

the insider

A newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

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With its 94 rivers, 150 creeks and 153 lakes, the Athabasca River Basin is an important ecological resource that provides employment in many sectors, including industry, agriculture and tourism. The second annual ARBRI Day Collaborative Research Conference on April 26, organized by the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute, will focus on the innovative research being done in the river basin (See page 5).



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Athabasca University

AU Grad Students Awarded Alberta Innovates Scholarships

The scholarship is designed to enable these promising students to succeed in areas of scientific research that are strategically important to Alberta:

FOUR AU GRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE received Alberta Innovates - Technology Futures Graduate Student Scholarships. The research of all four students is in the field of information and communication technology.

Doctor of Education Program student Giovanni Farias has been awarded \$15,000 a year for 4 years, beginning in the 2013-14 academic year. His research is being supervised by Dr. Mohamed Ally of the Centre for Distance Education.

Charles Bernard, Cheng-Hsin and Michael Procter, all in the Master of Science, Information Systems Program, have each received \$10,000 a year for two years. Bernard's research is being supervised by Dr. Sabine Graf and Hsin's by Dr. Maiga Chang, both of the

School of Computing and Information Systems. Procter's research is being co-supervised by Dr. Oscar Lin of the School of Computing and Information Systems and Dr. Bob Heller of the Centre for Social Sciences.

Alberta Innovates - Technology Futures Graduate Student Scholarships are intended to support academically superior graduate students working toward a master's or doctoral degree. The scholarship is designed to enable these promising students to succeed in areas of scientific research that are strategically important to Alberta: information and communication technology, nanotechnology and omics, in and of themselves or in support of the areas of health, bio-industries, energy and environment.

This is the second year that AU has been given the opportunity to offer this award. Depending upon the amount of funding received from Alberta Innovates - Technology Futures a second call for applications may occur later in the year.

AU Business Students Stand Out in CME Challenge

“The CME is not open to the public, and it is quite difficult to gain entry.”

BACHELOR OF COMMERCE STUDENTS

Bryce Schultz, Alexander Poulton and Scott Beaton, calling themselves the Calgary Traders, placed fourteenth out of 326 teams from 26 countries around the world after the preliminary round of the 2013 Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group Commodity Trading Challenge.

It is the first year that AU entered a team in the event, a four-week electronic trading competition in which teams of undergraduate and graduate students trade crude oil, gold and corn futures in a simulated trading environment on a real-time professional trading platform. Dr. Eric Wang, an associate professor of finance in the Faculty of Business, provided ongoing academic and trading advice to the team.

Finishing in the top 10 percent of all competitors qualified the Calgary Traders for the final round of competition. They were the only team from Canada to make the final round.

As a result of their outstanding performance and with financial support from Dr. Tim Nerenz, an AU alumnus and former member of the Board of Governors,

the Calgary Traders have been invited to participate in an education and networking day to be hosted in Chicago by the CME Group and a number of their largest corporate partners.

The invitation will provide the three team members with an opportunity to interact with and learn from some important industry players in the field of financial markets and financial analysis at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and their associate exchanges, some of the most important exchanges in the world.

“The CME is not open to the public, and it is quite difficult to gain entry,” Poulton said. “We are very pleased that we have been provided an opportunity to go and partake, for a day, in a veritable Mecca of the world of finance.”

In describing their success at the competition, Poulton said that they used a conservative, longer-term approach, which allowed them to identify an important inflection point in the price of crude oil. “By trading this inflection point, we were able to increase our account balance enough to qualify for the final round.”

A total of 10 Canadian teams participated in the competition, representing six post-secondary institutions: AU, Mount Royal University, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Ryerson University, the University of Toronto and the Université de Sherbrooke. All teams in the competition were made up entirely of either graduate students or undergraduate students.



The Calgary Traders (left to right): Bryce Schultz, Alexander Poulton and Scott Beaton

AU Places Second at the CMA/CGA Alberta Board Governance Case Competition



AU business students (left to right): Charles Gallucci, Sonja Vandermeer, Aaron Jones and Adam Chappell

AU BUSINESS STUDENTS ADAM CHAPPELL, Charles Gallucci, Aaron Jones and Sonja Vandermeer placed second at the Certified Management Accountants and Certified General Accountants Alberta Board Governance Case Competition held March 13 to 15 in Calgary.

The team, which was led by Dr. Aris Solomon, an associate professor of accounting in the Faculty of Business, received a \$5,000 prize. The \$10,000 first place award went to a team from the University of Lethbridge, and a team from the University of Alberta placed third and won \$2,000.

The team's success marks the second year in a row in which AU teams have been successful at the competition. In 2012, AU teams won both the first and second prize. "AU's success at this event continues to raise the profile of the university, especially the business program," Gallucci said. "Last

year it was apparently a surprise that AU did well. This year it was expected, and once again we showed that the online model of the university works just as well as the brick and mortar system."

Gallucci described the event as an outstanding experience. "There is no way to buy an experience like this," he said. "There is no other way to replicate this type of event except to participate."

Of the 13 teams entered in the competition, the top three entered the final round. Students analyzed a governance case, based on a fictitious not-for-profit company, and had six hours to develop their case and create a presentation and recommendations to deliver to a judging panel of Alberta business leaders.

"I'm always amazed at the quality of the presentations these students are able to achieve in only six hours, and this year

was no exception," said Joan Bedard, CMA Alberta's director of customer relations and events. "Overall the competition was a success, the judges were thoroughly impressed and each team member gained comprehensive practical experience that they can use in their careers."

The competition also included a Board Governance 101 workshop lead by Dr. Chris Bart, founder, principal and lead professor of the Directors College and a leading board governance expert. The presentation focused on governance fundamentals and the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between management and a board of directors.

CMA Alberta is the self-governing professional organization responsible for the training, accreditation and continuing professional development of CMAs in Alberta. CGA Alberta is the governing and regulatory body responsible for the training, certification and promotion of Alberta's CGAs and CGA students. The two organizations amalgamated in 2012 as part of a national effort to create a single Canadian accounting profession. More information about the CMA/CGA Alberta Board Governance Case Competition is available on the association's [website](#).

Second Annual ARBRI Day



Embracing a tapestry of diverse cultures, the Athabasca River Basin has played an important role in the discovery and development of western Canada.

THE SECOND ANNUAL ARBRI DAY Collaborative Research Conference, organized by the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute and focusing on the innovative research being done in the Athabasca River Basin, will be held at the Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel on April 26.

With its 94 rivers, 150 creeks and 153 lakes, the Athabasca River Basin is an important ecological resource that provides employment in many sectors, including industry, agriculture and tourism. It is rich in natural resources, including

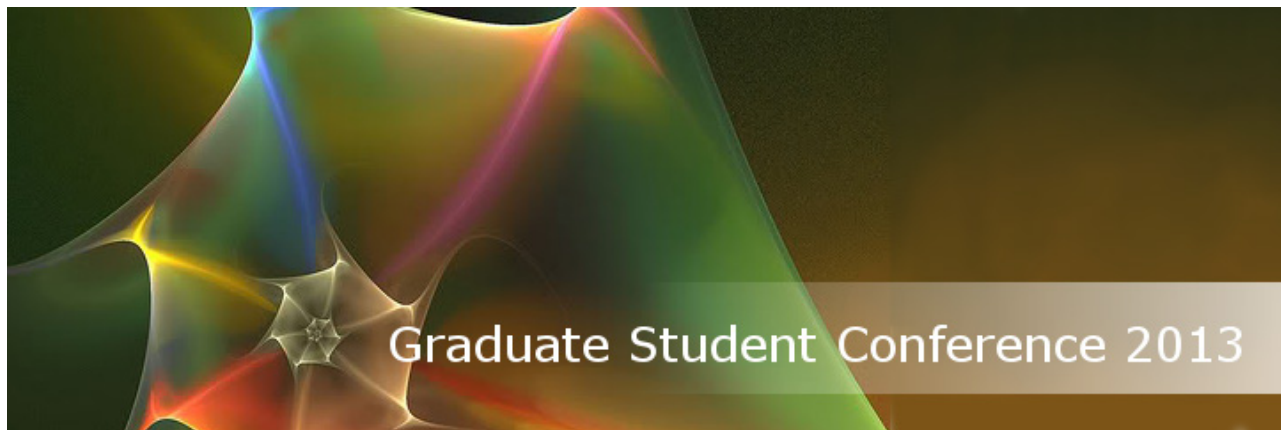
some of the world's largest oil sands deposits. Industrial development, climate change, and other factors now affect both environmental and human elements of the upper and lower Athabasca River Basin and have generated a great deal of research into its sustainability.

For more information, contact conference co-ordinator [*Jim Sellers*](#). To book a room, contact the [*Coast Edmonton Plaza*](#) (phone 780-423-4811).

Hotel parking is available for \$9 per day.

Grad Student Conference Set for September

The conference provides graduate students with a valuable opportunity to share their research and ideas with their peers and members of faculty.



Due to popular demand and strong recommendations from last year's participants, a second AU Graduate Student Conference, hosted by AU and the AU Graduate Students' Association, will be held September 13 to 15, 2013. The conference theme is AU Ingenuity.

The conference provides graduate students with a valuable opportunity to share their research and ideas with their peers and members of faculty.

A call for abstracts for both paper and poster presentations has been published.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is May 15, 2013. All abstracts will be peer-reviewed by a committee.

Abstracts can be submitted online at the [conference website](#).

AU In The News

Why AU Succeeds in Ontario

The article [*“What Can Ontario’s Public Colleges and Universities Learn from Athabasca University’s Success in Ontario?”*](#) appeared recently on the website of Contact North, an Ontario online learning portal for faculty and instructors.

The article discusses how AU is successfully responding to a demonstrable market need in Ontario and cites AU’s credit transfer system, prior learning assessment, open admission policy, flexible start dates, innovative programs and focused marketing and branding as some of the reasons the university is “seen by many as an example of a Canadian best-practice institution.”

It goes on to state that AU represents not a threat to colleges and universities in Ontario but an opportunity. “Ontario colleges and universities who understand why AU has attracted so many students in Ontario can leverage this knowledge to innovate and leapfrog. Doing so will create choice for students

and grow the market for registrations [sic] from Ontario and elsewhere.”

Established in 1986, Contact North works in partnership with Ontario’s 24 public colleges, 20 public universities and over 250 public essential skills and training providers to increase and improve online and distance learning opportunities for Ontarians.

Education in Your PJs

Jessie Brown is studying sociology at Princeton, taking game theory at Stanford, computer programming at the University of Toronto and equine nutrition at the University of Edinburgh. The classes he is enrolled in are MOOCs (massive open online courses), available for free to knowledge-hungry students through the educational website Coursera.

Brown’s Toronto Life column, [*“How to Get a University Education without Paying Tuition—or Changing Out of Your PJs”*](#) mentions that the term MOOC was coined in 2008 by Dave Cormier, a web communications manager at the University of Prince Edward Island,

to describe an Internet-based course designed by Dr. George Siemens of Athabasca University and Stephen Downes of the National Research Council. Twenty-five University of Manitoba students signed up for the course on connectivist theory and were joined by 2,300 virtual students from the general public, who participated free of charge via the web.

Correction

An article about the Science and Technology Day at Amiskwaciy Academy that appeared in the March 25 issue of The Insider incorrectly described Dr. Sabine Graf as an assistant professor of

computing science and stated that she was accepted into the Mitacs Elevate Postdoctoral Fellowship Program. Graf is in fact an associate professor and received an award from the Mitacs

Elevate Postdoctoral Fellowship Program to supervise a postdoctoral researcher. We apologize for the errors.

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The next issue of *The Insider* will be published on April 22. Deadline for submissions is April 12, 2013.

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