

the insider

Weekly newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

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UNESCO/COL Chair in Open Educational Resources Launched



Dr. Axel Meisen (president for the Canadian Committee for UNESCO), Dr. Rory McGreal (UNESCO/COL Chair in OER), Dave Wilson (communication manager for COL).

Dr. Rory McGreal, AU's associate vice-president (research), was appointed to a new UNESCO/Commonwealth of Learning Chair in Open Educational Resources on January 31. At the launch, McGreal told the Edmonton Journal that he will focus on aggregating free, quality resources already in development and on researching how to create online resources that are as easy as possible to learn from.

The chair is supported by \$520,000 in research funding, with the Commonwealth of Learning, the Hewlett Foundation and Advanced Education and Technology's Access to the Future Fund among the major contributors. McGreal (centre) is joined by Dr. Axel Meisen (left), president of the Canadian Committee for UNESCO, and Dave Wilson, communications manager for the Commonwealth of Learning. See more on page 2.



Posted live on The Landing:
<https://landing.athabascau.ca/>

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Vancouver-based Commonwealth of Learning formally launched a new Chair in Open Educational Resources at AU on January 31.

Open education resources are teaching and learning materials freely available online to instructors, students or self-learners. Examples of OERs include full courses, course modules, syllabuses, lectures, assignments, quizzes, lab and classroom activities, pedagogical materials, games and simulations.

The launch event, held at Government House in Edmonton, attracted about 45 guests including Dr. Alex Meisen, president of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and Doug Horner, minister of advanced education and technology.

The new chair, the first UNESCO chair to be created the prairie provinces, will be held by Dr. Rory McGreal, AU's associate vice-president (research). As UNESCO/COL chair, McGreal will be responsible for promoting the use of OERs at institutional, national and international levels, particularly in the developing world.

AU is committed to using OERs and to opening its learning content and applications online for free access, sharing open content with other universities and colleges across Canada and internationally. Students, educators and institutions anywhere will be able to access the content wherever they have an Internet connection.

"I am a firm supporter of UNESCO's contribution to the United Nations Millennium Development goal of Education for All," Meisen said. "The new UNESCO Chair in Open Educational Resources will make tangible contributions to meeting this goal, especially

for learners who are unable to attend traditional classes. I congratulate Athabasca University on its commitment to creating the chair in conformity with the demanding UNESCO Chair criteria. I also wish to extend my congratulations to Dr. Rory McGreal and assure him of my support."

The chair is supported by the Commonwealth of Learning, an intergovernmental organization created by Commonwealth governments to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. "As a member of Athabasca University staff in the 1970s," COL president

and CEO Sir John Daniel said, I am delighted to see this new manifestation of its commitment to opening up education and thrilled that COL is a partner. The OER movement will benefit greatly from the intellectual and practical support provided by this chair as it strives to make a truly useful contribution to learning for development."

The Government of Alberta also welcomed the announcement of the chair. "Alberta's post-secondary institutions have earned an international reputation as leaders and innovators," Horner said. "This UNESCO Chair recognizes Athabasca University's commitment to making education more accessible to Albertans and students around the world."

With new and more restrictive copyright legislation in the works, OERs are becoming essential for educators at all levels, McGreal said. "The survival of our educational institutions depends on increasing our use of OERs. Let's make the right decision."

For an interview with McGreal, see Erin Ottosen's story in [Open AU](#) and for more information about the UNESCO/COL chair in OER visit the [website](#).

Congratulations from Nepal

Dr. Pramod Dhakal, member-secretary of the steering committee for the Open University of Nepal initiative, congratulated Dr. Rory McGreal on his appointment to the UNESCO/COL Chair in Open Educational Resources. "This is a significant recognition of the contributions of Athabasca University and that of Dr. McGreal to the open university movement," Dhakal said.

Athabasca University has been working with the Open University of Nepal initiative. Dhakal and others involved in the initiative believe that members of the diaspora Nepalese population can contribute to higher education in Nepal but that they lack a way of organizing this contribution. Dhakal asked McGreal to encourage UNESCO to create such an institutional mechanism for Nepal and other countries in a similar situation.

More than 20,000 young Nepalis, mostly men, leave their country every year in search of post-secondary education and work opportunities, Dhakal said. Very few return; more than 10 per cent of the population now lives outside the country. At home, only three per cent of women are able to access post-secondary education.

"If nothing drastic is done, the Millennium Development Goals and other lofty goals will pass without seeing major educational transformation among the rural, poor and marginalized population of Nepal, a country mostly composed of that type of population," Dhakal said. "A small group of wealthy (people) will continue to monopolize the education and economy."

AU Athabasca Campus Reconfiguration Planned

The initial phase of the Main Campus Space Reconfiguration Project ended in December 2010 with the submission of a final report to the Project Steering Committee. The report makes recommendations on how to reconfigure the AU Athabasca campus over the next 10 to 20 years.

“To ensure the reconfiguration meets the needs of all operating units, the project team consulted with some 15 department representatives over five months and gathered extensive information about department functions, space requirements and working relationships,” project manager Vern Dery said. “The report recommendations, developed with the input of these departments, should allow for sufficient and appropriate workspace to support their work.”



AU Central lobby (Athabasca)

Moving all Athabasca-based operations, except the learning materials production and distribution warehouse at the Tim Byrne Centre, back to the main campus will result in significant savings in lease costs.

Dery said that flexibility to respond to Strategic University Plan initiatives, planned growth and future operational changes will be found through space optimization, renovation and re-absorption of meeting and common spaces.

As the Academic Research Centre becomes integrated into the campus, more opportunities to improve operational effectiveness and efficiencies and space use will emerge. Consistent with the project’s planning parameters, implementation of the report’s recommendations will depend on the occupancy of ARC and the availability of funds.

Following the approval of the Project Steering Committee, the report will be submitted to Executive Group for approval. Report recommendations may then be considered with the rest of the institutional priorities in the 2011-15 business and budget planning processes that are now underway.

Please visit the [project website](#) for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?



Athabasca University’s Facebook page now has over 1,200 fans

Follow the President on The Landing

Dr. Frits Pannekoek’s blog on The Landing includes entries about AU’s principles and strategies for dealing with the current financial challenges. He has also started a collection of budget model literature on The Landing that he encourages you to read.

AU a Finalist for an Alberta Business Award



AU has been selected as a finalist in the export category of the 2011 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction sponsored by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. The awards will be presented in Edmonton on March 4.

“AU is recognized worldwide as a leader in open and distance education,” Jim McLeod, manager of Alumni and Community Relations, said, “but many Albertans, especially those in smaller centres, do not know a great deal about the university. This is a good opportunity to showcase AU’s programs and achievements to business leaders from across the province. Our international success adds a strong measure of credibility right here at home.”

AU’s selection as a finalist in the export category demonstrates that organizations and businesses in smaller centres such as Athabasca can and do succeed on the international stage, McLeod said, pointing to several international achievements:

- AU is the only Canadian university to be accredited in the United States.
- AU’s Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Legislative Drafting has already attracted strong enrolment from international students, including contingents from Kenya, Hong Kong and the Caribbean.
- AU’s partnership with the Western Hockey League allows Canadian and American hockey players to take AU classes while playing for the WHL. Players from the Portland Winterhawks, Tri City Americans, Spokane Chiefs and Everett Silvertips are AU students.
- AU’s MBA program has been an overwhelming success worldwide, with graduates on all continents.

More information is available on the [Alberta Business Awards](#) website.

PARSE Award Winners Announced



Dr. Lorna Stefanick



Dr. Gina Wong

Congratulations to Dr. Lorna Stefanick, associate professor in the Centre for State and Legal Studies, and to Dr. Gina Wong, associate professor and chair of the Graduate Centre for Applied Psychology, who are the 2010-11 recipients of the President’s Award for Research and Scholarly Excellence.

The PARSE award consists of four months of research leave and will enable both recipients to ready works for publication:

- Wong is editing the collection *Moms Gone Mad: Motherhood and Madness, Resistance and Oppression*. Information about the book is available from Demeter Press.
- Stefanick’s work in progress is *Controlling Information: Freedom and Privacy in a Networked World*.

The PARSE is an annual award recognizing a record of excellence in research scholarship carried out by a full-time AU faculty or staff member. It is given for the specific purpose of bringing a major project to completion in a way which will result in a publishable manuscript at the completion of the grant period.

AU Launches New Web Conferencing System



With AU's new web conferencing system, Adobe Connect, staff and students will be able to see each other, talk to each other and share documents almost as if they were in the same room, but that is just the beginning of what the system can do.

Adobe Connect also offers a host of benefits that align well with the university's interest in mobile learning and its overall mission, said Glen Sabatier, project manager for the Synchronous Web Conferencing Project. The project, one of many undertaken in the last 18 months with funding from the Knowledge Infrastructure Program, co-ordinated the selection and implementation of the new system.

While all of the conferencing products reviewed by the project committee had their strengths, Sabatier said, Adobe Connect came out on top because it met the widest range of needs and was the best value for AU.

The committee decided that Adobe Connect was superior overall to Elluminate, the web conferencing system that has been in use at AU for several years. While the two can do many of the same things, the fine points of how they operate are different, and it was consideration of these fine points that put Adobe Connect ahead, Sabatier said. "Adobe Connect is Flash-based, while Elluminate is Java-based. Adobe Flash is on something like 98 per cent of the computing devices around the world, which means fewer problems for students and people outside the university getting into conferences. They don't have to contend with installing or updating Java the way people have experienced with Elluminate."

Unlike Elluminate, Adobe Connect is also an open system, and its functionality can be expanded through extensions. "The coolest extension I've seen is Footprints," Sabatier said. "It tracks where conference participants are located and calculates how much travel distance and expenses were saved by using Connect."

Adobe Connect was also the only product on the committee's final list that would work on mobile computing devices. A key goal of the project has been to ensure that the new system is widely accessible, Sabatier said. AU's

Adobe Connect system is licensed to allow up to 300 users attending multiple conferences at the same time, and staff will be able to schedule conferences themselves rather than having to contact a system administrator.

"We are providing training up front for people; we expect good support from the vendor of the product, and we're going to integrate it with Moodle," Sabatier said. An Adobe-certified trainer is delivering 10 half-day training sessions for AU staff. For more information, check the [AUiT training website](#).

The Computing Services IT Help Desk will convert Elluminate conference recordings for storage in another format. If you would like your Elluminate recordings to be saved, please submit a request to the [Help Desk](#).

AU's Elluminate system will be decommissioned as of March 31.

Key Benefits of Adobe Connect

The following are the key benefits offered to AU users by Adobe Connect:

- Adobe Connect is based on Flash, which is on almost all computing devices.
- Adobe Connect works with mobile computing devices such as iPhones, iPads and Android tablets.
- Adobe Connect is an open system that can incorporate extensions.
- AU's Adobe Connect system is licensed to support up to 300 users concurrently participating in multiple web conferences.
- AU's Adobe Connect system is hosted in Canada.
- Adobe Connect allows users to edit conference recordings and convert them to podcasts without having to use additional software.
- In addition to document sharing, Adobe Connect allows for desktop sharing and remote takeover.
- The Synchronous Web Conferencing Project Committee decided that, of the products they reviewed, Adobe Connect offered the best value.

National Advertising Campaign Receives Award

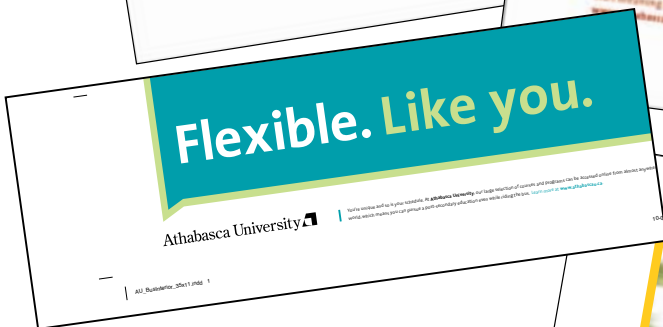
Athabasca University's national advertising campaign recently received a bronze medal in the student publications/advertising for student recruiting category from the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada District (District VIII) of the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. The award will be presented at the CASE VIII Conference in Vancouver later this month.

The CASE District VIII Communication Awards is an annual program designed to recognize institutional excellence in marketing and communication among its more than 130 member institutions.

This is the second major industry award received by Advancement's marketing and communication unit in 2010-11, the other being the Association of Commonwealth Universities' Public Relations, Marketing and Communication Award for the AU Viewbook and the Book of Answers. When asked how she felt about the award, Heather Newton, manager of marketing and student recruitment replied, "I'm really happy with how the national campaign came together this year. Each of the team members working on it added something special and the end result is a fresh and colorful campaign that is targeted to AU's audiences, flexible across the various media used, and best of all, measurable. It's an honour to be recognized by CASE".



Heather Newton



To find out more about AU marketing initiatives, check out the AU marketing intranet site.

Arts and Science Research Talks

A 17th Century Car Chase in the Snow: Joseph Boyden Talks History and Fiction



Joseph Boyden

Boyden gave the first-ever public reading from his work in progress. The as-yet untitled novel deals with Jesuit-Native relations around the Great Lakes almost 500 years ago.

tackling historical fiction in his first novel *Three Day Road* and again in his work in progress, Boyden reflected on what it means to transform historical research into imaginative narration. The potential benefits of “juicy” material must be earned, he suggested, through hard work, a little luck and occasional unconventional assistance.

Boyden advised his listeners not to overlook oral sources or be afraid to approach the right people. “Lucking into” an opportunity to meet with the Great War historian R. James Steel, he said he was expecting a “proper professor type” only to meet a tattooed auto worker and 1960s war vet whose grandfather had fought in the trenches of Europe. Steel provided invaluable knowledge to merge with the inspiration of First Nations’ sniper Francis

A large audience settled into video conference rooms in Calgary, Edmonton and Athabasca on January 21 for an Arts and Science Research Talks presentation by Joseph Boyden, AU’s first writer in residence, speaking from the University of New Orleans. Another 25 or so participants, many of them students, joined by Elluminate.

Calling himself something of a masochist for

Pegahmagabow, whom Boyden had learned about from Ojibwe friends during his youth in Georgian Bay. In the United States, he said, the little-known Pegahmagabow would be a national icon.

A Canadian author of Irish, Scottish and Métis descent, Boyden concluded the first part of his talk with a reminder that historical fiction must be deeply connected to the writer and resonate in some way in contemporary times.

He went on to give the first-ever public reading from his work in progress. The as-yet untitled novel deals with Jesuit-Native relations around the Great Lakes almost 500 years ago. The story concerns an opposition of world views, representing the First Nations’ outlook as much as the European. Boyden’s gripping opening resulted in a momentary stunned silence followed by a round of warm applause. The author assured his audience that the rest of the novel would not over-play the tense opening tones of a “seventeenth century car chase in snow.”

Following the reading, staff members representing the spectrum from global studies to computing science asked a wide range of questions.

Boyden has won the prestigious Giller prize and his works are international best sellers. He may be contacted at jboyden@athabasca.ca until the end of June 2011. He will reply to questions and offer comments on a short sample of creative writing (around 431 words).

Boyden’s presentation is available through Elluminate on the [Research Centre](#) website.

(continued on page 8)

Arts and Science Research Talks

continued...

All for One, One for All: Will the Real Musketeer Alexandre Dumas Please Stand Up?

The Arts and Science Research Talks series was pleased to host Dr. Vina Tirven-Gadum, an associate professor of French language and literature in Centre for Language and Literature, who provided an engaging account of Alexandre Dumas (1802 -1870), the prolific French author best known for his novel *The Three Musketeers*.



Dr. Vina Tirven-Gadum

According to Tirven-Gadum, Dumas's action-packed, swashbuckling novels were not far removed from the way in which the author lived his life. They also reflected the life and exploits of his father, who was born a slave in Haiti and rose to be one of Napoleon's favoured generals and ultimately a prisoner, when his allegiance with Napoleon was broken.

In his early 20s, Dumas left his village in northern France and travelled to Paris, where he found work and fathered a son, Alexandre Dumas-fils, who later became famous in his own right. In 1830, the July French Revolution led to the installation of King Louis Philippe, Dumas's patron and benefactor, and set the conditions for the arrival of the romance melodrama. Dumas was very active in the revolution as a soldier, spy and strategist, experiences that would serve as important sources for his later novels.

In the early 1830s, Dumas wrote three plays, *Henry III and his Court*, *Antony* and *La Tour de Nesle*, all historical melodramas which included elements of romance, action, sex, betrayal and murder. In 1840, he met his famous partner, Auguste Maquet, a struggling writer. Their collaboration has generated much debate about the origins of Dumas's work, in particular those of the three novels with which he is most often associated, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Queen Margot*, along with 15 other novels co-authored by Dumas and Maquet.

According to Tirven-Gadum, some critics have questioned whether Maquet was directly or indirectly exploited by Dumas through this collaboration, even though Maquet himself was financially successful as a result of it. Near the end of his writing career, Dumas's own fortunes and finances declined as he continued his lavish lifestyle and bon vivant ways.

Despite his successes, Dumas never achieved the literary stature of other French writers of his time, but in 2002, he was finally recognized by the French government, which had his body exhumed and transported to the Panthéon in Paris, where it is now enshrined alongside those of such illustrious authors as Victor Hugo and Émile Zola.

Please visit the [Centre for Research](#) webpage for a link to the Elluminate recorded session of this presentation.

The next Arts and Science Research Talks session on February 18 will feature a presentation by Dr. Emma Pivato, a graduate instructor in the Centre of Integrated Studies.

Upcoming Lunch 'n' Learn Presentations

Wednesday, March 23, 2011:

Dr. Carolyn Greene, an assistant professor in the Centre for State and Legal Studies will present "Punishing Processes in Youth Court: Procedural Justice, Court Atmosphere and Youths' Views of the Legitimacy of the Criminal Justice System."

Wednesday, May 18, 2011:

Dr. Dianne Conrad, director of the Centre for Learning Accreditation, and **Dr. Cindy Ives**, director of the Centre for Learning Design and Development, will present "The Shift to Learning Outcomes: Promoting Active and Authentic Learning."

Health and Wellness



Hugs and Kisses For Heart Month

February is Heart Month, and what better way to be good to your heart than to share your feelings with your colleagues.

Need to kick it up a notch? Try the Jump Start Your Heart Challenge. Skipping ropes will be available near the Valentines craft tables. See how many consecutive jumps you can make, and then enter your name to win a prize.



For more information on Heart Month and how you can become involved, visit the [Heart and Stroke Foundation](#) website.

Respectful Workplace Workshops

In the 2008 AU Staff Climate Survey, employees reported a perceived lack of respect and incidents of workplace harassment. As a result, AU, which believes in a respectful, harassment-free environment for all employees and is concerned about these perceptions and experiences, will be implementing interactive, problem solving Respectful Workplace Workshops as a first step in responding to and discussing employees' expressed concerns.

The Respectful Workplace Workshops will involve real AU scenarios and will provide an opportunity for all AU employees to discuss and jointly develop positive solutions that are relevant to their community. Feedback from AU employees who have already participated in the workshops indicates that the discussions have been very engaging and effective in problem solving.

All AU employees are encouraged to participate in one of the Respectful Workplace Workshops, scheduled at all AU locations from February to May 2011. Each workshop will be 3.5 hours long. To view the list of available workshop dates and to register for a workshop go to the [Respectful Workplace Moodle](#) site.

Contact Nichole Collins [ncollins@athabasca.ca] or Anik Fehr [anikf@athabasca.ca] regarding any questions.

Community Wellness Fair and Trade Show

Looking for Volunteers, Vendors and Content Experts

The AU Wellness Committee is excited to announce that it has teamed up with various Athabasca community organizations to hold a Community Wellness Fair and Trade Show at the Athabasca Regional Multiplex on Saturday, April 30, 2011, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The one-day wellness fair will bring information and organizations from all over Alberta and will include tables, displays, vendors, speakers and demonstrations focused on the elements of wellness.

Planning is in the early stages but gearing up quickly. Organizers are looking for

- volunteers to be part of this event
- people with content expertise
- people interested in having an information or vendor table

If you would like to participate, please email [Nichole Collins](#) or phone her at 780-675-6461.

Athabasca University 
Technology Enhanced Knowledge
Research Institute

moodlemoot^{*} 2011

May 1-5, 2011
Mayfield Inn,
Edmonton, Alberta

Open Learning Open Collaboration

This year's theme – Openness.
Open learning, open source,
open educational resources,
open social networking.

Keynote speakers Stephen Downes and Martin Dougiamas

Connect and share, virtually and in person, with practitioners, innovators, administrators, researchers and developers from across North America and throughout the world.

Proposal deadline has been extended to February 25.
Submit a proposal at
<http://moodlemoot.ca/course/view.php?id=141>

Registration now open. Early bird rates end February 27.
To register, please visit
<http://moodlemoot.ca/course/view.php?id=116>

For more information visit our website:
<http://moodlemoot.ca/>



International Academy of
African Business and Development

Challenges in the Era of Globalization

May 17 - 20, 2011

Robbins Health Learning Centre
Edmonton, Alberta

CALL FOR PAPERS

Submission deadline February 28, 2011

Join over 200 scholars, grad students and professionals from around the world who are actively engaged in business and economic development issues as they relate to Africa.

Special sessions with eminent panelists and contributors, some of which include:

- ▶ Changing paradigm of analysis of foreign direct investment: Chinese firms in Africa
- ▶ Successful Canadian business experiences in Africa
- ▶ The future of doctoral and post-doctoral business education in Africa in an era of globalization
- ▶ Stay tuned for updates on additional sessions

For more information visit our website:
<http://iaabd2011.athabascau.ca/index.php>

NOTE
extended
deadline!



Posted weekly on [The Landing](#)

Athabasca University 

Insider Information

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 and must accompany all photos. Please contact the Insider [co-ordinator](#) for a copy of the release form.

The next issue of The Insider will be published on Monday, February 28, 2011. The deadline for submissions is February 18.