

# the insider

A newsletter published for everyone in the Athabasca University community

Volume 2: Issue #4  
March 14, 2011

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1 Science Lab Opens
- 2 AU Wins Business Award
- 3 RAIC Centre at AU
- 4 New Fee Calculator
- 5 138 Years at AU
- 5 It's All About You
- 6 Rethinking Exams
- 7 Graduate Studies Presentations



Premier Ed Stelmach was special guest at the March 4 official opening of AU's new and expanded science laboratory. Also present were (left to right) provincial infrastructure minister Ray Danyluk, AUGC chair Barry Walker, Marie Stelmach, former Athabasca MLA Frank Appleby and his wife Dorothy, who assisted with the ribbon cutting, and Athabasca-Redwater MLA Jeff Johnson. A staff open house will be held in the new lab in April. Watch for your invitation.



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

Athabasca University 

# AU Wins Export Award at Alberta Business Awards

by Erin Ottosen

AU was recognized for its achievements in exporting knowledge and education at the 2011 Alberta Business Awards of Distinction banquet in Edmonton on March 4.

The university received the Export Award of Distinction, given to an Alberta organization that has achieved outstanding accomplishments in exporting products or services outside of Canada.

Dr. Deborah Hurst, associate dean of the Faculty of Business, accepted the award on behalf of AU president, Dr. Frits Pannekoek. "I applaud the Chambers of Commerce for seeing the power and impact of a slightly different kind of export," Hurst said, "one that does not involve a manufactured product in the traditional sense, but one that contributes mightily to our province's and our country's productivity and global influence. As Canada's leading distance and online education university, we export knowledge and education, and we do that on a global level. This award is an acknowledgement of the value of these exports and confirms their impact on our dynamic, global knowledge economy."

## AU's Export Achievements: Highlights

- AU has students in 90 countries worldwide.
- AU was the first Canadian university to be accredited in the United States, and last year, it was accredited in the European Union.
- AU's export revenues over the past three years exceeded \$7.5 million.
- The Government of Nepal has asked for AU's assistance with starting a Nepali open university, a development which could result in significant revenue for AU.
- AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek is president of the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE).
- Launched in 1994, AU's Executive MBA program was the world's first online program of its kind.
- AU has a long-standing practice of collaborating with international post-secondary educational institutions and other organizations to remove barriers to higher education for students around the world.
- AU was recently awarded a UNESCO/COL Chair in Open Educational Resources. This chair, which is international in scope, focuses on making education more accessible through the use of open educational resources (OERs).



Dr. Deborah Hurst (left) and Kay Taylor, chair of the Executive Committee of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce

## News In Brief

### MBA Student Aiming for 2012 Olympics

Devon Smibert, an AU MBA student who is training to compete as a track cyclist in the 2012 Olympics, was recently the subject of an article in the Vancouver newspaper *The Province*.

Smibert's long-term ambitions include entrepreneurship and a political career, and he sees his MBA as a way to support success in these areas. He is quoted as saying that he carried out extensive research before deciding that AU's program was the best fit. "My work and athletic schedules would never have allowed me to take a traditional classroom format program. At AU, I am able to arrange my school schedule around my work, military and athletic schedules."

The complete article is available in the online version of [The Province](#).

# The RAIC Centre at AU: Canada's First Online Architectural Program



RAIC president Stuart Howard (right) with AU president Frits Pannekoek at the launch of the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture.

In February, AU and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada celebrated the approval by the Alberta Government of a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture to be offered through the RAIC Centre for Architecture at AU.

The new architecture program is a flexible work-study program, allowing qualifying students to pursue an alternative, practice-based path to an architecture career. Building on a pre-professional program now in the latter stages of development, the program offers advanced experience in areas of technology and sustainable design.

“We are very pleased to see this program offered through Athabasca University,” RAIC president Stuart Howard said. “It will soon provide students across Canada with a path into the profession of architecture based on a unique work-study program that includes employment experience in the office of an architect.”

The strength of the new program is that it allows adult learners to earn a quality university education in architecture regardless of their personal, geographic, career or family commitments. While the program integrates the principles of architectural theory and design, it also respects the diversity of Canadian architectural practice, and the courses and practicums offered in the program will include materials that reflect these distinctions.

The new program will serve the educational needs of aspiring Canadian architects who are unable to attend one of Canada's 10 schools of architecture and those of international architectural graduates who come to Canada and find themselves in need additional courses.

“We're delighted we've been able to partner with RAIC in offering this much needed new program,” said AU president Dr. Frits Pannekoek. “Among its many benefits, it allows us to break down barriers for foreign-trained architects who need to prepare for their examinations so they can work in Canada.”

Architecture Canada - RAIC is a voluntary national association established in 1907 as the voice for architecture and its practice in Canada. Representing more than 4,300 architects, the RAIC is the leading voice of architecture in Canada. Its mission is to affirm that architecture matters, to celebrate the richness and diversity of architecture in Canada and to support architects in achieving excellence.

For more information about the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture program, visit the website for the [RAIC Centre for Architecture at Athabasca University](#).

MyAU | Library | Questions? Contact Us | A-Z Index  GO

**Athabasca University**

**Courses**

**Home**

**Courses**

- Undergraduate
- Graduate
- Course Fees**
- Course Delivery
- Sample Courses
- New Courses
- Course Search

**Programs**

**Students**

**Faculties & Centres**

**Administrative Offices**

**Research**

**About AU**

**Contact**

[New to AU?](#)

**Courses**

**Course Fees**

**Undergraduate Course Fees**

Depending on where you are located, your course fees will vary.

 **Calculate your fees**

Undergraduate course fees are a combination of tuition fees, learning resources fees (course material fee), and mandatory Students' Association and Alumni Relations fees.

Payment of learning resource fees entitles students to receive most course materials and support services required to complete the course.

Full payment must accompany applications regardless of the registration method used. Fees can be paid by credit card online or by fax or you can send the completed forms with a cheque or money order payable to Athabasca University by mail. Requests with insufficient fees cannot be processed until

**Related Links**



- [Undergraduate Calendar](#)
- [Graduate Calendar](#)

# New Online Fee Calculator

In their continuing quest to create more interactive student services, the Student and Academic Web Services unit and the Office of the Registrar have created an online fee calculator which allows students to estimate course fees based on their individual circumstances.

The calculator, launched on February 1, has been well received. As of March 7, 3,379 users have accessed the system, and there have been no reported issues.

Jeff Dutton was the primary developer on the project, with assistance from Stewart Foss and Elizabeth Gusnoski of Advancement Web Services. The Office of the Registrar team consisted of Mark Fabbro, Ann Humphries, Patricia Soluk, Laura Barakeris, Daisy Ramos and Jim D'Arcy. The team would like to acknowledge assistance from members of the Frontline alias, who offered valuable suggestions, and Carrie Anton, who provided advice on accessibility.

The fee calculator can be accessed on select AU web pages such as the [Course Fees](#) page. Further integration to additional web pages is planned.

## Roving Lunch Recipes Available

The dishes offered at the AU Roving Lunch in February were so delicious, many people have been asking for the recipes.

To satisfy these requests, the Wellness Committee has provided a spot on their Moodle site for these recipes. You can post your recipe to allow others the opportunity to recreate and enjoy your dish, and you can look up recipes for other dishes offered at the event and recreate them yourself. All employees will have access to the posted recipes.

To post your recipe:

- Go to the Wellness Committee Moodle site.
- If you receive the message: "You are about to enrol yourself as a member of this course. Are you sure you wish to do this,?" click on Yes.
- Click on the Post Your 2011 Roving Lunch Recipes link.
- Click on Add a New Discussion Topic. Type the name of your dish in the subject field. Then type in the recipe in the message field or upload a copy of the recipe in the attachment box.

**And enjoy!**



Dr. Emma Pivato

# It's All About You: Arts and Science Research Talks

by Leslie Johnston

Narcissism (pathological self-absorption or conceit) seems in some ways symptomatic of our time, appearing in various popular expositions of contemporary society, but what is it, and what is the history of this term?

Dr. Emma Pivato, an academic co-ordinator in the Centre for Integrated Studies, reviewed the history of the term, in her February 11 Arts and Science Research Talks presentation “Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD): Where Are They Now?” at AU Edmonton.

Pivato walked the audience through a series of expositions in the psychological literature from Freud and his late nineteenth century predecessors through the most recent diagnostic manual for psychiatric disorders, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV (Text Revision) (2000).

Narcissism is a personality disorder, and it appears to have deep developmental roots. A range of hypotheses, including inconsistent or absent parenting of toddlers, have been advanced to account for the symptoms. As a therapist, Pivato shared the difficulties of working with and treating narcissists, who often do not recognize a problem in their behaviour.

Narcissists can be shy (closet narcissists) or grandiose, and their drive to succeed accounts for a relatively high concentration of narcissists in some high status professions, such as medicine. These people may be users of colleagues and subordinates and can wreak havoc in professional and workplace relations. In somewhat more benign contexts, in this era of the net and reality TV, wannabe celebrities can create pseudo-selves to exhibit. Likely, as Pivato pointed out, these opportunities do not create the narcissistic tendencies but merely provide an arena for display.

Though narcissism is complex and difficult to diagnose and treat, Pivato argued for the continued relevance of the category, the need to seek maintenance therapies, and the need to find a way to spot potential narcissists and intervene in childhood. However, she concluded, that labelling has become pernicious, and it may in fact be kindest to de-list narcissistic personality disorder from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual after all.

The talk concluded with a lively discussion among online attendees and those in the room. The recorded presentation is available on the [Research Centre webpage](#).

# 138 Years at AU: Voluntary Retirement Program 2011

by Joelle Jackson

The Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program: 2011, offered to AU staff members earlier this year, provided incentives to help facilitate retirement. Nine staff members were approved for participation in the program.

A reception for these retirees was held in the Governing Council Chambers at AU Athabasca on March 2, and six attended: Dianne Balaski, Claire Gemmell-Mathieu, Janet Kremer-Kerr, Jerry Nolan, Myrna Nolan and Anita Spence. Many of their fellow employees took the time to attend the gathering and extend their congratulations and good wishes.

In his address to the gathering, Dr. Frits Pannekoek noted that the retirees who were present collectively represented 138 years of AU experience and memories. Dr. David Gregory and Dr. Tony Simmons said a few words on behalf of the retirees. Linda's Treats provided a delicious assortment of refreshments.

Thank you to the retirees of the VRIP-2011 Program for your years of service to AU, and congratulations.

# Pilot Project Explores a Web-Based Exam Creation System

by Erin Ottosen

The Exam Banking Pilot Project, a part of the Exam Harmonization Project is exploring an innovative web-based system that would enable AU faculty members to build exams from a bank of questions. The exams will be easy to create and process, and they can even be made unique to each student.

The pilot project is one of the steps AU is taking through the Exam Harmonization Project to develop an efficient online exam delivery system. A team of AU faculty and staff members is working with consultants to develop and test two essential components of the project: a question bank and an exam compilation system.

“As a predominantly online institution, AU is uniquely positioned to take a huge leadership role in online exam delivery,” said Akil Pessoa, CEO of MuchLearning, the Edmonton company developing the pilot system for AU.

Like most Canadian universities, AU now provides most of its exams to students on paper. “This paper-based system has inefficiencies and needs upgrading,” said Mark Meunier, one of the managers of the pilot and manager of Exam Services in the Office of the Registrar.

AU’s exams are also generally static collections of questions, but with advancements in technology, they can become much more dynamic.

## *How the Pilot System Works*

In the MuchLearning platform, exam questions are housed individually in a question bank. “We have a number of question types,” Pessoa said. “A question can be anything from an essay question to multiple choice to complex mathematics.”

All exam questions for all courses are kept in a single bank, and each question is tagged with metatags that describe what the question is about and how to use it. A

crucial part of metatagging is identifying which course learning objective(s) a question is meant to address. “Rather than authoring an exam,” Pessoa said, “you author questions and make sure you have great questions well-tagged.”

To create an exam, faculty members search the question bank using parameters such as topic, learning objective and difficulty level. The MuchLearning system compiles the exam based on the parameters specified. Faculty members can then review the exam and add or delete questions as they see fit.

## *The Benefits*

This new system represents a different approach to exam development, but it has the potential to yield benefits not possible in the more traditional system of paper-based exams.

For example, the system can safeguard against cheating by randomizing questions. “We can have different combinations of questions for students writing the same final exam in a room together,” Meunier said. “On some questions, especially math questions, we can actually randomize down to elements within the questions,” Pessoa added. “So your variable names will change, your coefficients will change, but it’s essentially the same question template.”

MuchLearning’s facility for math is one reason the Exam Harmonization Working Committee chose to hire the company. Of the several vendors reviewed by the committee, MuchLearning was the only one that could dynamically represent math problems, Meunier said. “They provide an intuitive way of typing and doing math on a computer,” said Maria Torres, an academic coordinator of mathematics and one of the committee members. “We want to extend

this to chemistry and physics and other disciplines.”

MuchLearning’s system is equally adept at handling exam questions for arts-related disciplines. It also has the potential to reduce duplication of work, as it will allow faculty members to use and adapt questions that have been created by others. “Say there’s a math question dealing with financial math,” Pessoa said. “A business professor might be putting an exam together, and as he searches the question bank, that math question might pop up. He might say, ‘Hey, this question fits exactly what I want to do, so I’m going to add a business tag to it so it’s readily available on the business side as well.’”

“Rather than an exam question being something you write once, and there is no way to access it easily,” Pessoa said, “it now starts to become something living, which is really what it was in the first place, the embodiment of an idea that someone had.”

## *What Happens Next*

Throughout March, AU staff members will continue populating the question bank with existing exam questions from a test group of AU courses across all faculties. When the two pilot components are ready sometime this spring, the Exam Harmonization Working Committee will invite AU’s academic community to participate in system testing.

“MuchLearning is quite flexible and willing to learn with us, to really take our opinions into consideration,” Torres said. “There is a good possibility we will grow together.”

The Exam Harmonization project is one of more than 30 Open Knowledge Environment projects that have been launched at AU in the past year-and-a-half thanks to Knowledge Infrastructure Program funding.

# Graduate Studies Presentations

The Faculty of Graduate Studies is offering a number of interesting presentations to AU faculty members and graduate students over the next couple of months. Those interested in registering for any of these presentations should email the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#).

## For Faculty Members

### **Planning Your Analysis I: Design to Selection of Analyses and Sample Size**

April 8, 2011, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Presented by Dr. Shawn Fraser, assistant professor, Faculty of Health Disciplines

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1217 at AU Edmonton

### **Copyright and Plagiarism**

April 11, 2011, 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Presented by Rachel Conroy, copyright officer, and Corinne Bosse, instructional media analyst in CLDD

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1222 at AU Edmonton

### **Planning Your Analysis II: How and Why to Clean Your Data and Check Your Analysis Assumptions**

April 18, 2011, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Presented by Dr. Shawn Fraser

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1217 at AU Edmonton

### **How to Help Students Write for Publication**

May 5, 2011

Presented by Dr. Debbie Fraser, associate professor, Faculty of Health Disciplines

(Time and location to be announced)

## For Graduate Students

### **Writing for Publication**

March 23, 2011, noon - 1:30 p.m.

Presented by Debbie Fraser, associate professor, Faculty of Health Disciplines

Via Elluminate and in Room 1217 at AU Athabasca

### **Planning Your Analysis I: Design to Selection of Analyses and Sample Size**

April 8, 2011, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Presented by Dr. Shawn Fraser, assistant professor, Faculty of Health disciplines

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1217 at AU Edmonton

### **Planning Your Analysis II: How and Why to Clean Your Data and Check Your Analysis Assumptions**

April 18, 2011, 10 - 11:30 a.m.

Presented by Dr. Shawn Fraser

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1217 at AU Edmonton

### **Copyright and Plagiarism**

April 21, 2011, 1 - 2:30 p.m.

Presented by Rachel Conroy, copyright officer, and Corinne Bosse, instructional media analyst in CLDD

Via Adobe Connect and in Room 1222 at AU Edmonton



International Academy of  
African Business and Development

## Challenges in the Era of Globalization

May 17 - 20, 2011

Robbins Health Learning Centre  
Edmonton, Alberta

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

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

# moodlemoot\* 2011

May 1-5, 2011

Mayfield Inn,  
Edmonton, Alberta

**Open Learning  
Open Collaboration**

**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.

To register, please visit  
<http://moodlemoot.ca/course/view.php?id=116>

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

*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 issue of *the Insider* will be published on Monday, March 28, 2011. The deadline for submissions is March 18.