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UA: a student's view

How the institution, its students and faculty are integrated into this jewel of the desert

05/07/08

📅 11:18:37 am, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 346 words 

Going back out into the world

Something odd has been coming over me in the last few weeks.

I will be 38 this year. I am married, with two children. I've had a variety of jobs in the world. I've lived life like few other people about to graduate from college, yet I feel afraid.

I had assumed that the fear and anxiety that comes with graduation and being "pushed out of the nest," was something only the 22-year-olds felt. I thought when I set out to get this degree that I would hit the ground running at the end of my grand educational adventure.

There's an odd comfort in being a student. My life has revolved around my family, but has also been deeply entrenched in school and the experiences that go along with it. Stepping out of my role as a student is starting to feel like coming out from under a warm quilt when it's cold. I like that fuzzy-warm feeling.

Now, I'm worried about getting a job, but it's more than that. I have a family and my husband is stressed out from being the only one with an income. My kids have needs.

Sure, we could keep going on as we have been for the last five and a half years, but it's been tough.

Beyond the panic of job hunting, I am still glad I went back to college. I'm glad I'll be finishing something that I have wanted for so long. I've learned a lot and grown a great deal as a person. I overcame some prejudices and focused my talents into real skills.

But back to the fear. Fear is a good thing. It keeps us sharp. As primitive humans, it kept our ancestors from becoming some animal's food. These days, it keeps us from getting squashed by cars...usually.

I'm confident I'll find my way back out in the big, bad world. I have a leg up on my fellow students: I've been there, and it's not so bad. I just have to give up my blankie and get on with it.

Jennifer Tramm

05/06/08

📅 10:24:45 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 304 words 

Textbooks still cost a lot

UA: a student's view

JENNIFER TRAMM is a non-traditional student of journalism at the University of Arizona who is married and has two children, ages 5 and 14. She has lived in Arizona since 1989 and in Tucson since 2005. When she started back to school in 2003, her youngest child was just 9 months old. While her baby slept, she did her homework and forgot what sleep felt like. It's still something of a mystery.

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Now is the time that has students lining up to try to sell their books back to the [UA Bookstore](#).

The thing is, despite having to pay hundreds of dollars for a semester's worth of books, "buybacks" don't usually yield much – if anything.

It's a real scam textbook stores have going. Charge a student \$100 for an algebra book, then at the end of the semester, he comes back and sells it back for \$10 to \$25. The store turns around and re-sells it for the used price, which is maybe \$50 or \$60. The store wins...financially. Even though the early-bird students will get a discount for buying used, the store still wins.

On the other hand, there are always online stores that facilitate book sales from person to person. I have gotten several of my books from [Half.com](#) and I know of other students who got them from [Amazon.com](#). The middleman – in this case, the UA Bookstore or the [Arizona Bookstore](#), right off campus – is eliminated and returns on popular books are much higher for students.

I'm pleased [Governor Napolitano](#) signed the textbook disclosure bill into law. It will help instructors understand what they are asking students to buy. The problem is that it will be up to the [Arizona Board of Regents](#) to enforce the law. Whether they will do so or not is anyone's guess.

We'll find out in January, though it'll be too late for students to benefit from it – the books will have been ordered for classes already for the most part. Despite faculty being habitually late in ordering the books for their classes, which is part of the cost problem, by January books have been ordered and shipped.

I am so glad I don't have to buy any more textbooks.

Jennifer Tramm

1 comment



04/24/08

📅 01:12:36 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 293 words

Good entertainment doesn't come cheap.

When the [Associated Students of the University of Arizona](#), UA's student government, contracted with rapper Kanye West to play the university's McKale Memorial Center tonight, it estimated the costs at about \$500,000, according to a somewhat sensational story in the [Arizona Daily Wildcat](#) newspaper.

Today's story makes it sound like the ASUA has really stepped in it, now. The concert is slated to lose \$150,000 from tonight's performance. Oh, no! But, wait.

The story informs that the expected ticket sales were at first projected to be just shy of \$377,000. As one astute Wildcat commenter noted, that means that ASUA expected to eat the \$123,000 not covered from ticket sales.

Here's the deal: The ASUA doesn't exist to make money off student events. It most often pays out of pocket for everything from concerts on the UA Mall, a popular spot for students in between classes (and often those who should be in class) to hang out, to discussions with noted authors and academics.

So, ASUA expected to cover a large part of the cost in its effort to entertain and bring a higher quality of life to the students. The only thing that bugs

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me is that they took out a loan to do it.

While loans are all too commonplace to students these days, that's for tuition. A loan for a concert seems frivolous. Maybe the price of the tickets could have been raised a bit. Maybe there could have been a little more financial planning done prior to contracting with West. Something.

The cost of this concert is not fixed. While the concert is currently sold out, according to the [UA Athletics Online Ticketing Center](#), that lovely loan could grow for some time to come.

Jennifer Tramm



04/15/08

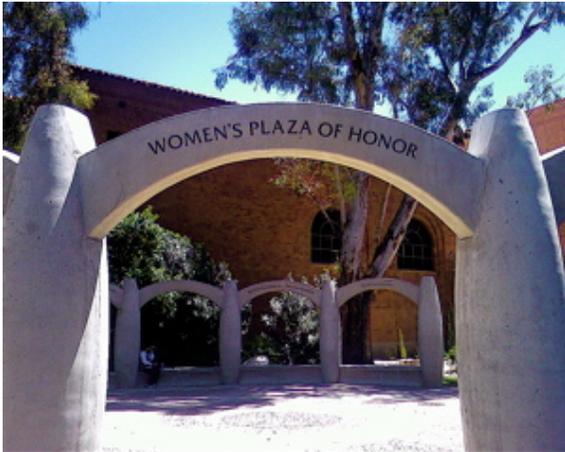
📅 12:00:52 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 341 words 

Take Back Our Night Tucson

Tonight is a big night for those concerned about or affected by sexual assault.

Two "Take Back the Night" events will take place this evening, starting at 6 p.m.

One of the events, organized in part by the [UA Women's Resource Center](#) starts on the UA campus, at the [Women's Plaza of Honor](#), where there will be displays, speakers and sharing of stories by anyone who wants to do so.



Above: A student sits in the University of Arizona Women's Plaza of Honor, Tucson, Ariz., Tuesday, April 15, 2008.

Below: The names of important women in history adorn the plaza's columns. Photos by Jennifer Tramm.



The group will then march to Catalina Park, where the group will meet up with the [Tucson Youth Take Back the Night group](#). Together, the groups will hold a candlelight vigil.

Don't think that these events are "women-only."

Sexual assault is something everyone has a stake in. Men care about the women in their lives – wives, daughters, mothers, nieces and aunts. In fact, there's a new organization at the UA, called "[Men Against Violence](#)," that encourages men to get involved in eradicating violence in the community.

Women care about those same people and have the added worry about their own safety.

Both "Take Back the Night" events are designed for everyone to attend. They're free and there are prizes and give-aways, for those still reluctant to see their involvement in the concern over women's safety in the community.

Stats (from FBI Uniform Crime Reports found [here](#))

The Good:

Forcible rape decreased in Tucson by more than 22 percent in 2006, the greatest decrease in one year since 2003, when the number of rapes decreased by 2.4 percent.

In general, rape decreased in Arizona by 3.2 percent in 2006.

The Bad:

Forcible rape increased in Phoenix by 3.2 percent for the same year and has increased in Mesa, Peoria and Scottsdale, the latter having increased by 27.5 percent.

The Ugly:

All sexual violence.

Get out there, Tucson, and show everyone you won't stand for violence against women and girls.

Jennifer Tramm



04/11/08

📅 05:28:43 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 288 words 

Two bucks a month isn't too much for a breath of fresher air

Solar power is cool. It's trendy. It's good for the planet.

It also costs money to build and maintain, which is why every Tucson Electric Power customer will now pay more each month.

And it's just a little tiny bit – residential customers only have to pay \$2 at the most, and businesses will pay at most \$39 per month.

It doesn't sound like much, but already, I've heard about people grouching over having to pay for the development of renewable energy sources, as mandated by [state law](#).

Why complain, when this will benefit us all? Look at it this way: It's only \$24 per year for residential customers. You pay more than that taking the family out to one dinner at a sit-down restaurant. It's worth it.

What is cooler yet is that the solar movement is starting to take off in new and better directions.

A new [solar energy plant](#) will be built near Gila Bend, Ariz., that uses a different technology than the black glossy [photovoltaic](#) squares we all know about. It uses solar heat to heat water, which will turn a steam turbine, generating electricity. The plant won't be ready until 2011 and will support about 70,000 Phoenix customers, but it is a big step toward what we all need: efficient, clean energy.

Someday in the near future, I hope Tucson gets a solar thermal generating plant. We need to do something to lessen the pollution going into our air. People don't show signs of suddenly foreswearing their gas mobiles, so something's got to give to help us all breathe easier.

Maybe your two bucks a month will help us get a little bit closer to that goal.

Jennifer Tramm



04/09/08

🕒 11:56:28 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 282 words 

Guest worker proposal not hitting the mark

The immigration issue is on everyone's minds these days.

New laws have started to drive undocumented workers out of Arizona – not necessarily out of the country – and employers are starting to feel the pinch.

On Monday, an Arizona Legislature committee gave the nod to proposals that could lead to a state-run guest worker program. It's a nice idea, but I don't think it'll work.

There are still undocumented people working in jobs in Arizona, even with the stronger laws. The employers just haven't been caught yet.

The proposals require things like background checks and that the workers have definable skills. One thing the program isn't slated to require is effective enforcement. In the [AP story](#) that ran in the Citizen Monday, Republican state Rep. Bill Konopnicki, a sponsor of the proposals, said, "If they (employers) don't comply, they're out."

Big deal. Without a real penalty, say a hefty fine, unscrupulous employers

who got kicked out of the guest worker program will just go back to hiring illegally again – if they ever joined in the first place.

What needs to be done is for Arizona to partner up with Mexico to try to find solutions that work for everyone. One thing that seems universal around the world to improve one's quality of life is education. That old adage, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for one day, but teach a man to fish and he'll eat every day," rings true here.

If people are taught how to better themselves – like how to run a business – they'll stay home, near their families, and leave all those crummy jobs to us.

Jennifer Tramm



04/04/08

📅 02:05:52 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 306 words

Free stuff! Got your attention? Read on:

Parking and Transportation Services has been the bane of my driving existence since I came to the UA in 2005. Every academic year, the parking fees go up and lots disappear. No longer...I graduate in May!

Why am I telling you this? Because parking and transportation in general don't have to be the bane of anyone's existence when there is a public bus system, such as [SunTran](#). And this Sunday, April 6, as part of [Clean Air Days 2008](#) and sponsored in part by UA PTS, everyone gets to ride free.

Some negative perceptions:

- Riding the bus is for poor people.
- Riding the bus is just for kids.
- Buses are full of smelly or crazy people.
- Bus seats are smelly and dirty.

Sure, poor people do ride, but there are environmentally responsible people sitting next to them.

Kids ride it and adults ride it. Lots of people use SunTran to get to and from work. My husband does!

Bus drivers know how to keep the peace on their buses; so don't worry about crazy people. About smell: With more than 17 million passenger trips each year, something is going to get messy, but that's what cleaning is for.

Plenty of benefits:

The SunTran system has won nationwide awards for service.

All 203 buses in the fleet run on either compressed natural gas or biodiesel, both of which are better for the environment than standard diesel.

Bus shelters are powered by solar panels.

The more people on the bus, the fewer there are driving cars and polluting Tucson's already brownish air.

It's also cheaper to ride than to gas up every week.

So, take this chance to get to know the bus system your tax dollars subsidize and ride free this Sunday. You'll be glad you did and so will our environment.

Jennifer Tramm



04/02/08

📅 03:02:16 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 313 words 

Everyone deserves access to health care

The UA finally will join the rest of the Pac-10 Conference when it allows domestic partners of UA employees to receive health benefits starting Oct.1. The move is the result of a statewide plan that includes all state employees.

What should have been a “duh, yeah,” common sense principal turned out to be a long struggle over religious values.

The [Alliance Defense Fund](#), a public charity founded by prominent Christian leaders which, according to its Web site, has set out “to aggressively defend religious liberty,” opposed the move in a letter to the state: “Marriage between one man and one woman remains the preferred relationship in Arizona.”

While it's unsettling that the ADF believes it's such an authority on what we all think, there are a couple of facts organizations like that tend to ignore.

Fact One: The State of Arizona, of which the UA is an official part, is a governing entity and as such, there must be a separation of church and state.

Fact Two: Marriage is a religious concept not embraced by everyone.

The state should have nothing to do with marriages – licensing or otherwise. When a person decides with whom they wish to live and love, there is no place for law. Common sense, maybe, but not law.

If an unmarried somebody wants to commit to another unmarried somebody – no matter the individuals' genders – I say that's great. Committed people are happy, stable people. I like happy, stable people.

This move by the state to allow domestic partners to get health coverage from their partners' plans isn't about gender or religion. For the UA, it's about competitive recruitment and retention of employees who find these benefits elsewhere. For everyone else, it's about fairness.

Happy, stable, unmarried people have a right to be healthy, just like those who chose to get hitched.

Jennifer Tramm



03/26/08

📅 09:00:20 am, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 295 words 

Bureaucracy Killed Mother Wit

Bureaucracy. Committee. Meeting.

These words may strike dread into your heart. They do in mine. Today, they didn't strike dread so much as exacerbate a problem.

I twisted my ankle this morning at the off-campus parking lot. The kind shuttle driver waited for me to hobble up the steps. When I got on campus, I utilized the free golf cart service to get to [Campus Health Services](#) to get help for my injury.

The problem: The “urgent” care center was closed until 9 a.m. for its weekly meeting. Every Wednesday, bureaucracy closes the health center.

Never mind that an injured student needed its help this morning. Never mind the other guy in the cart, who had to use crutches to get around. It

was meeting day.

The cart driver was surprised and said the people at Campus Health should hold their meetings earlier, so they can help the students. I agree. The service is supposed to be there for the students. If it's closed, what good is it?

You might say, 'Too bad. When something's closed, you wait until it reopens.' Ok, fine, then think of it this way: You're at work and you twist an ankle. There's a first aid kit, but everyone who has a key is in meeting and cannot be interrupted. Do you go to an emergency room and wait for hours to be seen for what could have been taken care of in 15 minutes?

First aid should always be available at a place of employment or schooling. Campus Health should have at least one person on duty during all hours that classes are in session to help students who need its services.

Bureaucracy really screws up the works. What happened to common sense?

Jennifer Tramm



03/21/08

📅 12:18:51 pm, Categories: [University of Arizona](#), 639 words 

Good grades don't prevent credit card theft

This week is Spring Break for the UA so not much has been happening to blog about with regard to that fine institution, but something did happen to this student that caused a shock to my system.

My family and I went on vacation for the first half of break – our first Spring Break vacation of my entire five-year college experience.

When we came back, my husband looked over our finances online to see whether all of our transactions had cleared properly. All of a sudden, he let out a howl of rage: Someone had stolen our credit card information and had made nearly \$800 in purchases online, putting us in the red with our bank – we had used our check cards instead of regular credit cards (big mistake!).

Considering it was 9:30 p.m., it amazed me that he was able to do as much as he did. He was able to cancel the card numbers – both mine and his – and get information from two of the companies listed in our online statement. He was able to start the process for filing a police report (they'll contact us in the "next several days"). He also was able to get information from some of the merchants the thief had used.

Though the thief had somehow gotten our card information, s/he did not get our home address, which caused most of the merchants to cancel the transactions (though the funds are still held unless the merchant releases them or until the holds expire).

S/he ordered things from QVC, Zappos.com, Bed Bath & Beyond and put an ad in on Craigslist.org, among other attempted transactions.

I was impressed by [Zappos.com](#), which sells shoes and other accessories. Its representative was able to tell us that the transaction was canceled because the delivery address did not match our address, on file with our bank. She was unable to give us the information from the fraudulent Zappos account, but she graciously contacted our bank to have the funds released so we wouldn't have to wait until Tuesday or so to use the funds. As a poorer-than-most student, that money is slated for bills and rent!

I wasn't as impressed with <http://www.qvc.com/>, however. He's sure its representative lied to him last night when he asked about the transaction.

She would neither confirm nor deny the existence of the transaction, despite that he was able to give them the card numbers to match. She did, however, make a sad little "oh" sound when my husband told her our zip code. Apparently, the zips didn't match, though she neither confirmed nor denied this. He advised them to stop shipment to wherever the purchases were going.

This morning, he called back and was able to get information. He was also told that they canceled the transaction after speaking with him last night. I wonder what would have happened had we not contacted them. Also - after my husband ended up saving QVC money in goods and shipping, the company steadfastly refused to call our bank and release the hold on our funds: about \$400. Not good business practice, in my opinion.

The [Craigslist.com](#) transaction was for an ad to hire a cashier. We weren't able to get the information because the ad already had been pulled or had expired (too quick, I think), but the Craig's List representative told us that they have the information on file for the police to look over.

All in all, it looks like we may escape with a lot less damage than could have been done had my husband not been vigilant with our finances. The lesson is one that hit hard: Anyone can get hit with identity theft and credit card fraud. Even students of a fine university.

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