

Online prostitution not a tuition solution



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OPINION WRITER

The story of students struggling through college and scrambling to pay for basic necessities is nothing new. But it's recently been acknowledged in the public eye that a surprisingly high number of students have used an unfortunate approach to break free of this vicious post-secondary cycle: sugar daddies. This method of income represents the flaws in our patriarchal society, as it's just another way through which women degrade themselves, when they can't support themselves due to high tuition fees and poor money management.

To clear up any misconceptions, a "sugar daddy" is defined as a "wealthy, middle-aged man who spends freely on a young woman in return for her companionship or intimacy." The University of Alberta ranks in the top five Canadian universities as one of the fastest-growing sugar baby schools according to new sign-ups in 2012 on a website called seekingarrangement.com. Although these are sign ups, and it doesn't necessarily mean women will find a sugar daddy, it shows that these women are prepared to enter this type of relationship. And this list only takes into account the new users on one site, so it's hard to know how many women in total maintain a sugar baby/sugar daddy relationship. Essentially, these young women rely on the financial aid of an older man in exchange for a sexual relationship.

Although seekingarrangement.com is presented as warm and is inviting, and introduced on the home page as perfectly acceptable, one needs only to take a closer look and read between the lines to recognize this as a disguised form of prostitution, with the website acting the part of the pimp. And although some women may legitimately want to enter into a prostitution type relationship with men, no female university student should feel like that is their only option. For the throngs of people cooing that this is merely an escort service, they need to open their eyes and take a closer look. I guarantee it won't take long. If you're wondering why men in their mid thirties to late fifties are interested in paying tens of thousands of dollars to women — primarily between age 18 and 28 — annually, the answer is simple: sex. These men aren't financing women for the dinner conversation, but for the implied intercourse that will be exchanged for hefty checks. Despite the initial jokes and a chorus of sarcastic, "Well, why didn't I think of that one?" comments, the 125 U of A students trying to gain one of these arrangements presents a very serious situation.

One of the largest issues concerning "sugar daddies" is that it solidifies patriarchal relationships in society. At the U of A, many students don't have the subject of gender equality even cross their mind. However, this new awareness about the numbers of women maintaining sugar daddy/sugar baby relationships is just one of the many reminders that gender inequality is an issue swept under the carpet and forgotten.

Although these women are

avoiding the stress of working numerous jobs and will have a better chance of being debt free after graduation, the means they use to avoid these instances leads back to the price tag on education. The cost of tuition and books are too high for students who don't have financial help from parents, or the luxury of home-cooked meals every night. The cost of living, which is continually on the rise, only compounding the matter further.

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It's not surprising that many women are looking for alternate means by which to get through university, because it's not easy. Although the U of A claims it's accessible to anyone, this is only true in theory, not practice.

A further problem is that after students struggle through a four-year Bachelor's degree, they are no longer guaranteed a job

post-graduation. In many fields, a Bachelors degree is considered a minimal asset, and not enough to get a job. In these instances, young women push themselves to maintain sugar daddy/sugar baby relationships for a few years to come. Instead of getting a high-paying job, grads often have to work long internships with minimal or no pay, or end up waiting tables while waiting for job opportunities to arise. Another unfortunate side effect is that if these women are in a sugar baby/sugar daddy relationship for a significant period of time, it could rob them of crucial work experience — making them bad potential candidates for future employers. Although they no longer have to pay for school, they are not yet self-sustainable, giving them a motive for maintaining the relationship.

High tuition and living expenses are unavoidable problems for any student, but one of the biggest problems lies with the women who are willing to take on one of these relationships. Four summer months with no school is a significant chunk of time, as well as an opportunity, to make money. Countless summer jobs are up for grabs, and many of them pay well, which is surely enough to help sustain students when school starts up again. There shouldn't be anything stopping these women from obtaining one of those summer jobs.

The U of A needs to take a long look at what means women are taking to ensure their financial and scholastic success, but at the same time, women engaging in these relationships need to re-prioritize their lives and look at how to manage and make money in the right places.

the marble pedestal

COMPILED BY Michael Ross

People often ask each other what they would do if they could be completely anonymous and never get caught. Some people might rob a bank or cheat on an exam, and generally the question is interpreted in a negative context.

But a group of students on campus, using only Facebook, have shown that given the opportunity for anonymity, students would do something completely different: compliment each other. If you haven't heard of the Facebook profile UofA Compliments yet, it's definitely worth checking out.

The page now has more than 1,000 connections with U of A students, and has facilitated hundreds of anonymous compliments between students. These short messages that people may not have normally shared with each other are often met with bewildered amusement, and are virtually guaranteed to make someone's day.

Originally started as an anti-bullying project, the group has been rapidly adopted by students on campus, and shows that often the best way to raise people's spirits come from the absolute simplest ideas.

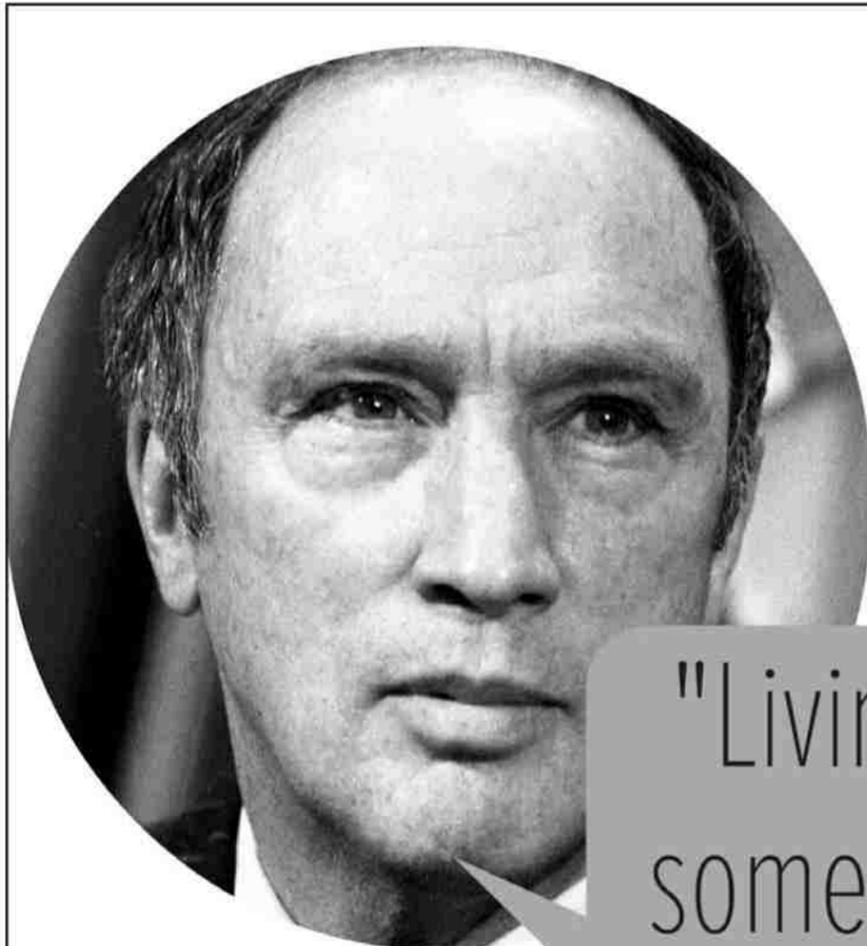
The Marble Pedestal is a semi-regular feature where we talk about things we like. That's why the pedestal is made out of marble — because it's fancy. There's also a nice fancy cloth on the pedestal that's purple and feels like velvet.

online at THEGATEWAYONLINE.CA

gateway opinion

It's all about perspective.

MEETINGS WEDNESDAY AT 5 IN 3-04 SUB



"Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant."

*** IN CONTEXT:**

Trudeau was describing Canada's relationship with America.