

# OVER THE EDGE

UNBC'S  
STUDENT  
NEWSPAPER

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# Welcome to UNBC Graduate Life: Your NBCGSS Guide

Greetings, new and returning UNBC graduate students! As you embark on your academic journey here in Prince George, we're thrilled to introduce you to the Northern British Columbia Graduate Students' Society (NBCGSS) – your dedicated support system and community hub throughout your graduate studies. Before you start PLEASE give us a follow on Instagram/ Facebook so we can stay connected! Just search NBCGSS!

## Who We Are

You might be asking, "What the heck is the NBCGSS?"

NBCGSS is the official representative body for all graduate students at UNBC.

Our mission is to enhance your academic experience, advocate for your rights, and foster a vibrant graduate student community.

Led by a passionate board of directors elected annually, we work tirelessly to ensure your voice is heard and your needs are met.

If you are a UNBC graduate student ever need support, have questions, or just want to chat about your graduate experience, the NBCGSS is here for you. Drop by our office in Room 7-168 at UNBC, or send an email to [gssoffice@unbc.ca](mailto:gssoffice@unbc.ca).

We're looking forward to meeting you and supporting you throughout your graduate journey at UNBC.

## What We Offer (Our Services)

At NBCGSS, we're committed to enhancing your graduate student experience. Here are the key services we provide and more details about all these services are available on our website <https://nbcgss.unbc.ca/services/>:

1. **The Deals App:** We've partnered with the BC Federation of Students to offer student discounts through the free Deals App. Download it to start saving money on your day-to-day expenses.
2. **Health & Dental Plan:** In partnership with Studentcare, we offer comprehensive health and dental coverage to fill the gaps in provincial health care.
3. **Graduate Computer Lab:** We manage access to a restricted computer lab in the Teaching



and Learning Building, room 10-3032.

4. **Graduate Lounge:** NBCGSS members have 24/7 access to our restricted-access lounge in the Teaching and Learning Building, room 10-3016.

5. **U-Pass:** This program provides unlimited access to Prince George's bus system and public pools.

6. **Emergency Bursary Fund:** We fund emergency bursaries of up to \$250 per student per academic year for members demonstrating considerable need.

7. **Legacy Scholarships:** We offer two \$500 scholarships annually to recognize academic excellence and contributions to graduate student culture.

8. **Welcome Kit:** New members can pick up a free kit including a handbook, dayplanner, and other useful items from our office.

9. **Legal Assistance:** As a member, you're eligible for free, unlimited legal advice over the phone in various areas of law.

10. **Printing Credits:** We fund a \$5 credit in your PaperCut account each semester for printing services.

11. **NBCGSS Food Bank:** We offer confidential food hamper services for graduate students in need.

For more details on any of these services or how to access them, please visit our office or contact us directly at [gssoffice@unbc.ca](mailto:gssoffice@unbc.ca).

## Get Involved

- **Board Positions:** Consider running for a position on our board of directors. It's a great way to gain leadership experience and make a difference in the graduate student community. Stay tuned on our social media.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** We always welcome helping hands for our events and initiatives. Did you know we have a volunteer group chat on WhatsApp? Find the link in our linktree in our Instagram page.
- **Our NBCGSS Staff Team is Expanding:** Keep an eye on your UNBC/ NBCGSS emails and our social media for potential upcoming opportunities. Non-UNBC students are also welcome to be part of the staff team.

## Looking Ahead: Looking for Sponsorships!

This year, we're excited to expand our reach and impact. We're planning bigger social events, more professional development workshops, and increased collaboration with the Prince

George community.

We're also actively seeking sponsorships to enhance our offerings. If you have connections with local businesses or organizations interested in reaching UNBC's graduate student body, please let us know!

## Stay Connected

**Weekly Emails:** Our primary communication channel. We send updates to over 700 graduate students every week.

**Social Media:** Follow us on [insert social media handles] for real-time updates and community highlights.

**Office Hours:** Drop by our office [insert location and hours] to chat, ask questions, or share your ideas.

One more time, welcome to the UNBC graduate community. We can't wait to meet every single one of you!

Btw, we will have weekly contributions to OTE! So you will hear more about us soon ;)

*On Behalf of Your NBCGSS Team,  
Behrouz Danesh, Chairperson of the NBCGSS*

# Over the Edge Newspaper: A Journey Through History

Prince George may not seem like a bustling metropolis, but it holds a wealth of opportunities and a Prince George may not seem like a bustling city at first glance, but it holds a wealth of opportunities and a vibrant community spirit. Within this dynamic landscape, a voice emerged 30 years ago at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) that continues to grow stronger each day—Over the Edge Newspaper.

Let me formally introduce myself: I am Over the Edge Newspaper, but my friends simply call me OTE. I am more than just paper and ink; I am a part of the heartbeat of this community, designed to connect and inform students at UNBC and beyond. Created with a mission to help students adapt to life

on campus and in Prince George, I've always been a voice for information, a platform for opinions, and a catalyst for change.

But who exactly am I? Let me take you on a journey through my history and evolution, starting with how I came to be and how I've evolved over the years.

## My Birth and Early Purpose

I was created 30 years ago—yes, I'm celebrating my birthday this year! My birthplace is the UNBC campus, where I began as a resource for students, helping them navigate the transition to university life and discover the opportunities available in

Prince George. Right from the start, I embraced my role as an information provider, a proud title that defines my purpose. My friends would describe me as observant, energetic, talkative, and kind, always eager to spread awareness, educate, and encourage positive change.

Whether on paper or online, I've remained committed to giving students a platform to express their opinions and make their voices heard.

Though some might call me old-fashioned for my love of print, I've always been adaptable. These days, I'm just as active in the digital world, and if you've visited my website, you'll know I've embraced modern technology without losing my original charm.

## Logo Evolution



### Early years (18th Century-Inspired Font)

My earliest logo was designed to be bold and eye-catching, with intricate details that mimicked 18th-century fonts. At that time, I wanted to make a grand entrance, capturing attention and portraying myself as an exciting, multifaceted entity.



### The Serious Era

As I matured, I adopted a more classical and serious tone. My logo mirrored this shift, with a refined font representing my new focus on addressing serious issues and providing educational content. This phase of my development was about raising awareness and engaging students in thoughtful discussions.



### Going Over the Edge

My next major transformation was all about pushing boundaries. My updated logo featured a symbolic icon on the left, representing the act of "going over the edge." This was a time when I became more active, encouraging my readers to challenge obstacles and embrace change. My tone became more motivational and hopeful, reflecting my growing positivity and inspiration.

### The New Me (2024\_

Today, my latest logo is a blend of everything I've embodied over the years. It reflects my playful yet serious nature, modern design, and trustworthiness. I've become a newspaper that not only informs but also inspires. I continue to address important issues, provide a platform for students to speak up, and contribute to the community in a meaningful way.

**OVER THE EDGE**  
UNBC'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER



# Welcome to a New Chapter for Over the Edge

It is with great excitement that I welcome the relaunch of *Over the Edge*, a vital voice of UNBC's student community.

For years, OTE has provided a platform for students to express their ideas, share their stories, and engage in meaningful dialogue. I commend Bruce, Ahmad, Lina, Nahid, Abdullah, and the entire team for their dedication and vision in revitalizing this important publication.

As we enter this new era for OTE, I look forward to seeing the creativity, passion, and fresh perspectives that will undoubtedly inspire both our campus and the broader Prince George community.

This aligns with UNBC's mission to Ignite, Inspire,



and Lead Change, as OTE continues to serve as a dynamic force for expression and leadership.

With the return to physical newsprint, a new partnership with Prince George's Citizen, and a renewed digital presence, OTE is positioned

to reach new heights. This publication will not only enhance student life at UNBC but also strengthen connections between our university and the wider community.

I encourage all students to contribute their voices and d engage with *Over the Edge* as we embark on this exciting journey together.

Congratulations to the entire OTE team on this milestone, and best wishes for your continued success.

**Dr. Geoffrey W. Payne (he/him)**  
President & Vice Chancellor

*We respect and appreciate that UNBC's Prince George campus is situated on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, part of the Dakelh First Nations. UNBC's regional campuses are situated on the traditional territories of Dakelh and Tsilhqot'in people, Dunne-Za people, and Ts'msyen people.*

## A Letter from the Over the Edge Board of Directors

On behalf of Over the Edge (OTE), we would like to extend a warm welcome to all first-year and returning students to UNBC for an exciting new year in 2024.

We are thrilled to announce that OTE is relaunching and have many exciting developments in content and opportunities that we are planning to bring you this year. Our goal remains to be a premier source of local news and information for the UNBC community, as well as a venue to showcase the amazing talent we have here at UNBC.

This year, we are proud to announce a new partnership with the Prince George Citizen to print inside their newspaper. This collaboration not only expands our reach but also enriches the content we can offer.

As a student newspaper run by students for students, we want to hear about what's happening at UNBC and what our fellow students are up to. Whether it's events, projects, or personal stories, we'd love to feature it in our paper.

If you have something you think is worthy of others' eyes, send it in! We may showcase it in our next issue, and you can get paid for it.

If you have a passion for journalism or an interest in the newspaper industry, consider joining our team. We offer opportunities for students to gain



valuable experience and develop their professional skills in various roles. This is a unique learning experience for us all, and we are committed to bringing you the best of UNBC and Prince George.

Don't worry if you don't have previous experience

working at a newspaper — few people do. We're here to work with you and help you develop those skills; all we need is a willingness to learn. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you the best of luck in this new year.

**OVER THE EDGE**  
UNBC'S STUDENT NEWSPAPER

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# Where to Live, Residence or Off-Campus?

One of the biggest decisions you'll make as a student is whether to live on campus in residence or rent a place off-campus. Having experienced both, I can say that each option comes with its own set of pros and cons.

Let's break it down.

Living in residence is an excellent choice for first-year students. It provides a sense of security when you first move to a new city, encourages you to interact with fellow students, and makes getting to class easy—especially if you don't have transportation.

You won't have to worry about finding roommates, furnishing a place, or paying rent monthly since it's all settled upfront. Living in residence also offers the best opportunity to meet new people.

Whether it's through your roommates, their friends, or people from your classes who also live on campus, residence life makes it easy to build connections.

Plus, there's no need to learn the bus system right away, and you can get up later since you won't have a commute.

However, residence life can have its downsides. By your second year, the novelty might start to wear off.

You've experienced the loud parties when you're trying to study, the 3 a.m. fire alarms, and those thin walls that reveal way too much about your roommate's personal life. Yet, it's still incredibly convenient.

Maybe you've clicked with your roommates and want to live together again. Or maybe the ease of being close to classes outweighs the downsides. Even though living on res can feel like a bubble, separating school life from personal life can be challenging, it's still an option some students stick with.

By third year, I decided to move off-campus. Not only was it cheaper, but it also offered more privacy and space.

Living off-campus is a completely different experience. You get the option to live by yourself or with roommates, you might even score a place with more than one bathroom, and the living conditions tend to be better.

The downside? You'll be further from your friends,

whether they're still living on campus or elsewhere, and the bus system in Prince George isn't exactly stellar.

However, navigating the city's public transit is part of the experience, and living off-campus allows you to explore the city in a way that being on-campus doesn't.

For me, moving off-campus led to me discovering new restaurants and entertainment options in Prince George.

You'll need to get up earlier and pack lunches, but having your own space to invite friends over and host gatherings more than makes up for it.

By fourth year, staying off-campus is the way to go. Residence life has its benefits, but living off-campus allows you to grow as a person. You'll become more engaged with the city, enjoy better living conditions, and take a mental break from constantly being around school.

If you're considering moving off-campus and haven't done so yet, I highly recommend it. It's an experience that helps you grow, both as a student and as an individual.



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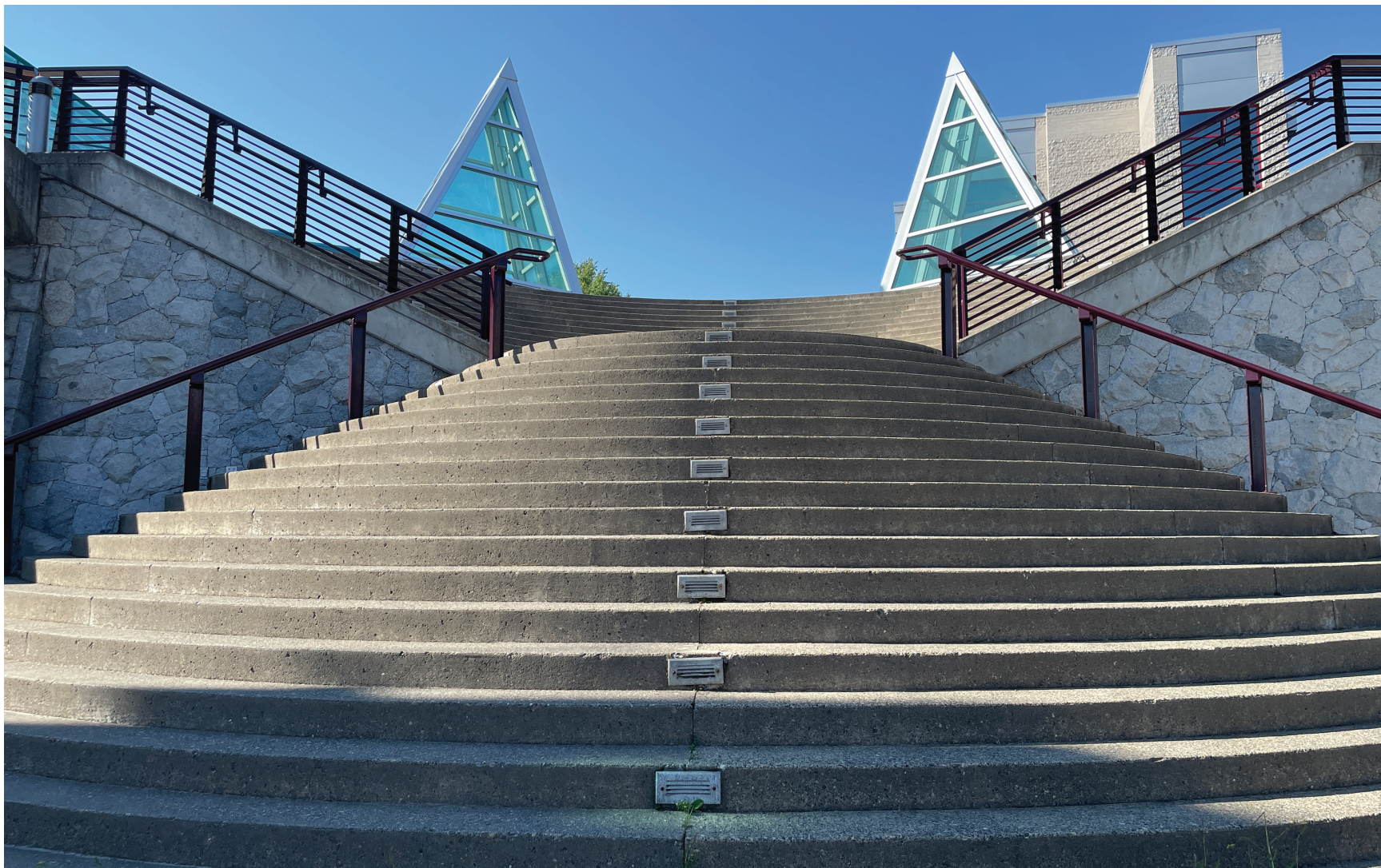
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## You Can Do This: A First-Year Survival Guide

The warm welcome back to university is always a great feeling, but this year, as I'm nearing the end of my undergrad, that warmth comes with a big sense of relief—knowing it's almost over. For those of you starting out, the journey ahead might feel daunting. So, I thought I'd pass along some advice that I've picked up along the way.

First off, relax and be yourself. Yes, it's a cliché, but when you're stressed and nervous, it's hard to think clearly and you might miss out on important things. Whether you're coming straight from high school or returning to university after some time away, the key is to embrace the experience and let go of who you think you need to be. In high school, you might have acted a certain way to fit in, but university is your chance to rediscover yourself. If you don't, your university experience might feel like an extension of high school. This is your opportunity

to start fresh and explore who you truly are.

Another piece of advice: join clubs or student organizations. Don't limit yourself to just one—explore different options! Whether it's Debate Club, the Fencing Society, or the Chemistry Club, joining multiple groups is a great way to find your crowd. If you don't enjoy one, move on and try another. Don't let your major define your extracurricular activities. University is about exploration, and by trying new things, you'll gain a clearer sense of what you truly enjoy. A university experience without participating in at least one club or group is a missed opportunity.

Next, you'll need to learn how to handle stress, judgment, disappointment, and regret. These emotions will pop up at different times during your university journey, sometimes all at once—especially around finals. Developing a solid coping strategy

early on is essential to managing the demands of university life.

Another great tip is to find a mentor. Having someone older and wiser to guide you can be invaluable. When I was at Coast Mountain College, I became friends with someone much older than me, and our friendship has shaped who I am today. The life lessons I learned from him are things I carry with me every day. Like me, you should seek out your own "Obi-Wan Kenobi" to help you navigate university.

Lastly, find a buddy. While university isn't a war zone, having a friend going through the same experiences can be comforting. You'll face challenges like changing majors, breakups, disagreements with colleagues, and even the occasional failed class. Having someone to lean on during these times will make the tough moments easier to manage.



# Entertainment in Prince George? Dream on

AUTHOR UNNAMED FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION

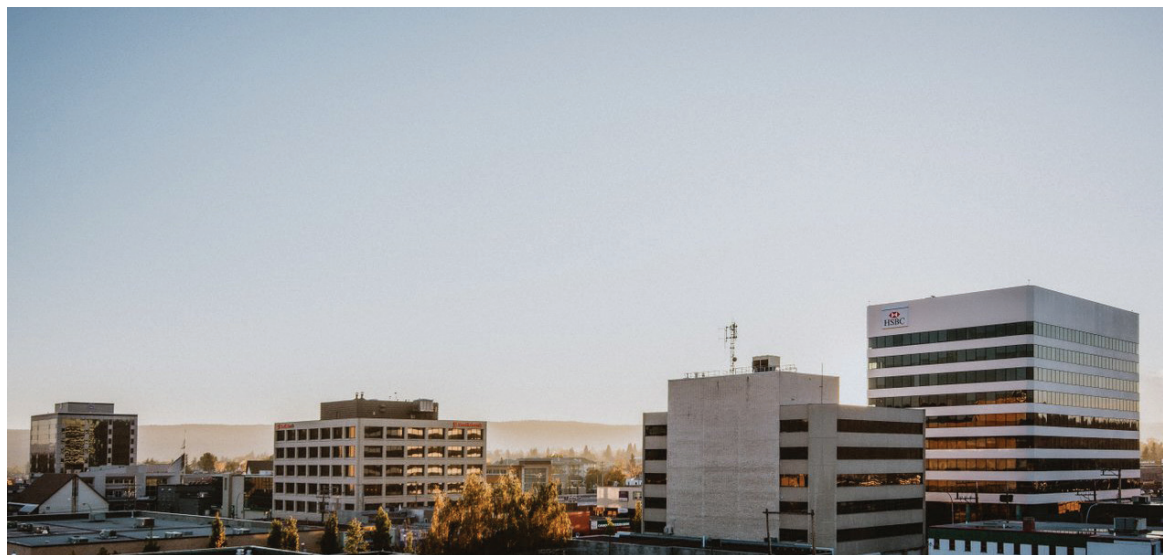
Having lived in Prince George my whole life, I can honestly say I know everything there is to know about this town, which is not much. Now don't get me wrong, there is no where else I'd rather be, but P.G. can get a little boring when you are under 25. (Or over 25, I'd imagine). Any way, I thought I would share my knowledge of what there is to do in P.G. (Editor's note: your time is near, I'd start to fear. Big Bad 25.)

If you are the partying type, there are a few places that you can go to be busy. There are the dance clubs: The Overdrive, The Generator, Club 770, and Dakota's. There is a \$3.00 cover charge, but sometimes it is worth it.

If you like to go to a bar and play pool or listen to music, there are quite a few. Steamer's, The B.X., and JJ's are quite nice.

If you are of a sport's nature, there are swimming and skating and basketball and tennis and some others. If you like peace and quiet you can go to the Public Library, UNBC Library and the Nechako Branch of the Public Library on the Hart Highway.

Some good places to eat are Niner's Diner, Earl's,



and the Keg. (If you have the dough.)

The best time to see movies is at the drive-in on Chief Lake Road on FRIDAY'S AND SATURDAY'S. They give out programs at Auto Magic Tire on 15th Avenue. The best value for videos is at Wilderness Video. You can get 5 movies for 5 days for \$5.00.

There are classes through Continuing Education

in everything from Karate, to Quilting, and most are cheap.

I hope some of this is useful in helping you find some ways to stay amused. This actually seems to say that there is a lot to do in P.G. But don't be fooled, if you stay here long enough you will be as unimpressed as those of us who grew up here.

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# A New Beginning: Stepping into University Life

AUTHOR: SAMA AMIRKHANI ARDEH

It's early September, and the energy on campus is electric. The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) opens its doors, welcoming a fresh cohort of students into a world brimming with discovery, opportunity, and growth. For many, Orientation Day on September 3rd and 4th marks the start of a transformative journey. New faces light up with excitement as they explore the campus, taking in the sights of labs, lecture halls, and spaces that will soon become second homes.

## Embracing New Experiences

As the fall breeze whispers through the trees, students meander across the campus grounds. Some clutch maps, navigating their way to future classrooms and labs, while others gaze around in awe, imagining the adventures university life holds. It's a thrilling time; a chance to break free from high school routines, forge new friendships, and join a vibrant community. Whether it's the library where countless hours of study will unfold or the Northern Sport Centre where future intramural champions will rise, Orientation Day is the gateway to it all.

But the excitement goes beyond academics. It's about experiencing independence for the first time, building lifelong relationships, and growing in ways never imagined. UNBC, renowned for its strong sense of community, fosters an environment where everyone, from local students to those from abroad, finds a place to belong.

## UNBC: A Top Choice in British Columbia and Canada

Nestled in the heart of British Columbia, UNBC offers more than a traditional education. Consistently ranking among Canada's top small universities, it stands as a pillar of academic excellence. Students benefit from small class sizes, allowing for personalized interactions with professors who are not just instructors but mentors and innovators at the forefront of their fields.

The university is a leader in environmental sustainability, featuring green buildings and programs dedicated to understanding and preserving the natural world. For environmentally passionate students, this is more than just a university, it's a place to make a real difference. UNBC's research opportunities are vast, especially in health sciences, forestry, and Indigenous studies. Through connections within



British Columbia and across Canada, students engage with communities, industries, and government bodies in meaningful ways.

But UNBC isn't just about academics; it's about shaping well-rounded individuals ready to make their mark on the world. Its tight-knit community offers robust support, from counseling services to career development programs. Whether a student hails from Vancouver or overseas, UNBC provides a nurturing environment where they can thrive.

## Challenges and Triumphs for International Students

For international students, the excitement of Orientation Day comes with unique challenges. While domestic students adjust to living away from home, international students navigate a new country, adapt to different academic expectations, and overcome language barriers.

Stepping into this new chapter, many face culture shock. Differences between their home countries and Canada can seem vast; from classroom dynamics to unspoken social norms. It's not just about mastering course material but also learning how to communicate effectively, participate in group projects, and build friendships in an entirely new environment.

Homesickness is common. While Canadian peers might visit family during breaks, international students often can't. Time zones, long-distance calls, and physical distance from loved ones can

feel isolating. Financial strain adds to the pressure, with higher tuition, accommodation costs, and daily expenses in a foreign country.

However, UNBC offers substantial support for international students. Dedicated advisors assist with visa and immigration issues, while peer support programs connect newcomers with those who've already navigated these waters. The university goes above and beyond to ensure international students feel at home.

Numerous student groups and associations celebrate cultural diversity, providing spaces for students to share their heritage and traditions. For many, these groups become a second family—a place to find comfort and belonging while pursuing academic goals.

## Embarking on a Transformative Journey

For all students, starting university at UNBC is more than the beginning of an academic career; it's the start of a journey filled with opportunities, challenges, growth, and endless possibilities. Whether navigating the thrill of the first class or the complexities of living in a new country, students at UNBC embark on paths that will shape the rest of their lives.

With every step across campus, every new connection made, and every challenge overcome, they're not just students; they're pioneers, carving out their futures in a place that will forever be part of who they are.



# Making Memories This Autumn at UNBC

AUTHOR: MARK DHILLON

Autumn at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) is a special time. As leaves turn vibrant shades and the air becomes crisp, it's the perfect season for students to create lasting memories.

Whether you're new to university life or a returning student, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy what autumn at UNBC has to offer. Here are some ways to meet new people, engage with the community, and make this fall memorable.

## 1. Explore the Outdoors

Prince George is renowned for its natural beauty, and autumn is an ideal time to experience it. Activities like hiking, biking, and nature walks are popular, with numerous scenic spots nearby. Start with Forests for the World, just minutes from campus. The trails wind through colorful foliage and offer stunning views of Shane Lake, making it a perfect place to relax. Bring friends or join the Outdoor Recreation Club to meet new people while enjoying nature. Closer to campus, the Cranbrook Hill Greenway provides trails for walking or running amid beautiful fall scenery. The fresh air can energize you and clear your mind.

## 2. Host a Potluck or Friendsgiving

Autumn is about coming together, and sharing food is a great way to connect. Hosting a potluck can bring people together, whether you live on campus or off. Invite friends or classmates and ask everyone to bring a dish from home. It's a wonderful way to learn about different cultures and share personal stories. If you're staying in Prince George over Thanksgiving, consider organizing a "Friendsgiving." It's a fun twist on the traditional holiday dinner and offers a chance to bond with friends who are also away from home. Share stories, enjoy comforting food, and create a welcoming atmosphere.

## 3. Join Campus Events and Clubs

Getting involved on campus is one of the best ways to meet new people and make lasting memories. UNBC offers a variety of clubs and organizations with social, cultural, and academic activities. The Northern Undergraduate Student Society (NUGSS) organizes events throughout the year, such as movie nights, pub nights, and themed gatherings. Keep an



eye on campus event boards and social media for updates. These events provide a casual way to connect with fellow students outside the classroom. If you have a specific hobby or interest, joining a club can help you find your community. From photography to Model United Nations to intramural sports, UNBC's clubs offer fantastic opportunities to make lifelong friends.

## 4. Enjoy Coffee Dates

Prince George boasts a cozy coffee culture that's perfect for autumn. Local cafés like Ritual Coffee Bar, Trench Brewing & Distillery, and Zoe's Java House offer warm beverages and relaxed atmospheres. Meeting up at a café is a great way to get to know classmates or study partners better. Whether you're grabbing coffee between classes or spending a Sunday afternoon studying, these spots provide an ideal setting for conversation. Organize a casual coffee date after a lecture to extend discussions

beyond the classroom and potentially build lasting friendships.

## 5. Attend Seasonal Events and Festivals

Autumn in Prince George features a variety of seasonal events. Look out for fall festivals, outdoor markets, and community gatherings. These events allow you to immerse yourself in local culture while enjoying the mild weather. One highlight is the annual Northern Lights Estate Winery Harvest Festival, celebrating the grape harvest with local vendors, live music, and food trucks. It's a great opportunity to enjoy local flavors with friends and soak in the fall atmosphere. Additionally, Prince George hosts Halloween events like haunted houses, pumpkin patches, and costume parties. Embrace the spooky season with friends, dress up, and have fun together.

## 6. Address Homesickness

Starting university is exciting but can also be challenging. If you're new to Prince George or living away from home for the first time, feelings of homesickness are normal. Engaging in activities like campus clubs, events, or exploring the city with new friends can help create a sense of belonging. Don't hesitate to reach out for support. UNBC offers resources such as the Student Life Office and the Wellness Centre, where you can talk to counselors or connect with peer support networks. Sharing your feelings can make a significant difference.

## 7. Capture Your Experiences

Don't forget to document your experiences. Whether through photography, journaling, or social media, capturing these moments will allow you to look back on your time at UNBC fondly. Organize a photoshoot among the autumn leaves with friends, or take snapshots of hikes, study sessions, and coffee dates. These memories will be cherished for years to come.

## Make the Most of Autumn

Autumn at UNBC combines adventure, community, and cozy moments. By exploring the outdoors, participating in campus events, and making new friends, you can make this season truly memorable. Take the initiative to step out of your comfort zone and fully experience all that Prince George has to offer this fall.



# Spark Lab: A Start-Up Space for Creative Types

AUTHOR: CALEB MUELLER (CMUELLER@UNBC.CA)

When a friend from UNBC first mentioned Spark Lab to me, a start-up 3D printing/maker space in the Wood Innovation and Design Building in downtown Prince George, I knew I had to see it for myself. As someone who's been into 3D printing and 3D modeling for a while now, I was super excited to find a space where I could work on my projects. I've owned my own budget 3D printer for 2 years now and I was excited to have a place to put it other than in the closet of my tiny dorm room (it's very loud and very sketchy).

One of the coolest things about having access to Spark Lab is the ability to use their high-end fully enclosed 3D printer. This has been a game-changer for me, as I've been dreaming of building my own printer using 3D printed parts.

The printer I chose to build is a Voron, an open-source project made by a group of engineers. The printed parts need to handle high temperatures and long-term strain, which means you need to print with acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) or acrylonitrile styrene acrylate (ASA).

This requires an enclosed printing chamber to minimize warping and carbon filtration to handle the toxic fumes that come with printing these types of plastics.

Also, it needs a lot of space and tools to build, as it can get a little messy (see the picture of me working on the electronics). Without the lab, this project would have been way more challenging and expensive to pull off.

Being involved with Spark Lab means I have had the chance to work on projects that directly impact the community.

I've had the opportunity to design and print tools for researchers, which has not only helped me level up my skills in 3D design but has also allowed me to gain experience working with clients in a relaxed environment.

One project that really sticks out in my mind involved designing and printing a culture plate holder that could be screwed into an orbital shaker, providing a much safer and robust solution than the researcher's previous method of using tape. The picture on the left is the 3D model in Fusion 360.

Another thing I love about Spark Lab is being able to contribute to the space's growth and development.

It's been great to come up with ideas for new equipment, figuring out the layout, and having the freedom to rearrange and organize the space in a



way that works for everyone.

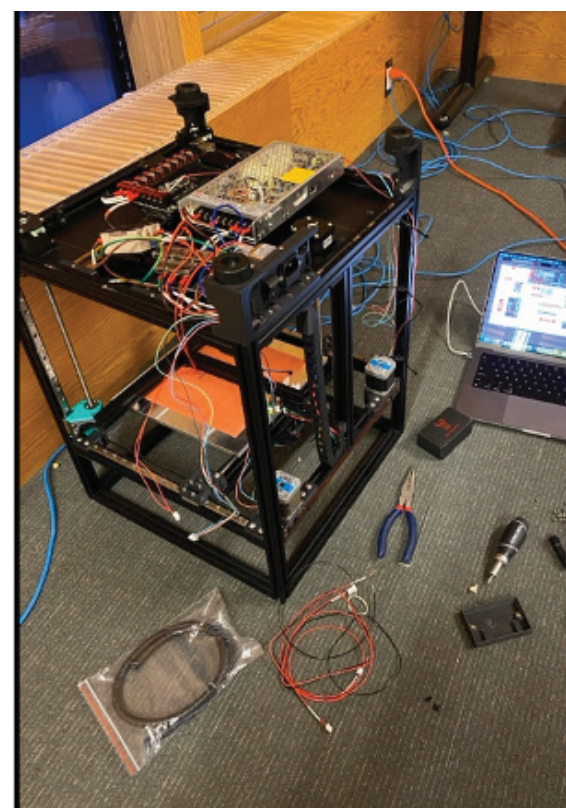
Right now, the lab only has a few 3D printers and basic electronic tools, but we're working on getting our hands on a laser cutter, a desktop 3-axis CNC machine, more power tools, and even some bean bag chairs for just hanging out.

To be honest, I was a bit unsure about the lab's downtown location at first, thinking it might be a pain to get there.

But I was pleasantly surprised to find that the commute was easier than I thought (even on a bike) and having an ongoing project at the lab gave me the extra push I needed to make the trip regularly. It's also nice to get off campus and see other parts of Prince George.

As a start-up space, Spark Lab is still growing and evolving (the name might change in the future), and that's what makes it so exciting to be a part of. I can't wait to see where this journey takes us and how the lab will continue to support the maker community in Prince George.

If you're a creative type looking for a place to bring your ideas to life, give Spark Lab a shot – you might just find your new favorite hangout spot!





# Chained to the Road: The Paradox of Automobility

AUTHOR: ISABELLA MESQUITA

As a 22-year-old university student and basketball player at UNBC, cars have always symbolized freedom to me. Growing up in Calgary and now living in Prince George, I've experienced firsthand the challenges of relying on a car for almost everything—but I never really questioned it. That changed this past summer when I spent time with a friend from Toronto who doesn't own a car. He gets around using public transit, e-bikes, or e-scooters, mainly because of the GTA's notorious traffic. We used to joke about how in Calgary, everything is "just a 20-minute drive away." But our laughs turned into serious discussions about how dependent we've become on cars. It made me wonder: Do cars really provide freedom, or are they actually holding us back?

What started as a lighthearted joke led to a real eye-opener. While cars are often seen as symbols of independence, they come with significant constraints and even dangers. This paradox isn't just in big cities like Calgary; it's right here in Prince George, too. Maybe it's time we rethink how our cities are planned. Shouldn't we be prioritizing public transit, bike lanes, and sustainable transportation options that are more accessible to everyone?

Cars have always been marketed as icons of freedom, privacy, and control. I remember the thrill of getting my driver's license—I felt like I could go anywhere without relying on my parents or brother for rides. In our culture, owning a car is a status symbol, a personal milestone that says you've "made it" into adulthood. But is this perception misleading?

In reality, cars can be both limiting and dangerous. The environmental damage from car emissions is hard to ignore anymore; air pollution and climate change are issues that affect us all. Plus, cities designed around cars tend to sprawl out, making it tough to get to essential services without a vehicle. In places like Calgary and Prince George, trying to navigate without a car is not just difficult—it's inefficient and eats up a lot of time. This kind of urban planning lowers our quality of life and makes us even more dependent on cars.

Then there's the financial side. Owning a car isn't cheap. Between buying the vehicle, keeping up with maintenance, paying for insurance, and constantly filling up the gas tank, the costs add up fast. For students like me, these expenses can be overwhelming.



And let's not forget the dangers of driving. Traffic accidents are a grim reality. On the roads in Calgary and Prince George, large trucks are everywhere, making driving feel like a competition for safety. It feels risky to drive a small car when massive, six-wheeled trucks could barrel over you like a speed bump.

The rise of oversized vehicles not only increases gas emissions but also makes accidents more deadly. The dangers are real, and the statistics are alarming. In 2023 alone, there were over 2,000 motor vehicle fatalities in Canada, with around 20% involving trucks or large vehicles.

Given all this, maybe it's time to seriously consider the benefits of public transit and other forms of transportation. First off, public transit systems need to be more efficient and accessible. A reliable transit system would make life so much easier for students like us. In Prince George, buses don't run as frequently as they should—sometimes you could be waiting up to an hour for the next one, which just isn't practical.

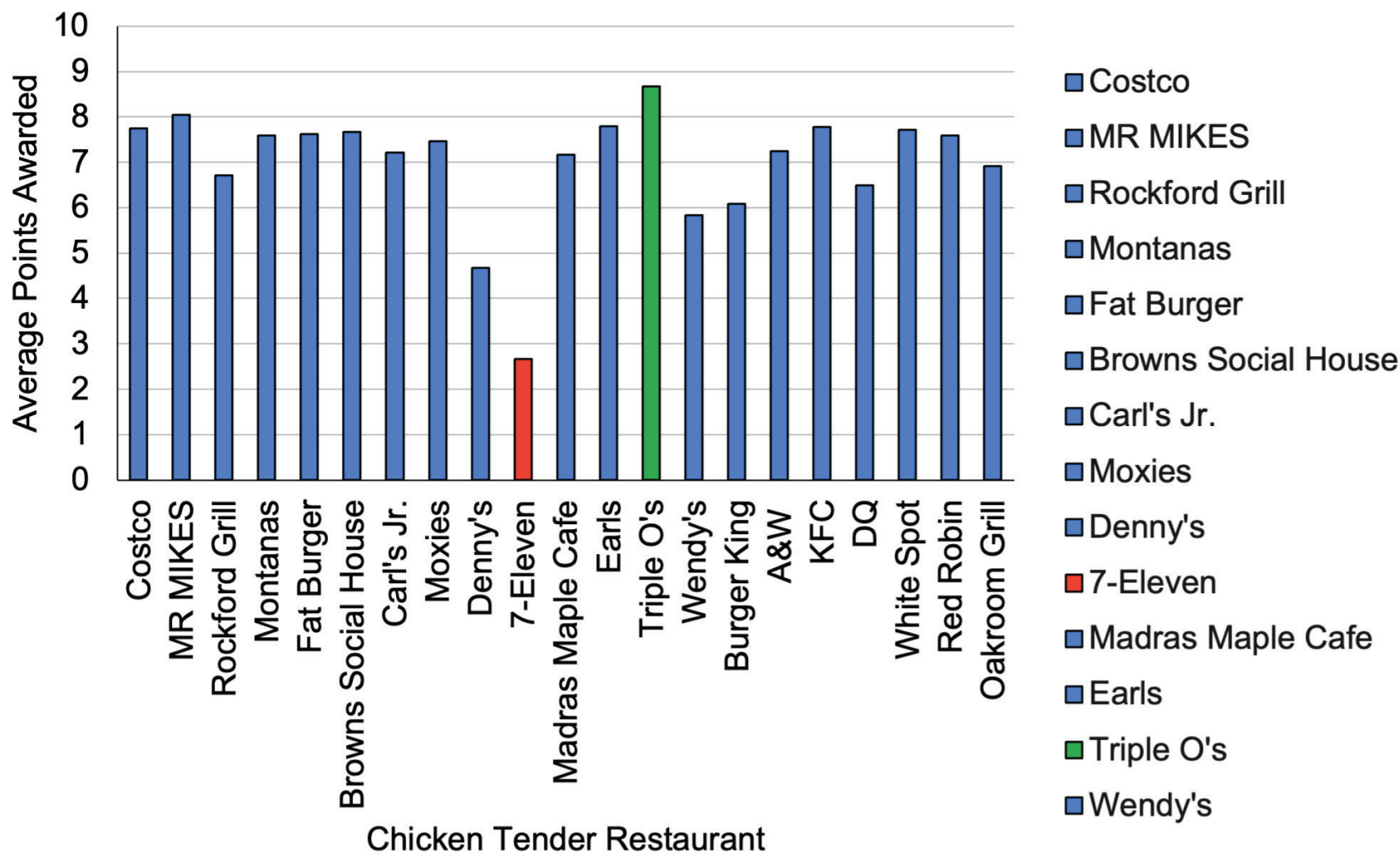
Walking, cycling, and using e-bikes or e-scooters are also great alternatives. Not only do they reduce pollution, but they also get us moving physically, which is a bonus for our health. I genuinely believe that opting for these modes of transportation could

improve our mental health, too. In a world where technology often keeps us isolated, getting out and moving can make a big difference. While driving alone might feel peaceful, taking public transit can foster a sense of community. On a bus, you're sharing a space with people from all walks of life—different ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ages—all coming together in a shared experience.

So, what's the next step? I think it's time we push for more investment in public transit systems to make them more reliable and widespread. This would benefit everyone, especially students and low-income residents in cities like Prince George. Expanding bike lanes and widening sidewalks would encourage more people to cycle or walk, making our cities more pedestrian-friendly and reducing our reliance on cars. Policies could also help make e-bikes and e-scooters more accessible and affordable. These alternatives offer a convenient and eco-friendly way to get around.

We've been chained to the road for too long. While cars seem to offer freedom, they actually bring significant constraints and dangers. It's time to support policies and initiatives that prioritize public transit and alternative transportation options. By doing so, we can help create more sustainable and equitable cities for everyone.





# The Great Chicken Tender Quest: A Cross-Restaurant Comparison

In the vast landscape of fast food and casual dining, chicken tenders have emerged as a quintessential menu item.

These golden, breaded strips of chicken have captured the hearts and taste buds of diners across the nation.

But with so many restaurants vying for the title of “best chicken tenders,” how can one determine which establishment truly reigns supreme?

Our team of four dedicated taste-testers took on this challenge, embarking on a flavor-filled journey across 20 diverse eateries.

From fast food giants to local bistros, we left no stone unturned in our pursuit of tender perfection. Join us as we reveal our findings and crown the ultimate chicken tender champion!

## Methodology

Our chicken tender quest spanned two days, during which we meticulously sampled offerings from 20 restaurants. These included popular fast food chains, beloved casual dining spots, and even a local bistro.

At each location, we procured 4 tenders, carefully weighing them to calculate the average weight per tender. Prices were dutifully recorded, though it’s crucial to note that some orders included sides or fries, which could impact the overall value assessment.

To ensure a level playing field, we conducted our taste tests within 20 minutes of purchase, sampling the tenders in the car for immediate comparison. Dipping sauces were strictly forbidden, as we

wanted to evaluate the tenders based on their inherent merit rather than any flavor enhancements provided by condiments.

Each tender was meticulously scored by our team based on three key criteria: taste, breading quality, and overall appearance. These scores were then averaged to determine each restaurant’s final rating.

It’s worth noting that our study focused exclusively on chicken tenders, meaning chicken nuggets were not included in our assessment.

While both are popular chicken-based snacks, our participants firmly believed that nuggets and tenders are distinct entities that warrant separate consideration.

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# Who has the best tenders in town?

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## Findings

After rigorous tasting and meticulous scoring, Triple O's emerged as the undisputed victor, boasting an impressive average score of 8.67 out of 10. Earls Kitchen and KFC were hot on its heels, with commendable scores of 7.79 and 7.78 respectively. On the opposite end of the spectrum, 7-Eleven and Denny's received the lowest marks, scoring 2.67 and 4.67.

Notably, the chicken tenders from 7-Eleven were disappointing. This unfortunate incident underscores the vast disparity in quality among the tenders we sampled.

In terms of bang for your buck, Costco proved to be the value leader. Their \$6.99 order delivered tenders weighing an average of 38 grams each, offering the most substantial portion per dollar. Carl's Jr. and A&W also demonstrated good value, providing tenders weighing 50 and 38 grams respectively for less than \$7.

## Limitations and Challenges

Orchestrating a taste test of this magnitude was not without its hurdles. By the conclusion of day two, some participants confessed to feeling a bit overwhelmed by the sheer volume of chicken consumed.

The rapid-fire sampling of numerous tenders may have influenced scores given later in the process.

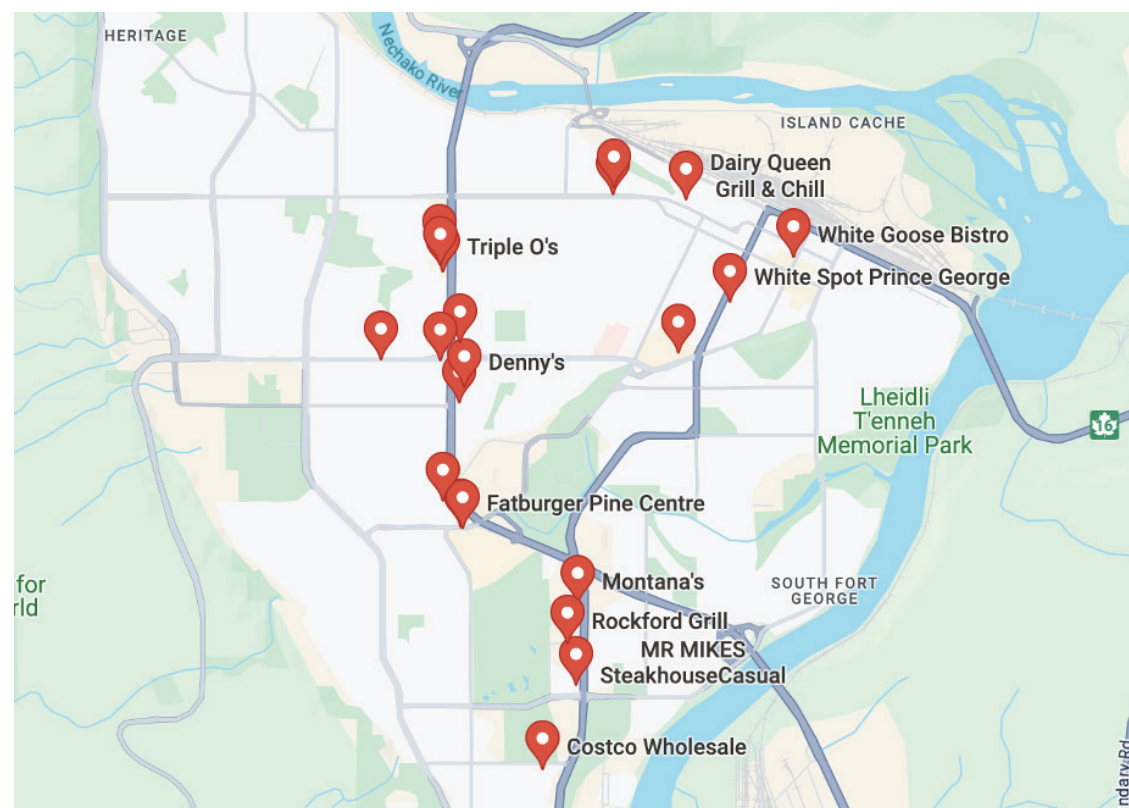
Moreover, as previously stated, the price data doesn't factor in accompanying sides, which could substantially alter perceptions of value. A more comprehensive study with a larger sample size could yield even more reliable results.

It's also crucial to acknowledge that our decision to forego dipping sauces, while essential for fair assessment, may have put some tenders at a disadvantage.

Many restaurants craft their sauces to complement and elevate the flavors of their tenders, potentially masking any shortcomings. However, we firmly believe that a truly exceptional tender should be able to stand on its own, sans sauce.

## Conclusion

Though Triple O's clinched the top spot in terms of taste, and Costco reigned supreme in value, the notion of the "perfect" chicken tender is ultimately



subjective. Our quest highlighted the remarkable diversity available within this seemingly simple dish.

Whether your preferences lean towards crispy, juicy, spicy, or mild, there's a restaurant ready to cater to your distinct palate.

For an even more thorough evaluation of chicken tenders, a larger study with more participants, controlled portion sizes, and detailed sauce analysis would be beneficial.

However, our intrepid team is content to have survived this delectable, albeit formidable, gastronomic odyssey. The search for the ultimate chicken tender is far from over, but we've taken a significant step in unraveling its secrets!

As a final note, it's important to recognize that our participants undertook this challenge purely out of their love for chicken tenders and commitment to culinary discovery.

No honorariums were provided, underscoring the genuine passion and dedication that fueled this flavorful endeavor.





# The Importance of a GPA in the Education Process

In today's competitive academic environment, students are sometimes under intense pressure to maintain a high grade point average (GPA) throughout their college or university careers. While solid grades are important, they are not the only factor that determines future employment success. In fact, relying entirely on GPA ignores many other critical parts of a well-rounded education and personal development required for professional success.

First and foremost, businesses generally value real-world abilities and experiences over a high GPA. Many industries value practical knowledge and hands-on experience over academic performance alone. Internships, co-op placements, research projects, and extracurricular activities are all excellent ways to apply classroom learning to real-world circumstances, acquire practical skills, and expand professional networks. These experiences indicate initiative, adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, which are highly valued in the workplace.

I just had an informative talk with one of my instructors, who has their firm. When I asked about the importance of GPA in their employment

process, they provided an intriguing viewpoint. Surprisingly, they stated they are less likely to hire candidates based purely on their excellent GPA. According to them, focusing entirely on grades may imply a lack of critical personal skills required for the job. However, specific majors, such as those preparing for medical school, frequently stress a high GPA. Even in such disciplines, extracurricular activities, volunteering, and interpersonal skills are essential considerations in the admissions process.

Employers are increasingly recognizing the value of soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, leadership, emotional intelligence, and technical expertise. These abilities are frequently honed through extracurricular activities, volunteer work, part-time jobs, and other non-academic experiences. Employers want well-rounded applicants who can effectively cooperate with others, convey ideas clearly, think critically, and adapt to changing situations – skills that cannot be judged solely by GPA.

Furthermore, GPA is only one measure of academic accomplishment and does not entirely reflect a person's abilities, qualities, or potential. It does

not take into consideration elements such as coursework rigour, academic interest diversity, and personal circumstances that may impact academic achievement. A student who excels in challenging classes related to their subject of interest may be more prepared for their future employment than someone with a higher GPA but less relevant coursework.

It is essential to mention that an excessive focus on GPA might increase students' stress and anxiety levels, thus harming their mental and emotional well-being. The pressure to maintain good marks may breed a culture of perfectionism, in which students feel

obligated to prioritize academic accomplishment over overall happiness and fulfillment. As a result, individuals may miss out on opportunities for personal growth, exploring new interests, and participating in extracurricular activities that contribute to a well-rounded college experience. Academic achievement is not only one aspect of a satisfying and meaningful life. Personal development, cultivating relationships, and prioritizing self-care are all worthwhile endeavours that contribute to overall well-being. Encouraging students to strike a balance between their academic pursuits and other elements of their lives can foster resilience, adaptability, and a better attitude to handling the obstacles of higher education.

Begin considering your future career path early in your academic endeavours, focusing on enhancing your resume rather than solely prioritizing your GPA. Engaging in various events and volunteer activities not only aids in skill development but also facilitates networking, potentially connecting you with future employers or references. Remember that when applying for jobs, employers typically request your resume, work experience, cover letter, and references, with GPA being of minimal importance in comparison.

It's critical to remember that not obsessing about GPA doesn't negate the value of education. Rather than focusing simply on achieving excellent marks, the school provides a platform for obtaining knowledge, developing skills, and encouraging personal growth.

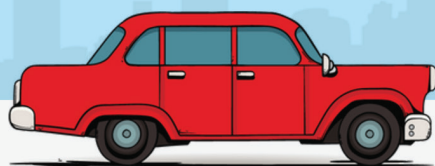
While maintaining a solid academic standing is essential, focusing on learning, exploring new topics, and polishing vital skills functional in educational and professional activities is also critical. Ultimately, the actual core of education is the quest for information and intellectual curiosity rather than focusing solely on GPA.

While GPA may play a role in some professional paths and graduate school admissions, it is not the only driver of success. Employers and graduate programs reward a combination of academic achievement, practical experience, soft skills, and personality traits.

Instead of focusing on GPA, students should prioritize holistic personal and professional growth, including seeking new experiences, honing their abilities, and cultivating meaningful relationships. Students who embrace a well-rounded approach to education and prioritize growth and learning might position themselves for success in their future vocations and lives outside of academics.



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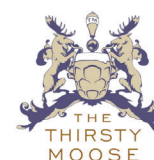
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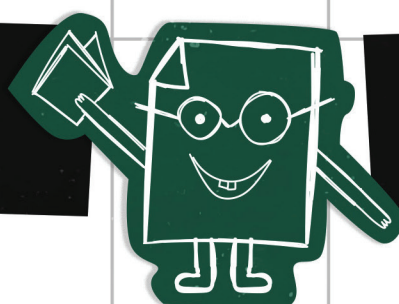




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