

# ***Dare to Deliver 2011-2015***

The Academic Plan for the University of Alberta

# Introduction

*“The modern state university has sprung from a demand on the part of the people themselves for intellectual recognition, a recognition which only a century ago was denied them. The result is that such institutions must be conducted in such a way as to relate them as closely as possible to the life of the people. The people demand that knowledge shall not alone be the concern of scholars. The uplifting of the whole people shall be its final goal.”*

*Henry Marshall Tory, address to the first convocation, 1908*

Certain characteristics define every major university. Chief among these is the quality of its people—students, staff, faculty, and alumni. Attracting and engaging talented, dedicated people is the hallmark of a great university and the foundation of the University of Alberta’s ongoing success. This is clearly evident in the professoriate, research, administration and support staff across the academy. It is also true of the undergraduate students, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows who surge onto campus each year – they are the lifeblood of our University. We will continue to celebrate and find inspiration in the quality and dedication of all members of the academy.

Collegial governance is another crucial characteristic of major universities, one that rests on the fundamental concept of academic freedom. Anchored in collaboration and consultation, it allows the University to incorporate and harness the various ways the academy pursues its teaching, learning, research, and service missions. We all benefit from collegial governance; it is at the heart of our success as an institution.

It is also essential for our University to preserve, protect and enable an academic environment in which its scholars are able to pursue diverse forms of research and creative activity. Whether our scholars are driven by curiosity or motivated to meet a societal challenge, their capacity to pursue scholarly endeavours free from undue influence is a hallmark of a great university and will continue to characterize the University of Alberta.

Equally important, an outstanding student experience is at the heart of a great university. As a research and teaching intensive university the University of Alberta is well positioned to offer outstanding learning opportunities to all of its undergraduate and graduate students, opportunities equal to those of the best public universities in the world. We reaffirm the importance of providing all students with the opportunity to participate in research and creative activities as part of their learning experiences. While recognizing that intellectual and creative engagement occurs first and foremost in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or field, we remain committed to providing more and better co-curricular opportunities for students. It is also important that all the University has to offer remains relevant and accessible to our diverse student

population on our multiple campuses, and that students have the range of effective and appropriate supports that allow them to fully realize their potential during their time at the University of Alberta.

The University of Alberta is the flagship post-secondary institution in its namesake province and one of the leading medical-doctoral universities in Canada. We have seen tremendous physical growth across and within our five campuses adding much-needed space for teaching and research, while also developing innovative new programs and improving connections to our communities near and farther afield.

Development of the academy has progressed and been channeled through the previous academic plan *Dare to Deliver*. We continue to build on the achievements of the last five years, and in this sense, the current plan for the academy is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. The strategic investments of *Dare to Deliver* allow us to refocus on and consolidate our core strengths in teaching and research, reinvigorating our commitment to delivering the kind of extraordinary student experience associated with a great university.

As a leading public institution, the University of Alberta shapes and develops our society and culture. Over the next five years, pressures are likely to emerge from changing demographic trends in our student population, resource constraints, the role of technology in the classroom, emerging requirements for research that crosses conventional disciplinary borders, new structures in research funding, and competition from increasing numbers of post-secondary institutions around the world. These new challenges come at a time when the global economy is still recovering from a severe recession. Governments and members of the public will be looking even harder at universities to deliver solid returns on public investments as evidenced by success in educating and training workforces, developing the next generation of leaders and problem solvers, and leading the way to renewed and sustainable prosperity through innovation and technological developments.

First implemented in 2006 and recently renewed, *Dare to Discover* articulates the values, vision, mission and cornerstones that together define a framework to chart the course for the University of Alberta towards becoming one of the world's great public universities. It connects our aspirations with the traditional foundation of our academy, guiding our growth and development.

*Dare to Deliver 2011-2015 – the Academic Plan of the University of Alberta* aligns with *Dare to Discover's* four cornerstones to continue putting its strategies into action. These cornerstones not only help define who we are and want to be, the diverse nature of our scholarship, the places and partners of our work, but also how we can continue to transform our University for the better.

# Cornerstones

## *Talented People*

The essence of the academy is its people, and engaging in academic pursuits is a distinctly human endeavour. From the democratic promise of President Tory's founding aspiration to the University's values and vision today, talented and engaged people are the common thread that helps define who we are and want to be as an outstanding institution. One of our key strengths is the diversity of our talented people in every area of the University.

The core work in this cornerstone remains focused on attracting, developing and retaining outstanding people - faculty, staff and students. Much of this is done at the faculty, department or unit level, but there are common activities and initiatives that can be effective in supporting these efforts to enlist talented people.

As the cornerstones are mutually supportive, many of the objectives and initiatives of each are connected to the success of the others—and Talented People is fundamental to all. Fostering a first-rate culture of research and creative activity, for instance, plays a huge role in recruiting and retaining leading-edge faculty. Continuing the University's tradition of teaching excellence and innovation by its faculty is essential to attracting the best undergraduate and graduate students and post-doctoral fellows—all of whom become the University's best ambassadors and our most effective means of transferring knowledge to society when they leave our halls. Other initiatives, such as welcome centres and student services, serve to help individuals connect and communicate within the academy, playing a crucial role in support and retention, particularly for international students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty.

Finally, it is essential that the University continue to find ways to appropriately support and develop all members of the academy, and to recognize in meaningful ways their diverse contributions. Professional development is a vital component of a great university. Our aim is for that sweet spot where the goals and aspirations of individuals align with those of the University as a whole.

We will enrich our team of talented people by:

### **Attracting and retaining outstanding people**

- **Recruitment:** Recruiting exceptional students, staff and faculty, locally, nationally and internationally.
- **Welcome Centres:** Supporting the creation of physical and virtual welcome centres for students and alumni.
- **Research Culture:** Fostering a collegial research culture that attracts and engages undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty to extend the frontiers of knowledge within and across disciplines.

## Training and professional development

- **Teacher Development:** Creating professional development, mentorship and support networks for anyone who teaches as they move through their careers.
- **Researcher Development:** Supporting the development of researchers and all those who pursue creative activity to become leaders in their fields.
- **Leadership and Staff Development:** Ensuring the academy is ready, willing and able—together and as individuals—to seize opportunities for transformation.

## Recognizing and celebrating our people and their accomplishments

- **Diversity:** Enhancing, recognizing and celebrating the strength provided by the equity and diversity within our community.
- **Employee Recognition:** Providing opportunities for professional growth and meaningful recognition, particularly for those involved in service and support activities within the University.
- **Teaching and Research Recognition:** Actively pursuing recognition for excellence in teaching, research and creative activity through national and international awards.

### ***How will we know we are making progress?***

There will be a mix of qualitative and quantifiable metrics including goals such as:

- retention rates for a diverse community of faculty, staff and students will be improved;
- progress is made towards attaining target ratios that enrich and enhance teaching, learning and research: 1:3 graduate student: undergraduate student; 1:4 professor: graduate student; and 1:16 professor to overall student number.
- awards and recognition for individual and academy accomplishments are increased in number and variety;
- more students, staff and faculty are recognized as leaders in their fields and communities;
- all members are more engaged in the academy.

## *Learning, Discovery and Citizenship*

If talented people are the essence of the University of Alberta, then learning, discovery and citizenship encompass our essential work. In the simplest terms this cornerstone outlines our vocation as scholars at a public university, defining our collective dedication to teaching, research and service. The University of Alberta has a history of excellence and innovation in teaching and research as well as service, based on a philosophy that considers every member of the institution part of the scholarly process. *Dare to Deliver 2011-2015* reaffirms our commitment to that core scholarly work.

A great university has at its foundation the ability to offer an outstanding student experience. While that experience starts in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or field, the research-intensive environment at the University of Alberta offers a qualitatively unique educational and training experience for students. Through curricular and co-curricular activities, students learn fundamental skills, attitudes and values as they contribute to the advancement of knowledge and society, taking the University's research and scholarship into communities near and far. *Dare to Deliver 2011-2015* challenges members of the academy to continue to think deeply about how to connect their research with their students' learning experiences, and to engage students in the excitement of pursuing their own research projects.

We also recognize that our instructors employ many teaching methodologies and that our students learn in many different ways, both inside and outside the traditional settings. We will harness the innovative talents of our teachers and researchers to find fresh new ways of integrating the University's tremendous breadth and depth in traditional academic disciplines with training focused on specific attributes and competencies. We will provide a range of effective supports to enable students and instructors to discover and create optimal educational experiences. To this end, students are encouraged to take the lead in designing and implementing their educational experience at the University, to design their own futures in research, creative works, and service to society.

The University of Alberta's long tradition of excellence in research and creative inquiry will lead the way. Our research and creative activities are driven by both passionate curiosity and pressing social need, fostering a culture that enables the pursuit of both. It sets an indelible example of engaged scholarship and civic involvement for scholars at every level, from the undergraduate student to post-doctoral fellow and professor. Whether making fundamental discoveries or striving for the broader benefit of society, the University's culture of encouraging leading edge research and creative activity through learning, discovery and citizenship will also support our scholars participating in national and international discussions.

We will also tackle the challenge of reinvigorating the way we undertake research and creative activities at the University of Alberta with the same enthusiastic spirit of innovation and commitment to continuous improvement that inspires our teaching. We will strive to break down barriers and forge new connections for our research and

creative communities. We will encourage all individual researchers and creative artists to achieve their full potential while also promoting the development of “constellations” in areas of existing and emerging scholarly interest and strength, which could include, for example, Northern studies, sustainability and cross-disciplinary health studies. We only have to look to the Faculty of Native Studies, the only one of its kind in Canada, for an example of what can be accomplished through collaborative community and academic effort. This vision sees collaboration developing within and across faculties, as well as with other research and creative institutions outside the University. Such partnerships will incorporate and leverage different scholarly perspectives and approaches, thus integrating innovation to advance our overall understanding of our world and more effectively benefit society.

For in the end, our teaching and research endeavours at the University of Alberta are aligned with President Tory’s vision that public universities serve the communities that support them. Those communities are increasingly global as well as national and local, and we strive to be good, engaged citizens of all the communities that are touched by our endeavours. We will continue to support research and educational opportunities that benefit our communities, and to celebrate the service our faculty, staff, students and alumni provide to the people of Alberta, Canada and the world.

We will foster and enhance learning, discovery, and citizenship at the U of A by:

### **Providing meaningful learning opportunities**

- **Undergraduate Research:** Enhancing structured opportunities to develop undergraduate inquiry and research skills, such as establishing an office of undergraduate research and expanding community service learning and co-op programs.
- **Attributes and Competencies Upon Graduation:** Articulating core sets of skills, attributes and values to be incorporated into graduate and undergraduate programs, while also supporting units across the University charged with their development.
- **Capstone Courses and Certificates:** Developing further capstone initiatives as well as theme-based and skill-specific certificates, enabling students to receive academic recognition for their pursuit of multiple interests and cross-disciplinary learning.
- **Professional Academic Development:** Offering a comprehensive range of training, development and leadership opportunities in non-disciplinary skills to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.
- **Leadership and Citizenship Values:** Cultivating Canadian citizenship values of engagement, equality, respect, diversity and community across the University and beyond.

## Ensuring high-quality support structures to support learning

- **Advising and Mentorship:** Creating a seamless advising infrastructure for all students across the University.
- **Assessment and Grading:** Renewing our university-wide Principles on Assessment and Grading.
- **Academic Integrity:** Fostering a culture that understands and expects the highest standards of academic integrity.

## Enabling world-class leading-edge research

- **Research Funding:** Ensuring that funding, support and recognition mechanisms are appropriate for all research and creative activity.
- **Research Constellations:** Encouraging scholars to establish innovative research networks within and across faculties, as well a nationally and internationally, particularly in areas of existing and emerging strength.
- **Big Questions:** Fostering the continued development of a research culture that encourages scholars to tackle tough questions, look for big ideas, and make their inquiries relevant to their peers and to society.

### ***How will we know we are making progress?***

There will be a mix of qualitative and quantifiable metrics including goals such as:

- the high level of teaching quality at the University is maintained and extended;
- experiential learning opportunities, such a Community Service Learning, practicum, and undergraduate research opportunities, are enhanced;
- graduate students are more active and engaged in the Academy;
- a growing number of certificate programs are established;
- collaborative and interdisciplinary research programs;
- an increased number of postdoctoral fellows;
- and in research productivity and the number and value of Tri-council and other funding commitments are increased.

## *Connecting Communities*

While its physical campuses are located in Northern Alberta and centred on an inextricable and symbiotic relationship with Edmonton and the Capital Region, the University of Alberta has connections near and far to communities across Alberta, Canada, and around the world. Our academy is connected to diverse communities and forgets neither its place nor its history, including recognition that the University of Alberta stands respectfully on lands once known only by aboriginal peoples.

The University of Alberta is internationally recognized as a premier teaching and research-intensive university. This recognition is hard-won, and its continuation requires that we work with and alongside our international partners to lead scholarship on local, national and international stages. In turn, this premier standing yields multiple benefits to the communities within which our campuses stand.

By connecting our students and researchers with institutions and communities around the globe we will be able to influence and help shape the future prosperity and well being of the province, our country and the world.

The University of Alberta will connect with communities by:

### **Embracing Alberta's history and contemporary place**

- **Aboriginal Foundation:** Celebrating the diverse First Nation, Inuit and Métis histories and cultures throughout the physical, virtual, ceremonial and intellectual spaces of the University.
- **Campus Saint Jean/Augustana Campus/Enterprise Square:** Embracing and extending strengths such as la Francophonie at Campus Saint-Jean, and our rural and urban connections via Augustana Campus and Enterprise Square, in order to enhance the University's interconnectedness with local communities,

### **International teaching and learning**

- **International Expertise:** Strengthening international and intercultural dimensions in teaching and learning in curricular and extra-curricular programming, to prepare students for an increasingly international and intercultural range of career opportunities.
- **Global Engagement:** Cultivating a body of globally engaged students, alumni and faculty who understand the diverse historical and cultural perspectives of current international issues and relationships and are able to work with integrity and purpose within globalized contexts.
- **Collaborative programs:** Creating more internationally collaborative models of course delivery, such as dual and joint degrees for undergraduate and graduate programs
- **International scholars:** Celebrating the presence of international students and faculty on our campuses and assisting them with the best possible support for their success and wellbeing.

## Enhancing our presence in the world

- **International Research:** Nurturing strong international research linkages, collaborations and consortia.
- **Research Translation:** Building stronger and more effective mechanisms to translate research and share the creative activities of our scholars for the benefit of society.
- **Alumni Engagement:** Creating opportunities for alumni and the University to engage in mutually beneficial activities.

## Our community

- **Social Spaces:** Encouraging the development of social spaces on our campuses that promote interaction and collaboration among members of the University community.
- **Great Neighbours:** Continuing to foster mutually beneficial relationships with and contributions to our home communities of Edmonton and Camrose.

### ***How will we know we are making progress?***

There will be a mix of qualitative and quantifiable metrics including goals such as:

- an Aboriginal gathering place is established;
- partnerships with research organizations and top-tier international collaborators are increased;
- five dynamic campuses are thriving and working well within the local communities of Edmonton, the Capital Region and Camrose;
- program innovation is enhanced with partners in Alberta, across Canada and internationally;
- the numbers of incoming international students and outbound education abroad students are increased;
- the number and breadth of innovative models that integrate an international dimension in course delivery is increased.

## *Transformational Organization and Support*

Transformation of the academy is never complete. Our core work of teaching, research and creative activity, and service continues to evolve and we are well positioned as a great public university despite the current financial constraints.

The sustained progress made by the University of Alberta in recent years is evident in new buildings like the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science, Student Forum and Library at Augustana Campus, and the Edmonton Clinic Health Academy; in initiatives like the Centre for Writers, the China Institute, and the Centre for Teaching and Learning; in groundbreaking partnerships like the Helmholtz-Alberta Initiative; and leading-edge research institutes such as the National Institute for Nanotechnology, Li Ka Shing Institute for Virology and the Kule Institute for Advanced Study. Our reach and connection with external communities has been extended and improved through the establishment of Enterprise Square and continued development of Augustana Campus and Campus Saint-Jean. We have one of the finest University libraries in North America, one that serves as a library of record. These are all competitive academic advantages, on which we can build.

Many of the physical transformations are not immediately obvious. Developments such as the improved air handling system in Chemistry may be invisible to most but are important progressive steps the University is taking to improve the physical environment on campus. The investments we have made in renovating and improving existing teaching and research space are not as dramatic as the construction of new buildings but they are equally important. As well, sustainability principles and best practices will continue to be implemented throughout the academy, particularly in the design and operation of facilities and programs.

If there is one area where the academy needs to be revolutionary rather than evolutionary it is with information and communication technologies (ICT). Advances in ICT are transforming our world at an astonishing rate. Universities, including ours, have traditional information technology infrastructures that are ill-suited for the radical shift to mobile computing that is already underway. We will position ourselves to support the mobile, connected ICT campus of the not-so-distant future, else we run the risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant to the needs of our students, staff and faculty.

In addition to mobile computing, we will continue to provide increasingly sophisticated and useful electronic tools to support and enhance the teaching, learning and administrative experience at the University. An academy supported by a truly modern set of ICT tools and infrastructure will further enable the discovery, dissemination, and application of new knowledge through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community involvement, and partnerships. We will also ensure that our faculty, staff and students receive the training and support they need to take advantage of enhanced technological capacity.

While the physical aspects of the academy are important, the University of Alberta is fundamentally about people. We will continue to welcome, orientate, inform, and connect new members of the academy with their communities on our campuses. We'll also simplify routine reporting and find other administrative efficiencies to better enable faculty and staff to focus energy and expertise on their core work at the University. It is also important that all the University has to offer remains relevant and accessible, and that students have the appropriate support mechanisms and services to allow them to realize their full potential. Reducing the bureaucratic complexity for students will be a priority, including the development of an enhanced and interactive University Calendar that will be integrated with other administrative systems. All in all, we will work diligently to meet the needs of students to create an outstanding student experience at a great university.

We will enable the continued transformation of the University of Alberta by:

### **Transformational stewardship**

- **Input for Improvement:** Inviting everyone to reflect on and articulate ideas for making the University an even better place to live, work and study.
- **Sustainable Foundation:** Embracing the principles of sustainability (economic, environmental, and social) in all decision-making processes.
- **Administrative Barriers:** Reviewing and removing policies and procedures that impede progress, slow innovation and reduce our efficiency.
- **Research Leadership:** Nurturing and enhancing an environment where innovative and collaborative research models are encouraged for investigating the frontiers of knowledge.

### **Implementing the digital learning environment**

- **University Calendar:** Building an interactive University Calendar and developing other media to ignite the imagination and support the ongoing engagement of learners.
- **Progressive IT:** Evolving our computing infrastructure, creating a mobile, connected community able to access information and learning communities anytime, anywhere.
- **Web Enhancement:** Building a dynamic and interactive online presence that enhances communication between faculty, staff, students, our communities and prospective students around the world.
- **Library of Record:** Maintaining our leading role as an international library of record, and supporting our libraries in their transformative role in the University.

## Providing targeted student support

- **Student Financial Support:** Working towards a financial aid infrastructure that strives to offer every interested and qualified student an opportunity to complete a degree at the University of Alberta.
- **Graduate Student Support:** Encouraging and supporting graduate students in obtaining funding from national and international agencies.
- **Childcare and Housing:** Identifying opportunities to address key concerns in areas that underpin student engagement, such as the availability of childcare and accessible housing spaces.
- **International Student Services:** Easing the transition for international students into the University of Alberta, and assisting them throughout their programs.

### ***How will we know we are making progress?***

There will be a mix of qualitative and quantifiable metrics including goals such as:

- a robust, versatile, efficient digital learning environment is in place that meets or exceeds contemporary IT expectations;
- support systems for Aboriginal students will continue to enhance a positive, nurturing environment and student experience;
- recommendations from cross-academy committees on academic and administrative efficiency and effectiveness have been or are being implemented;
- students report they have the tools and support they need to succeed, including a more student-friendly bureaucracy;
- a greater number of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows with national and international funding are engaged in the academy;
- sustainable operations are implemented across our campuses and are becoming best practices;
- support efforts by Facilities and Operations to establish more childcare and housing spaces.

## Conclusion

As we turn our attention to the path ahead, there is incredible potential on the horizon for the University of Alberta. Our academy continues to make progress based on shared and deeply held values. Rooted in our collegial structure and founding democratic purpose, we will continue to encourage and support our students, staff and faculty to become fully engaged in university life, reinvigorating the sense of pride in belonging to the University of Alberta as well as our collective contributions to the growth and success of our communities.

We will nurture a responsive, compassionate, fair and inclusive academic community, one that embraces diverse viewpoints and backgrounds, supports academic freedom and open inquiry, and seizes opportunities with passion and creativity. By encouraging innovation and best practices while focusing our investment of time and resources, we can reinvigorate our commitment to carrying out the core mission of the University of Alberta. Members of the academy will continue to find joy and inspiration in our individual and collective ability to affect the wider community through our actions.

The collegial ties at the foundation of our academy will be strengthened through our ongoing pursuit of innovation and excellence in teaching, research and creative activity. The University of Alberta will continue to solidify its place as a worldwide hub for scholarship in a dynamic, global learning community. Thus, the University will continue to evolve as a microcosm of local and global citizenship, thriving in the mutual respect and understanding between and among cultures while fostering a passionate and abiding curiosity about ourselves and the world around us. In this way, we will proceed together towards the uplifting of the whole people.

## Background and Process

In the Winter and Spring of 2010, central units and the Vice Provost Team worked widely with many committees and all across constituent parts of the University to build a set of concept documents to help inform a new academic plan. In addition to this, specific submissions were received from the two student associations and many central units and task-forces engaged in processes of review or renewal met with the writing team and submitted documents outlining their work. When the intensive writing process began in the summer of 2010, the core foundational documents influencing the process were as follows:

- Student Engagement
- Alumni Affairs
- Library of Record
- Teaching and Learning
- IT: The Mobile, Connected Community
- Leadership White Paper
- Graduate Student Submission to the Academic Plan
- Report of the Provost Fellow on Assessment and Grading
- Aboriginal Strategy
- Northern Strategy
- Integrating Sustainability Across the University
- International
- Human Health
- Students' Union Submission to the 2011 Academic Plan
- Report of the Subcommittee on Undergraduate Research and Discovery Learning
- Diversity
- Office of the Registrar
- 2010 Institutional Access Plan
- 2010-2011 Institutional Research Plan (Draft)
- "Student Engagement: A Shared Responsibility" 2005 Senate Task Force Report
- Remarks on citizenship education by the Hon. David Crombie

While these documents were foundational, and fundamentally influential, the outlines and drafts that emerged from examining these documents were heavily influenced by a small resource group from across the academy.