



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

Start  
something.

# Academic Innovation Plan

DRAFT FOR FEEDBACK

Ahead of  
**Tomorrow**

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'S 2023-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN 

In June 2023, the General Faculties Council and Board of Governors approved the University of Calgary's Strategic Plan for 2023–2030. Titled ***Ahead of Tomorrow***, this plan outlines the University's mission and values—as well as goals, approaches to work and **initiatives for:**

- **Teaching and Learning;**
- **Research and Innovation;**
- **Community; and**
- **Operations**

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To deliver on this community vision, Vice-Presidents of the University have been asked to draft more detailed work plans that cover shorter time periods. These three-year implementation plans expand on how the University will deliver approved initiatives and meet set goals—and build out roadmaps of enabling activities that will be needed to deliver on *Ahead of Tomorrow*.

This draft Academic Innovation Plan addresses the teaching and learning strategy in *Ahead of Tomorrow* as well as the academic priorities and initiatives outlined throughout the document. Activities and initiatives in this Academic Innovation Plan are integrated with approaches described in the Research and Innovation Plan, Community Engagement Plan, and Operations Plan.

As with all University activity, the Academic Innovation Plan should be considered and interpreted through our foundational commitments to: Equity Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Indigenous Engagement; Mental Health; Global Engagement; and Sustainability.



# Introduction

Universities exist to educate, to discover, and to enrich the societies they both serve and lead.

The academic mission of the University of Calgary is to innovate, create, and take action to improve society. We are a diverse community of future-focused leaders and lifelong learners who, through excellence in teaching and learning, student experience, research, and service, drive change, focusing on both local and global impact. The work is undertaken with our partners and communities, as together we are creating bold ideas, challenging the status quo, acting on Indigenous reconciliation, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility and optimizing the work we do in advancing knowledge and creating solutions to real-world problems.

## Teaching and learning *Ahead of Tomorrow*

As established by *Ahead of Tomorrow*, the goal of the University of Calgary is to educate transformative leaders, and we will do this by increasing access to excellent future-focused education.

**Three objectives have been set for 2030 in *Ahead of Tomorrow*:**

1. Become #1 University, (U15) in student engagement.
2. Increase total enrolment by 10,000 to 46,000 (with graduate enrolment increasing by 7,000 to 15,000).
3. Ensure all students are provided an opportunity for meaningful entrepreneurial and critical thinking within research and creative scholarship.

To achieve the above objectives, we will embrace new ideas and new technologies to support innovation in teaching and learning including a commitment to providing relevant and inclusive student services, programs and supports. With an emphasis on future-focused programs, we will create accessible, flexible, innovative, and relevant programming both in and outside of the classroom. We will push the boundaries of knowledge and creativity to drive innovation and discovery, develop a culture of entrepreneurial thinking, and a determination to create positive social change through collaboration, action, and research.

### MEASURING PROGRESS

**Progress towards objectives will be measured in the following ways:**

#### A. Student Engagement

- In 2023-24 a teaching and learning engagement dashboard will be developed after dialogue with students, faculty and staff. This dashboard will include KPIs to measure performance.

#### B. Student Enrolment

- Progress will be measured through our Fall enrolment snapshot data with Fall 2022 being used as a baseline.

#### C. Entrepreneurial and Critical Thinking within Research and Scholarship

- The number of programming opportunities for undergraduate research experiences including summer research experiences, course-based research experiences, and research skills micro-credential programs will be used to measure the above objective.

- Starting in 2023-24, an inventory of courses containing entrepreneurial thinking will be undertaken that will serve as the benchmark and facilitate the setting of annual targets.
- Starting in 2023-24, an inventory of undergraduate research opportunities in academic units will be undertaken to serve as a benchmark for setting targets to grow undergraduate research opportunities.

## ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

### Domain #1: Transformative Student Experience

Our commitment is to provide an experience that fosters a sense of community, belonging, and curiosity that will live on for a lifetime. Students are the foundation of our excellent, safe, and inclusive environment that provides opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge, and personal attributes necessary to contribute as citizens and leaders in their chosen fields. Whether an undergraduate, graduate, or a life-long learner, we enhance each student's experience through outstanding teaching, research, and academic support. Our students learn, explore, and live in world-class facilities and on the land on which the University of Calgary is situated. Students have access to extracurricular lifestyle and social activities, intramural and varsity sporting activities, leadership and professional development opportunities, Work Integrated Learning (WIL), land-based learning, and diverse ways of thinking, learning, and living. We are committed to delivering student services and programs that support the personal development, academic success, and wellbeing of each student who is a member of our diverse community of learners. Fostering an accessible, equitable, and supportive environment, we are responsive to students' changing needs as they continue throughout their academic journey. We are committed to ongoing assessment, continuous improvement, and working with students to understand and improve their experience.

#### Key Initiatives:

- 1.1** Increase average financial support for thesis-based graduate students to highest level in the U15 research Universities. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B*

**Attracting local, national, and international graduate students grows our economy, our province and country, and our reputation.**

- Invest in areas of thesis-based graduate support identified as benefitting most from strategic investment.
- Advocate for enhanced external supports for thesis-based graduate students at the provincial and federal levels.
- Leverage strategic community and industry partnerships to provide new sources of funding support for graduate students.
- To support the above, review current thesis-based graduate support model and Faculty of Graduate Studies funding operating standards.

- 1.2** Provide one semester of financial support and wrap-around services for first-in-family students.

*Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B*

**Students from families with no post-secondary history face unique uncertainties about investment in higher education. Addressing them opens doors to expanded educational participation.**

- Launch a first-in-family award, with an application open in Fall 2023, that initially provides \$2500 in financial support, with goal of growing to \$3500 in 2027.
- Launch a complementary support program for first-in-family students that includes: dedicated mentorship and peer supports, networking opportunities, dedicated residence programming, academic and career advising, and well-being support.
- Identify funding sources, in conjunction with the Office of Advancement, ensuring long-term sustainability of the program.

**1.3** Establish collaborative, integrated approaches to improving the UCalgary student experience.

*Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B*

**Coordinated services, programming, and supports mean are provided to students to enhance the overall student experience.**

- a. Create a dedicated UCalgary student communications content hub creating a unified and aligned institutional voice for (and to) all UCalgary students.
- b. Launch a campus-wide steering committee dedicated to enhancing the UCalgary student experience through coordinating services, programming, and communications.

**1.4** Complete a review of student services, programs, and supports. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B*

**Service and program delivery needs to support diverse student needs and provide flexibility to address emerging demands at a growing university.**

- a. Undertake reviews of:
  - i. Student wellness, access, and support
  - ii. Student housing demand and supports
  - iii. Undergraduate academic advising
  - iv. Graduate student supervision
- b. Develop a Student Housing Demand and Residence Master Plan.
- c. Coordinate food security initiatives and programming for students through a food hub and campus-wide working group including institutional monitoring and reporting.

## **Domain #2: Innovative Academic Programs**

At the University of Calgary, we create future-focused, innovative, flexible, and accessible programs for all our undergraduate, graduate, and lifelong learners. We build experiential teaching and learning opportunities for students that foster a deeply reflective process, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills as our students work alongside our scholars as partners, and with industry and community leaders in creating new questions, knowledge, solutions, and understanding. Students are prepared to create their own paths and carve their own futures, being prepared for careers now and those that are yet to exist. We deliver programs that are timely, relevant, and responsive to the needs and interests of the community and strongly connected to industry through high-quality professional and continuing education programming.

### **Key Initiatives:**

**2.1** Expand required programming focused on entrepreneurial thinking, research, and creative scholarship.

*Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.C*

**Innovative opportunities for students that embed research experience, creative scholarship, and entrepreneurial thinking into diverse curricular, extracurricular, and experiential learning opportunities across all faculties.**

- a. Initiate a faculty/unit-led process through which all courses that currently include or have the potential to include entrepreneurial thinking, research and creative scholarship are identified and categorized.
- b. Support academic staff in understanding and embedding entrepreneurial thinking, research, and creative scholarship into new and existing courses.
- c. Ensure that learning spaces are available and equipped to foster entrepreneurial thinking, research, and creative scholarship including the development of land-based learning environments.
- d. Host institutional conversations focused on transformational changes in teaching and learning and the creation of signature learning experiences at the University of Calgary that includes entrepreneurial thinking, research, and creative scholarship.

- e. Review the Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking to understand and clarify its role in building entrepreneurial thinking capacity across the institution.

**2.2** Increase flexibility to change majors and register in other program's courses. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.C*

**Fostering transdisciplinary learning and making more out-of-program seats available to students better equips graduates for a dynamic world and creates a more seamless student experience.**

- a. Work with students, faculties, and units to determine high-demand major-restricted courses that would provide transdisciplinary opportunities if made available to non-majors.
- b. Pilot and implement an expansion of seats/courses for non-majors in high demand, restricted enrolment courses.

**2.3** Develop future-focused programs and program delivery for undergraduate, graduate, and lifelong learners. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B, 1.C*

**Expanding innovative, modularized, and professional program offerings, including upskilling and reskilling in high demand areas supports graduates and supports our community.**

- a. Expand support for program innovation throughout the ideation, development, and implementation stages available to all faculties and units through the Program Innovation Hub.
- b. identify high-priority areas to transform, innovate and create undergraduate programs, laddered and professional graduate programs, and continuing and professional education programs that align with student, labour market and community demand.
- c. Grow the number of transdisciplinary program offerings and build capacity for faculty and staff to teach and support them. *Also see Research Plan 2.1 for additional information*
- d. Expand the number of blended and online courses and programs that meet emerging student needs and support enrolment growth.
- e. Increase access to academic programs through the creation of pathways and local and global partnerships.
- f. Advance innovative approaches to the assessment of student learning within our academic programs that support evidence-based practices.
- g. Develop an institutional micro-credential framework supporting and incentivizing the development of new learning opportunities across faculties and units that align with industry and community needs.
- h. In support of the Community Plan, work with faculties/units to expand life-long learning opportunities for our communities. *For additional information see Community Plan 1.1*

**2.4** Create an institutional enrolment strategy to reach the enrolment targets outlined in *Ahead of Tomorrow*. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B*

**Growing by 10,000 students will drive innovation in program delivery, new program development, and growth of faculties, while supporting the priorities and expectations of our community.**

- a. In conjunction with faculties, develop and approve an Institutional Enrolment Strategy, that will enable the *Ahead of Tomorrow* funded enrolment targets to be achieved.
  - i. Analyzes the internal and external environmental context and reviews current enrolment analytics practices to identify gaps and strategic opportunities.
  - ii. Analyzes enrolment potential including institutional capacity, student demand, and external drivers that engage all faculties and key stakeholders.
  - iii. Establishes a scalable student support model that enables enrolment targets and student engagement objectives to be achieved at the same time.

## Domain #3: Increase Influence and Investment with Our Communities

At the University of Calgary, we continually challenge our approaches to teaching and learning, our program curriculum and delivery, and the way we do things. We are committed to a leading teaching and learning experience that is current, relevant, and meaningful to our learners and the communities they serve. Our approach to teaching and learning opens ourselves to new perspectives and ideas, leading to innovative and creative programs and teaching. Students participate in experiential learning and work on real world problems alongside our scholars, preparing students to take on roles as active citizens and thrive in an increasingly complex world.

### Key Initiatives:

#### 3.1 Expand and enhance blended and online learning opportunities in courses and programs.

*Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A*

**Embracing new technologies supports diverse learning needs and innovation in teaching and learning.**

- a. Develop a Digital Learning Strategy for the University of Calgary that includes the platforms, technologies, professional learning opportunities and resources needed for academic staff to offer high-quality online learning across the institution.
- b. Update classroom design standards for technology integration supporting high quality hybrid learning.
- c. Expand professional learning opportunities for academic staff in course and program design for teaching in blended and online modalities.
- d. Investigate, test, and offer professional learning opportunities regarding responsible and creative Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications in teaching and learning.

#### 3.2 Expand Research, Experiential and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities in partnership with community and industry. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.C*

**Expanding these opportunities better prepares students to take on roles as active citizens and thrive in an increasingly complex world.**

- a. Expand opportunities for research, experiential learning, and WIL in undergraduate and graduate programs.
- b. Annually update the inventory of WIL courses across all academic programs.
- c. Support faculty and academic units to develop and offer the UNIV 304 and 501: Experiential Learning in the Workplace courses, expanding opportunities for students to participate in WIL.
- d. Expand the number of WIL and research-based EL specialists across campus to support WIL placements and EL course development.
- e. Launch the College and University Teaching Environment Survey in 2024 (run by NSSE Institute), establishing a baseline for strengths and gaps in innovative teaching environments and experiential learning and identify areas for growth.
- f. Support the VP Research in expanding opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research and supporting faculty in developing these opportunities. *For additional information see Research Plan 1.4*
- g. Expand Mitacs opportunities providing undergraduate and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from all disciplines research and industry-focused internships. *For additional information see Research Plan 1.4*

#### 3.3 Attract, engage, and retain a diverse community of talented faculty and staff. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.B, 1.C*

**Investing in our faculty and staff through professional and leadership development initiatives -and recognizing and valuing the impact of their contributions.**

- a. Reimagine the Academic Leadership Academy ensuring the Academy offers the right mix of experiences to develop leadership skills, build culture and community, and grow careers.

- b. Create learning opportunities, in conjunction with Human Resources, that develop the skills and increase awareness of supports and services available in teaching, research, community partnerships, and university operations.
- c. Expand and enhance professional learning opportunities for teaching, learning and curriculum innovation offered through the Taylor Institute.
- d. Expand institutional capacity in faculty level hires through the creation of new transdisciplinary assistant professor positions. *For additional information see Research Plan 1.1.*
- e. Create a new Visiting Scholars Program. *For additional information see Research Plan 1.1*
- f. Advance DORA principles on diverse outputs and impact in the activities guided by the UCalgary GFC Academic Staff Criteria & Processes Handbook. *For additional information see Research Plan 1.3*
- g. Incentivize community engagement and recognize community-focused work by our students and academic staff. *For additional information see Community Plan 1.1*
- h. Pilot Associate Dean (Community) position. *For additional information see Community Plan 1.2*

## Domain #4: Inclusive, Caring and Sustainable Campus Culture

The University of Calgary is strongly committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming, equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible working, research, teaching, and learning and living environment that enables all members of our campus community to thrive and excel. We aim to create a culture of belonging; one that is built upon the foundation of kindness and compassion, that promotes the holistic health of people and the environment, and which actively contributes to a transformative student experience. Through this work, we demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, wellbeing, and intercultural capacity-building opportunities for the campus community. We honour our responsibility to truth and reconciliation and cross-cultural learning opportunities that promote awareness, education, and understanding. We demonstrate our institutional commitment to meaningful connection and interaction with the world around us through the diversity of our campus community, and our partnerships.

### Key Initiatives:

- 4.1** Expanding understanding of the university's foundational commitments in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA). *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B, 1.C*

**Advancing our institutional understanding and commitment toward the creation of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive campus that is accessible and free from harassment, bullying, and discrimination.**

- a. Create an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility strategy for the University of Calgary (Presidential Task Force on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility).
- b. Establish an Inclusive Engagement Framework for the University of Calgary using equity principles that guide how we have conversations within our community.
- c. Expand intercultural capacity building opportunities made available through credit and non-credit activities.
- d. Commit to learning and growing as an institution through the analysis of our institutional EDIA data to inform actions and initiatives in future years.

- 4.2** Expanding understanding of the university's foundational commitments in Indigenous Engagement. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B, 1.C*

**Advancing our institutional path of transformation, commitment and responsibility for truth and reconciliation.**

- a. Encourage increased enrolment of faculty, staff, and students in The Story of ii' taa'poh'to'p and Beginning the Journey Towards Reconciliation online courses.
- b. Encourage expanded participation by faculty, staff, and students in the Anti-Indigenous Racism workshop.



- c. Enhance support for faculties and units in advancing Indigenous Engagement and the university-wide commitment to *ii' taa'poh'to'p* within the program development and curriculum renewal process.
- d. Increase institutional capacity in Indigenous ways of knowing, teaching, learning and research.  
*Also see Research Plan 1.7 for additional information*

**4.3 Expanding understanding of the university’s foundational commitments in Mental Health and Wellbeing, Global Engagement; and Sustainability. *Ahead of Tomorrow 1.A, 1.B, 1.C***

**Facilitating access for all seeking additional education in Mental Health and Wellbeing, Global Engagement, and Sustainability.**

- a. Promote and expand course and program offerings in Mental Wellbeing and Resilience, Sustainability and Regenerative Futures, and Pluralism and Global Citizenship.
- b. Provide training and educational opportunities for our campus community in supporting mental health and wellbeing through meaningful support and referral.
- c. Expand opportunities for students to integrate sustainability into their academic journeys.
- d. Enhance support for faculties and units in advancing the Institutional strategies in Sustainability, Campus Mental Health, and Global Engagement within the student experience, existing courses, and new program development.

**TIMELINE AND PROCESS**

Implementation plans for *Ahead of Tomorrow* are written by the responsible University Vice-Presidents using the IECB model of strategic planning. These plans provide additional detail and context necessary to deliver on the University’s approved Strategic Plan.



*Figure A. The implementation plans are four of many plans at the University of Calgary. Collectively, these plans define our academic, research and operational environment, as well as our connections to the broader community.*

Plans at the University of Calgary are developed using the **IECB Framework** that brings together:

- Internal data sources such as existing strategic plans and decisions that have been made to date on the direction of the university.
- External information such as government frameworks, sector-wide planning and market/landscape analyses.
- Consultation with affected groups, both internal to our campuses and in the broader community.
- Best practice and emerging practice as articulated and proven by scholars and professionals at the university and beyond.

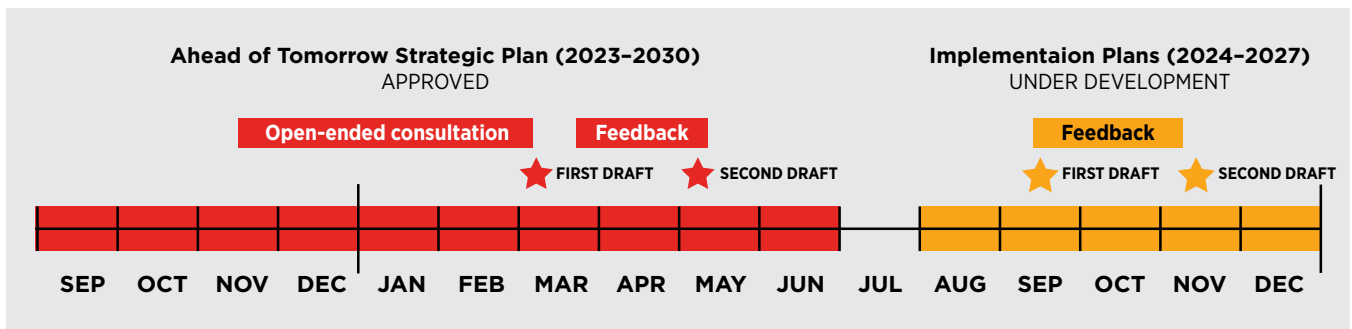


Figure B. The implementation planning process is a continuation of the strategic planning process. It addresses how and in what order the items in Ahead of Tomorrow will be approached in the next three years.

Implementation plans are taken to the University’s governance bodies for awareness, discussion and, as applicable, approval. This process will begin later this year and conclude in early 2024.

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