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CALGARY

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# Talent for **Tomorrow**



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY PEOPLE PLAN 2026-2028



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The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut’ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The city of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation within Alberta (including Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6).

The University of Calgary is situated on land Northwest of where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, a site traditionally known as Moh’kins’tsis to the Blackfoot, Wíchísipa to the Stoney Nakoda, and Guts’ists’i to the Tsuut’ina. On this land and in this place we strive to learn together, walk together, and grow together “in a good way.”

# Introducing our People Plan

We are delighted to introduce the University of Calgary’s first institution-wide People Plan.

Our strategic plan, *Ahead of Tomorrow*, outlines four core strategies: teaching and learning, research and innovation, community engagement, and operations. Threaded through this plan and associated implementation plans are cross-cutting objectives that describe how we will support faculty, staff, and leaders in this work.

The People Plan connects the dots between these plans, so our people-related endeavours receive the focus, backing, and coordination they need. At the same time, it creates a compass for the People and Culture department, which was reorganized as the engine to drive these efforts in the fall of 2024.

But the plan does more than simply connect the dots. It highlights the fundamental importance of the faculty, staff, and leaders who make what we do possible. It compels action in areas we know matter deeply to these same people — and change they tell us is required. And at this critical juncture in the institution, province, and world around us, the plan will enable and equip faculty, staff, and leaders to embrace their future and our future as a university: together activating our *Talent for Tomorrow*.

Initiated in the summer of 2025, the planning process was driven by leadership in People and Culture, in collaboration with clients and colleagues across faculties and administrative units. We have endeavoured to engage respectfully yet pragmatically to distill the key themes, knowing that ongoing dialogue and feedback will be central in implementation. We have also drawn from the employee engagement survey and the extensive consultation that preceded *Ahead of Tomorrow*.

Informed by these various inputs, the People Plan sets out our priorities across the next three years. While led by People and Culture, this is a university plan, and we will sponsor and oversee it accordingly. All members of the executive leadership team are fully committed to its success. The plan represents an institutional transformation in how we support people. We believe similar types of improvement are equally relevant in other administrative services as we deliver against the ambitions of *Ahead of Tomorrow*. People and Culture may be the first function, but we will approach the work as part of a broader change program.

This is important and timely activity. Thank you to all those who have contributed to the conversation to date. We look forward to continuing collaboration.

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<b>Ed McCauley</b> <i>President and Vice-Chancellor</i>	<b>Dr. William Ghali</b> <i>Vice-President (Research)</i>	<b>Andrea Morris</b> <i>Vice-President (Development and Alumni)</i>
<b>Jacqueline Lacasse</b> <i>General Counsel and Vice-President (People and Culture)</i>	<b>Wilbert Arends</b> <i>Vice-President (Finance and Services) and CFO</i>	<b>Nipa Chakravarti</b> <i>Vice-President (Digital Transformation and Technology)</i>
<b>Dr. Sandra Davidson</b> <i>Provost and Vice-President (Academic)</i>	<b>Kate Hamilton</b> <i>Vice-President (External Relations)</i>	

## Our Aims and Approach

As with all institutional endeavours, the People Plan is grounded in the values we espouse at the University of Calgary: authenticity, inclusivity, diversity, and critical thinking.

We foster collaboration so that all can achieve their potential. And we strive to create an environment where all can thrive.

References throughout this plan to faculty and staff are inclusive of student employees, graduate assistants, and postdoctoral associates (postdocs). While the plan is designed to meet the needs of all people, we will tailor approaches, where relevant, to reflect underlying differences between faculty and staff, between people leaders and individual contributors, and between faculties.

### **Our aspiration through this plan**

is to inspire and develop the human capability to power positive change by putting people, meaningfully and consistently, at the centre of all we do.

### **The purpose of People and Culture,**

as trusted advisors, is to partner with the university in this work.

People and Culture are the professionals upon whom we rely in the operational activity of human resources (HR) and labour relations, the colleagues with whom we design and put in place the programs and practices that support faculty, staff, and leaders throughout their careers, and the experts to whom we turn for advice as we navigate the complexities of an evolving work environment.

This plan is fundamentally about equipping the university with the talent to deliver upon *Ahead of Tomorrow*. People and Culture have a unique and crucial role to play as strategic catalysts in this work. And they will champion and lead the implementation of this plan.

But People and Culture cannot make it happen alone; this is a team game. University leaders set policy in respect of people and culture, allocate resources, and model the behaviours that will inspire and guide the community. People leaders play a crucial role in bringing the plan to life — and exemplifying culture — through their engagement with faculty and staff. They are the ones who ultimately adopt and advance the changes in our people practices. And, while the experience of employees is shaped by this work, so too must they shape the experience of their colleagues through their actions and interactions. Distributed responsibility is an imperative.

## Culture and the Future of Work

Culture is defined as the shared set of workplace beliefs, values, and behaviours that motivate and bind an organization. It is what employees experience when they come to work.

Culture may be abstract and subjective, but it cannot be ignored, especially in an era in which talent attraction and retention are more important and challenging than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic was highly disruptive, professionally and personally, and its impacts are still keenly felt. Austerity measures in the public sector and affordability pressures more broadly have added significantly to the stresses on students and employees. Also seismic shifts in the job landscape, technology and artificial intelligence, and employee expectations continue to reframe the future of work.

At the University of Calgary, we value a **culture of care and accountability**: a work environment that balances compassion, support, and empathy for individuals with emphasis on personal ownership, shared responsibility for outcomes, and continuous improvement. While culture is not something we can set out to build through a campaign or task force, it is something about which we must — and will — continue to be intentional as a community. The People Plan plays a key role.

As we embark upon implementation, we will take steps to articulate our desired **employee experience**: the ‘why’ of working at the University of Calgary. In addition to helping us anchor and communicate the People Plan, the employee experience will serve as a lens through which we can evaluate the impact of our efforts. Are we making a difference in the ways that matter most?





## Our Objectives

Three objectives capture what we are seeking to achieve in this work. Through the People Plan, we will:

1

### **Build a high-performing People and Culture function**

to provide effective support for faculty, staff, and leaders.

2

### **Foster an empowered work environment**

to strengthen our employee proposition in an evolving and competitive landscape.

3

### **Enable university transformation and growth**

by ensuring we have the people and culture to fulfil our collective ambitions.

While all three are crucial and all require collaboration with clients and colleagues across the university, there are synergies and dependencies. The first objective creates a platform; the third builds from the others. These connections influence the order in which we will phase the work.

These objectives are not fully new in People and Culture, and versions of these have long guided work across the university. What is new in this plan, and at a critical moment in time, is the commitment to working collectively — and at the highest levels — to advance the university through people and culture.



## Our Priorities

Informed by what we have heard through the process, we have distilled nine priorities in line with these objectives.

This plan touches on every element of the employee lifecycle, while enabling the organization to transform in real time. The priorities depict our focus on strong foundations, clear and consistent practices and processes, and future-focused tools and resources. In many cases, activity and change are well underway, with the priorities both bolstering and extending from these efforts.

### Objective 1

#### High-Performing People and Culture Function

These are the steps through which we ensure we have the right structures, practices, and capacity to support people and culture, both within the department and across the university.

- 1 We will **clarify our service model** and align resources to ensure support for all those engaging with People and Culture and to manage expectations about service levels and our respective roles. Each part of the model needs to operate effectively for the clients it is designed to serve. And each needs to work in concert with the rest of the function, emphasizing the need for integrated, efficient workflows and shared accountability. Ongoing upgrades in the HR aspects of UService will pave the way for more expansive efforts to optimize our shared services model. And in time, this priority may extend to those operating in people-related roles across faculties and units to improve coherence.
- 2 Recognizing the critical liaison function of HR business partners as the university moves forward, we will **reinforce and align our partner capacity**, so we consistently and proactively meet client needs. There is strength from which to build — and clear recognition of the value. The task now is to reduce the routine transactional demands on business partner time, channel training and supports so partners are fully equipped to serve leaders across the academy and administration, improve people data so they can work with their clients to anticipate trends and make evidence-informed decisions, and find ways to coordinate service with Labour Relations given the demands in this domain.
- 3 We will **formalize surge capacity** to ensure scalability as faculties and units embark upon new programs or reorganizations, while staffing People and Culture at sustainable levels. A version of such a model exists in the recently launched 'agile pods', from which we can learn as we determine how to sustain and extend this approach. There may be logic for including other functions at times (such as finance, IT, communications) to provide more comprehensive and coordinated administrative support in driving change across the university.





## Objective 2

### Empowered Work Environment

These activities foster the essentials of a productive and engaged work force in a world in which employers are competing for talent and employees are navigating fast-changing ways of working.

4 Alongside institutional efforts, we will **streamline and simplify core HR processes**.

This is one of the top requests of both our clients and our colleagues, and it is activity we must prioritize. Documentation will be a key component, so we can codify our ways of working. While some may perceive a trade-off between process discipline and judgement in finding client solutions, we believe there is a way to balance both, and this will be at the forefront as we redesign and then train colleagues to operationalize these processes. There will inevitably be systems implications and investments, and we will need to consider these in the context of other priorities. While not a panacea, technology will be a key enabler of both how we work and how we attract and retain talent.

5 Recognizing the various constraints, we will continue our efforts to **align total rewards** to ensure we are market competitive and can attract and retain the talent we need.

The Management and Professional Staff (MaPS) salary framework renewal is our first area of focus, not only in step with provincial legislation but also in recognition of the alternatives open to these individuals beyond the university and public sectors. We will also continue to review and revise, where relevant and possible, the other financial and non-financial benefits that define the university's offering as an employer.

6 We will **invest in people leader capability**, strengthening and making mandatory orientation programs for individuals as they take on supervisory positions. This will pay dividends in multiple ways: developing leaders, enhancing employee experience, and increasing institutional effectiveness. By including basic people and culture competencies, we will also improve the ability of our leaders to work in productive partnership with People and Culture.

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## Objective 3

### University Transformation and Growth

Clients consistently highlight three core functions as priorities for enhanced support and advice. Success lies partly in the work of People and Culture and partly in the ways colleagues across the university anticipate and embed the work. The role of people leaders in transformation cannot be overstated.

- 7 We will **strengthen support for recruitment**, in both academic and non-academic positions. Pace and response times are key in a competitive process. There are also scale challenges given the growth trajectory in *Ahead of Tomorrow* and the resource constraints of the last few years. Moreover, there are strategic questions around organization design and employment models that merit consideration and advice, as well as close coordination with thinking around compensation and total rewards.
- 8 We will **bolster professional development**, in line with institutional ambitions to be the top university in the U15<sup>1</sup> for investment in professional development. This work also underpins our focus on enriching the non-salary components of the employee proposition wherever possible. Clients endorse ongoing efforts in this area, citing opportunities to extend and improve current programming, increase expectations around participation, and sharpen focus on skill building for resilience in the future of work — including in artificial intelligence and change management.
- 9 We will **enhance performance enablement** to mobilize our extraordinary workforce, guide and support colleagues in their development, and ensure employees can enjoy a full career at the university. From new role orientation to career pathing to succession planning, we will both renew practices and work with people leaders to ensure greater consistency in their application. We will revise and, where necessary, replace existing processes — mindful always of change readiness and resource constraints. Above all, we will strive to create an environment that unleashes talent by encouraging feedback, agility, and growth.

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## Action

While there is demand for action in all nine priorities, we must sequence our activity to respect the interdependencies, as well as the available capacity of people leaders and People and Culture.

Moreover, clients and colleagues alike recognize the need for foundational improvements in the function to maximize the value of the other initiatives. The shape of the roadmap reflects this relationship, with a high-performing People and Culture function positioned as the backbone for more expansive change.

The figure below outlines our current thinking on phasing, noting there are elements — while critical — that are not reflected explicitly in the roadmap. These include the upfront work to articulate the employee experience and value proposition, and our ongoing work with colleagues and institutional offices across the university to help foster and sustain culture.

The roadmap depicts a significant cross-university transformation, and progress will not be linear. We will translate this high-level roadmap to more granular action plans on a yearly basis, accelerating where possible and slowing down where necessary. While the phases will inevitably blur, the progressive approach should enable sustainable change, building at each step upon improvements in the previous phase — or strengths that characterize our approach today.

### People Plan Roadmap

Objectives	2026 Capability	2027 Competency	2028 Continuity
Build a high-performing People and Culture function			Cross-cutting HR alignment*
		Surge capacity	
	Business partner capacity		
	Service model and levels		UService optimization*
Foster an empowered work environment		People leader capability building	
		People process streamlining and simplification	
	Salary framework renewal	Ongoing compensation alignment	
Enable university transformation and growth		Performance enablement	
		Professional and leadership development	
		Recruitment	

\* Cross-university priorities, with responsibility well beyond People and Culture



## Accountability

We will only succeed in *Talent for Tomorrow* through excellence and resolve in implementation.

The plan creates a solid framework for prioritization, collaboration, and accountability, and we will adopt a robust approach to program management that supports these outcomes.

Under the leadership of People and Culture, we will:

- » Determine and track **annual actions**, with transparent accountabilities and deliverables through which we advance the plan through the next three years.
- » Establish **key indicators** to measure the impacts of the plan, drawing both from existing methodologies such as the employee engagement survey and from new metrics and data where practical.
- » Share **progress reports** with the organization, in line where appropriate with broader university communications around the operationalization of *Ahead of Tomorrow*.
- » Charge the **People and Culture Leadership Team** with driving implementation, aligning responsibilities to create capacity for this work, while maintaining connections with 'business as usual' to ensure coherence and synergies across the department and its various workstreams.
- » Designate **champions and cross-functional teams** (extending beyond People and Culture where relevant) to progress interdependent priorities, harnessing the expertise of our colleagues to guide and enable change — and building people leader competencies at the same time.
- » Leverage **institutional leadership forums**, as we have done throughout the planning process, to guide and support implementation, embracing the spirit of client focus and continuous improvement.

We know we will need to adapt as we proceed. But even as circumstances change and, arguably, especially then, the People Plan creates a mechanism through which we can respond and pivot with intent, holding ourselves accountable to the people who make the University of Calgary what it is today — and what it will be tomorrow.

