

DARE TO DELIVER

University of Alberta Academic Plan
2007-2011

Five campuses. 37,000 students, from every corner of Canada and 110 other countries as well. Among our alumni a Prime Minister, a Nobel Prize winner, a Supreme Court Chief Justice. More national teaching award winners than any other university in Canada. Sports teams that excel. Dedicated student advisors and lively student groups. State-of-the-art medical research and services. A hospital, a research farm, the best theatre teaching facility in Canada, the nation's second biggest library, and 400 other labs that examine everything from dinosaurs to nanoparticles. And these days, a building crane on every corner.

Henry Marshall Tory, the University of Alberta's first President, might not be able to find his way around the University of Alberta at 100 years old. When Tory served as President, Athabasca Hall housed the entire university. Not only were all classes held in the building, but students and faculty members, as well as domestic staff, lived there. The dormitories and the dance hall abutted professors' offices and research labs. The library and the dining room were just two storeys apart. All of the University's social events were held at the brick building "on the edge of an oat field," as Tory memorably put it. In the 1940s Athabasca Hall was pressed into service as an army barracks. Today, it houses virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and robotics laboratories within the Department of Computing Science – disciplinary pursuits that Tory could not even have imagined.

Athabasca Hall embodies a vision for the University of Alberta's first century and suggests some of the values that will move us into our second. Boldness is one of them; broad-mindedness, another. A third is care, a sense of University members as whole people. The same daring vision that prompted a province to found a university as one of its first legislative acts, the ambition that believed it could all be started with a single building, can be seen in our present determination to become even better while we grow bigger and more complex. The University of Alberta will soon be operating in five locations: North Campus, South Campus, Campus St-Jean, Augustana Campus in Camrose, and Enterprise Square in downtown Edmonton. But like the professors, students and staff who lived and learned together in one building a hundred years ago, we remain unusually collegial and we cherish our diverse and expansive communities. Like Henry Marshall Tory, we cannot always see the precise shape of tomorrow's disciplines, but we know that if we get the fundamental priorities right, the rest will follow.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Alberta is the province's leading academic institution, with an international profile of excellence across the humanities, sciences, creative arts, engineering and health sciences. Alberta needs and deserves the benefits that a globally recognized institution brings to its citizenry, who move globally, and its industries, which engage globally. A great research and teaching institution offers leaders of tomorrow an opportunity to study at a level competitive with the world's finest universities. Such an institution will attract the best and brightest students and scholars to Alberta and retain them here in Alberta. The University of Alberta, in partnership with the province and the nation, can achieve great things for its students and for society at large.

In 2006, the University of Alberta adopted *Dare to Discover* as an invigorating articulation of its vision and mandate:

VISION: To inspire the human spirit through outstanding achievements in learning, discovery, and citizenship in a creative community, building one of the world's great universities for the public good.

MISSION: Within a vibrant and supportive learning environment, the University of Alberta discovers, disseminates, and applies new knowledge through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community involvement, and partnerships. The University of Alberta gives a national and international voice to innovation in our province, taking a lead role in placing Canada at the global forefront.

Dare to Discover lists seven aspirations under each of four cornerstones: Talented People; Learning, Discovery and Citizenship; Community Engagement; and Transformative Organization and Support.

In recent submissions to the Alberta Government, the University of Alberta has expressed the *Dare to Discover* vision as a goal: to become one of the top 20 universities in the world by 2020. The institution is also required to submit to the Province a 2007-2011 Institutional Business Plan which identifies how the University will spend its resources and track its performance. This Institutional Business Plan must be motivated by clear academic priorities. The role of the Academic Plan, *Dare to Deliver*, is to identify the institution-level commitments and initiatives for the 2007-2011 planning cycle. It thus drives and rationalizes two connected documents that follow it: the University of Alberta Institutional Business Plan and a Scorecard that will provide the performance indicators by which we will monitor our progress toward specified outcomes. The Academic Plan includes text boxes asking, "How will we know when we're there?" The answers are deliberately qualitative and descriptive. Concrete benchmarks will be part of the Scorecard.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

The Academic Plan developed through extensive consultation during the last two years. From September 2004 until March 2005, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), together with the Vice-President (Research), coordinated a series of conversations with Deans, Chairs, students, major governance bodies like GFC and APC, staff associations, the Board of Governors and interested members of the wider public. These consultations are summarized and accessible on the Academic Plan Toolkit webpage (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicplankit/>). By March 2005, nine themes had emerged:

- Enrich the undergraduate student experience
- Enrich the graduate student experience
- Integration of teaching, research, scholarship and creative activities
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration
- Northern strategy
- Aboriginal engagement
- Rural engagement
- Urban and civic engagement
- International engagement.

During 2005 and 2006, various University constituencies and working groups produced a number of targeted reports on issues that addressed the student learning experience, the integration of teaching and research, the advancement of scholarship, the role of the University within the provincial post-secondary system, community engagement, and the institution's competitive place within the global arena. These reports include:

Campus Alberta System Vision (May 2006)
Celebrating the Undergraduate Research Experience (2005)
CLE Task Force on the Graduate Student Experience (June 2006)
CLE Report on the Undergraduate Experience (September 2005)
CLE Report on Teaching, Learning & Technology Innovation & Leadership (May 2006)
CLE Report on the Process of FECs (September 2004)
Cohort Learning Initiative Work Group Report (January 2006)
Connecting with the World (May 2006)
E-Learning Report (November 2005)
Interdisciplinary Task Force (May 2005)
Senate Task Force on Student Engagement (December 2005)
Strategic Research Plan for CFI and CRC Program (2003, updated 2006)
Writing Task Force (Spring 2006)

Finally, in early 2006, Faculties and administrative units developed planning documents that outlined how they would advance the aspirations under the *Dare to Discover* cornerstones. Three members of the academic community, with support from the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and the Vice-President (Research), were engaged to analyze these unit-level documents, together with the 2005 themes and the targeted reports listed above, and to craft the Academic Plan for 2007-2011.

In a general sense, the priorities that have served the University of Alberta so well for our first century will continue to command our allegiance over the next four years. Learning and discovery are at the heart of our everyday work: we are both a research-intensive university and a teaching-intensive one. We take pride in the research which has been accomplished within core disciplines and across disciplines, and affirm its importance. We are committed to offering our baccalaureate, Master's and doctoral students the most superlative learning experience possible in an intellectually rich environment. Our aggregate research funding record is enviable; we have built a number of partnerships with stakeholders in government, industry, and other organizations; and our professors serve as advisors at all levels of government, nationally and internationally, on matters of environment, society, law, health, science, engineering and the arts. We are committed to internationalization in every aspect of our development. The University of Alberta cherishes diversity as a strength and a privilege, and we welcome the opportunity to engage our communities at all levels from local to global, to learn from the communities that we serve and to contribute to a better world. The collegial nature of our academic community makes the University of Alberta a unique environment, one that facilitates the recruitment and retention of superb individuals at all levels – and in all sorts of capacities, including fulltime, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, traditional and non-traditional students, permanent and contract faculty members, librarians, service officers, trustees, administrators, and non-academic support staff with a remarkable range of roles and responsibilities.

Programs, Departments, Faculties, and administrative units will continue to invigorate teaching, set new directions for research and scholarship, pursue promising partnerships, and internationalize, while building a transformed and transformative institution. In short, all that we do well, we will continue to do. The Academic Plan highlights a set of priorities that will receive particular attention in the next four years.

RESOURCING THE PLAN

The majority of the institution's resources lie directly within Faculty and administrative units, and the activities identified in the planning at that level will form the core response to advancing the *Dare to Discover* vision. *Dare to Deliver* draws on the common themes emerging from two years of consultation so as to define four areas for *additional* institutional commitment over the next four years. These commitments are described in detail below. Capturing innovative ideas that have been emerging across the academy, they represent the most promising directions for the University of Alberta to follow during the next four years. A new Special Initiatives Fund, administered through the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), will provide seed money for pilot projects and other actions that support these commitments. Together with the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund and the Killam Research Fund to support scholarship in the humanities, social sciences and fine arts, the Special Initiatives Fund will be a key mechanism for enabling institution-level changes that are ultimately realized through activities defined by and executed within the Faculties and administrative units.

Two large-scale initiatives deserve special mention because they will be transformative in elevating the excellence of the teaching and research environment across the academy. The first is to improve significantly the ratio of professors to undergraduate students by increasing the size

of the core professoriate. This is an essential component to delivering a high quality and diverse educational experience within a research-intensive environment and to ensuring that research activities and community engagement are tightly linked to undergraduate learning. The second initiative is to address the institution's competitive disadvantage in the recruitment of the best national and international PhD students by providing attractive multi-year funding packages across the institution. This re-affirms our commitment to doctoral level study, which is essential to our role as a leading research-intensive institution. These two initiatives require significant new resources, and the President and senior executive will look to advance these initiatives through partnerships with government and research agencies, and through increased development activities that engage private philanthropy.

FROM DISCOVERY TO DELIVERY: FOUR COMMITMENTS

Dare to Deliver identifies four areas of commitment: Discovery Learning, Incubating Scholarship, Community Engagement Near and Far, and Building the Transformative Organization. These four areas synthesize many exciting ideas that have been emerging in different research, teaching and service units across the academy. They are opportunities for the institution to support how individual programs, Departments, Faculties, and units advance their own plans for continued teaching excellence, research impact, and community engagement.

1. DISCOVERY LEARNING

We use the term “Discovery Learning” in its broadest philosophical sense to embrace many different approaches to active education, particularly those that exploit our research-intensive environment, increase student engagement, and reach out to our communities. As a research-intensive university, we are especially poised to connect the latest scholarship and research with our students' learning, whether that takes place within a single discipline or draws upon several. A research-intensive environment defines a qualitatively different educational and training experience for undergraduate students, who are the primary vehicles for taking the University of Alberta's research and scholarship into our local communities within Edmonton and Alberta. Learning through discovery happens within laboratories and summer field research programs, in clinics and services offered throughout the province by our professional schools, and through academic assignments that engage our students with community and government service organizations. By strengthening the ties between scholarship and teaching, we provide our students with forward-looking perspectives, understanding, and knowledge that they carry to all sectors of the province.

Equally, Discovery Learning is a way of fostering student engagement. We seek to engage students inside and outside the classroom, with a particular emphasis on the first year. We want to give our students a “wow” experience that is unique to the rich academic culture that they have joined, by diversifying teaching and learning and fostering an environment where discovery runs through everything we do. Discovery Learning can link formal coursework with informal co-curricular activities, thereby making space for partnerships through ventures such as community service learning, co-op/internship programs, and cohort classes. In this way, Discovery Learning connects education to active, socially responsible citizenship.

With the core concepts of active engagement, critical thinking, and inquiry, Discovery Learning is already being widely practiced around the university. It travels under many names, such as context-based learning, evidence-based teaching, experiential learning, inquiry-driven pedagogies, and case studies approaches. It has been particularly successful in upper-year undergraduate classes and professional programs, as well as with non-traditional adult learners. While lectures, labs, and seminars will continue to be effective tools for conveying knowledge, methods and thoughtful critique, Discovery Learning represents an institutional commitment to support novel ways – where appropriate and effective – of expanding active pedagogies across the curriculum in order to both reinvigorate established teaching practices and encourage innovation. Ideally, Discovery Learning will energize a culture of enthusiasm for teaching and learning across the university: not only among learners, but also among instructors who seek to transform their teaching, non-academic staff who want specific training or more comprehensive education, and professionals or alumni engaged in lifelong learning.

To cultivate and expand Discovery Learning we will:

- Hire more professors. Increasing the number of full-time faculty positions by 100 per year over the next five years, along with the appropriate non-academic staff, capital support, and 2500 new graduate students, will improve the faculty-to-student ratio, which will in turn directly increase Discovery Learning's success, especially in first-year classrooms.
- Provide professional development assistance for teachers to develop Discovery Learning skills appropriate to their discipline. We have several established and emerging ways to fortify Discovery Learning. University Teaching Services educates and assists faculty, lecturers, sessionals and graduate teaching assistants from across the university. The Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund will be a vehicle to support Discovery Learning as part of its overall mandate to improve teaching and learning effectiveness. The Telus Centre, repurposed as an academic building, will house the Teaching-Learning Institute, which will have an academic governance structure whose mandate will be to actively promote the integration of teaching, learning, research and use of technology. It will also provide the space and technological infrastructure for pilot projects designed to improve teaching and learning.
- Cultivate dialogue among instructors and between instructors and students about which teaching and learning practices are most effective and engaging.
- Support and expand Community Service Learning (CSL) and co-op/internship programs, especially those with an international, rural, remote or Northern component. These projects must be developed within Faculties but may require central coordination to develop registries of non-profits, industries, and international partners.
- Encourage the development of early-year cornerstone courses, which offer a big picture view of one or more disciplines, and later-year capstone courses, in which smaller groups of advanced students have the opportunity to integrate and apply the concepts they have acquired over the years. Cultivate learning communities through cohort initiatives that allow a common group of students to move together through their required courses, especially in the early years of students' programs.
- Recognize the importance of communication skills for our students and begin to address the issues in the Writing Task Force Report.

- Develop the technical infrastructure and expertise necessary to form virtual communities of practice, and use such virtual learning communities to complement face-to-face learning, as well as collaborative research groups, mentorship and knowledge transfer.

How will we know when we're there? The University of Alberta will boast exceptional environments for discovery learning that ignite a passion in our students for knowledge and ideas, an excitement for inquiry-based teaching in our professoriate, and a commitment to creating opportunities for intellectual growth that exceed the expectations of our learners.

2. INCUBATING SCHOLARSHIP

The University of Alberta is a powerhouse for research, scholarship and creative arts. We are committed to building upon our existing strengths in all disciplines, partnering in innovative ways with government, industry and others to develop a knowledge-based economy, expanding interdisciplinary links within our community and beyond, maintaining flexibility to both create and respond to new research opportunities and fields, maximizing research benefits through technology transfer, protecting academic freedom, and fortifying the teaching-research continuum. Our University Library is a fundamental element of our scholarly environment and we support its development as a Library of Record to serve today's researchers and generations of researchers in the future. As a leading research-intensive teaching institution, we affirm our commitment to doctoral-level study. Doctoral students not only contribute to our basic and applied scholarship activities, but they are core partners in mentoring and teaching our undergraduate students in classrooms, labs, small discussion groups and tutorial sessions. The quality of our discoveries, and our discovery learning initiatives for our undergraduate students, are driven by the best and brightest doctoral students from Canada, North America, and the world.

Interdisciplinary research is one of the foundations of a vibrant research culture in the twenty-first century. Like most major research-intensive universities, we face the challenge of how to respond to rapidly changing disciplines, technologies, and needs in a knowledge-based economy. This means not only providing institutional "homes" for interdisciplinarity, but actually creating the conditions within which new approaches to questions might be explored. If we approach the generation of ideas boldly enough, we will take risks; in this way, we will continue to generate our own world-class research. Our incubator concept will bring together people who do not normally come together, from across the hall and from across the world, by providing special environments in which innovative thinking can take place. Such environments will attract and retain talented people – students, scholars, artists, postdoctoral fellows and visitors – from all over. Incubating scholarship, in sum, names a flexible and mobile system of support that can generate disciplinary and interdisciplinary synergies.

To incubate scholarship, we will:

- Address our competitive disadvantage in the recruitment of PhD students by providing attractive multi-year funding packages across the institution.

- Increase the number, prestige, and value of visiting scholar/visiting scientist positions, so as to establish a prestigious institutional-level fellowship program through which external scholars rotate.
- Build UofA think tanks that span Departments and Faculties to support faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and undergraduate/graduate students who want to work together to explore new ideas or form pre-grant-application research teams.
- Define and promote internal, time-limited competitive support opportunities that give individual researchers, teams or groups more “time to think” by releasing them from other professional duties.
- Continue to pursue innovative joint appointments with local, provincial, and national entities, as we have with TEC Edmonton, Alberta Cancer Board, and the National Institute for Nanotechnology, and expand our teaching and researching collaborations with community partners such as Capital Health.

How will we know when we're there? The University of Alberta will be characterized by uncommonly innovative scholarship that frames our world in new ways. Our “incubator concept” will make us a destination of choice for leading scholars, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, either as a place to define their academic careers or as a place to explore new science and scholarship for a short time within innovative environments that we define.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT NEAR AND FAR

“Community Engagement” in this plan works in two ways. First, it speaks to the kind of relationships we want to cultivate between the University of Alberta and external communities: certainly those within the Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton, but also, in particular, Aboriginal and international communities. We are ideally situated to address Northern and Aboriginal issues, and have a presence in and a responsibility to rural Alberta. Through international recruitment, we bring the whole world to our campuses, while through research projects and partnerships, student exchanges and study abroad programs, we have a hand in shaping that global world. Linking the local and global, the near and the far, is a key goal for us.

Second, “Community Engagement” speaks to the internal dynamics of the University of Alberta as a community. Embracing our complexity brings challenges as well as opportunities, and knowing exactly how to cultivate a nourishing environment in the face of our complexity can be elusive. We recognize that a healthy workplace is one in which staff are respected and the value of their daily work is recognized. The University is a community that people join, geographically and intellectually, from disparate places, and it can be difficult to move into, out of and within this community. We want to ease transitions, whether from high school to university, from student to alumnus, from one country to another, or from doctoral student to faculty member. A great University strives to make transitions so positive that they become unexpected “bright spots” as people journey through their university careers – and their careers at university.

To engage communities near and far, we will:

- Put key recommendations from “Connecting with the World” into action. Increase the number, attractiveness and affordability of genuine joint programs, semesters abroad, bilateral exchange programs, international community service learning, internship opportunities with international companies and non-governmental organizations. Support new academic programs with a global perspective.
- Improve access to the UofA for rural, Aboriginal, and non-traditional students through partnerships with colleges across Alberta and the North. Support cross-Faculty programs of study for rural and Aboriginal engagement. Hire and support Aboriginal recruiters. Begin work to build or designate an Aboriginal gathering place.
- Create cohesiveness across our five campuses. Foster new joint degree programs and interdisciplinary initiatives that unite academic units with each other and with our professional schools. Strengthen and build upon the educational and research environments offered by our distinctive smaller Faculties, which distinguish the UofA provincially, nationally, and internationally.
- Celebrate our cultural diversity by improving our cultural sensitivity and our cultural literacy. Actively promote equity in recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. Identify and work to eliminate barriers that prevent the UofA from fully embracing all equity groups, and publicize our successes where equity goals have been met.
- Manage transitions for those joining, moving through and leaving our community through targeted initiatives. For incoming students, build real and virtual “welcome centres.” Ensure sufficient resources for English as a Second Language/English as an Alternate Language for international students. Expand lifelong learning opportunities and build an Alumni Centre to maintain good relations with students after they graduate.
- Support careers of faculty and staff as they develop, through leadership training, mentorship programs, internal mobility opportunities, a healthy workplace, professorial/professional development opportunities, and succession planning with targeted training for all levels of staff.

How will we know we're there? The University of Alberta will be recognized as one of the world's great universities and as a university that is great for the world. We will be responsive to our community members as whole people, anticipating, encouraging and celebrating growth and change within our ranks. Although our members may leave us geographically, they will maintain close connections after they leave because they value the social, intellectual, and professional connections we offer.

4. BUILDING THE TRANSFORMATIVE ORGANIZATION

As the University of Alberta approaches its centenary, we find ourselves at a moment of substantial growth. We want to maintain our collegiality as the size and scope of the academic enterprise expand, as experienced individuals move toward retirement, as the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students changes, and as we internationalize. We need to manage a UofA on five distinct campuses in an infrastructure that anticipates changes in our demographics, our

disciplines, our technologies and our financial needs. Our new initiatives will require effective internal and external communication, environmentally sound physical space and refurbished facilities that can respond to the rapidity of disciplinary and interdisciplinary developments. We must recognize the value in creating a balance of central and decentralized resources as well as private, corporate and government revenue streams. Institutional structures need to facilitate positive change in a changing environment.

To build a transformative organization, we will:

- Make excellent use of our space. Ensure that facilities encourage transformations in the ways we think, teach and interact; in this regard, the Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science, the Edmonton Clinic, and the Killam Centre for Advanced Study are models to emulate. Periodically revisit and refine the Long-Range Development Plan. As we build and refurbish spaces, consider space as an integral aspect of student experience: graduate and undergraduate students need 24-hour study space and more residences. Beautify all five campuses and make it easy to move among them. Become a leader in environmental stewardship.
- Improve information exchange on key university initiatives and decisions. Explore new models for consultation and decision-making.
- Ensure that rewards and incentives for academic work respond to the priorities of this Academic Plan.
- Explore alternative policies and practices to encourage and reward interdisciplinary research, especially cross-Faculty collaboration.
- Marshall financial resources, including scholarships and bursaries, to support student learning and improve affordability.
- Allow for more flexibility in recruiting and admitting students, especially those who are likely being courted by other schools. Customize our communication strategy to incoming students so that they receive a cohesive package.
- Build capacity among support staff. Provide staff with sufficient training and flexible and reliable information technology systems. Integrate and balance generic central service with Faculty- or discipline-specific support. Ensure that support staff numbers keep pace with an expanded professoriate.
- Celebrate significant achievements in order to develop an academic environment so rewarding that it becomes a significant tool for retaining the very best faculty, staff and students.
- Use our strength as a collegial university community to network leaders who can guide coalitions to champion programs and initiatives that exemplify our Academic Plan commitments.

How will we know we're there? When all members of our community exude commitment to each other's goals, whether it is the quality and safety of our physical surroundings, the nature of our students' experiences from the time they arrive until they leave, the effectiveness of services that enable the institution to thrive, or the teaching and research achievements of our professoriate.

FROM DELIVERY TO DISCOVERY

The four commitments outlined above are closely intertwined: an initiative listed under one commitment typically supports the others as well. Community service learning, for instance, offers one approach to Discovery Learning; at the same time, it engages communities. Similarly, innovative cross-appointments with government and industry partners (commitment 2) require institutional policies and practices that encourage and reward interdisciplinary research (commitment 4). We might use our “time to think” to incubate new teaching ideas. If the Academic Plan is successful, it will inspire all University members to take up individual initiatives with imagination and a sense of the big picture.

The commitments identified here will not, alone, carry the University of Alberta to its 2020 goal, but they ensure that we will make significant progress toward it. By unifying individual efforts across academic, service, and support units, our Academic Plan commitments define the priorities that will best advance our teaching, research, and community impact for the next four years. In short, *Dare to Deliver* identifies a set of concrete steps that, together with the ongoing work within Faculties and units, carry out *Dare to Discover*'s mission. Pursuing the initiatives described above will create a more engaging experience for our undergraduates, a richer environment for our graduate students, a more rewarding workplace for faculty and staff, and a more stimulating environment for all of us.

In order for this Academic Plan to resonate, we must deliver on its promises and we must revisit it periodically with a new sense of discovery. By putting “discovery” and “delivery” into a productive cycle, we will build the “vibrant and supportive learning environment” that *Dare to Discover* describes. And we will be that much closer to realizing the vision that our first president, Henry Marshall Tory, and our twelfth, Indira Samarasekera, share:

To inspire the human spirit through outstanding achievements in learning, discovery, and citizenship in a creative community, building one of the world's great universities for the public good.