



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

*energizing*   
**EYES HIGH**  
Strategy 2017-22

**INTEGRATE THE UNIVERSITY WITH THE COMMUNITY**  
a focus group guide

September 16, 2016

# Overview

## Participation

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an Energizing *Eyes High* focus group session. We have received research ethics approval for the focus group sessions. Based on this approval we are including the following information. Your involvement in this session is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time. Your choice to not participate or withdraw will not affect any rights that you might have at the University of Calgary now or in the future.

## Confidentiality

All of your comments and responses to questions will be kept completely confidential. Your name and anything else that can identify you will be removed from all written records. Any of the materials that come out of our discussion will only be evaluated by staff working on this project and will be kept secure and protected. Information from focus group sessions will be aggregated. Quotes may be used in summary reports and other forms of public communication but they will not be attributed to individual participants. Personal contact information collected for prize draws will be deleted once winners receive their prizes.

## Results

The results of the session will help the Energizing *Eyes High* team better understand the impact that the *Eyes High strategy* has had from the perspective of students, faculty, staff, alumni and other members of the University of Calgary community. The results of this session will also help to develop recommendations for change.

## Information

If you have questions that are not answered in this session, you may contact:

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# Background Information

In 2011, the University of Calgary embarked on a journey to define its future direction. The university had experienced significant momentum and growth in a community known for its energy, opportunity and expectation of excellence. There was a shared sense that the ‘time was right’ to raise the bar on the impact of the University of Calgary locally, nationally and internationally.

A broad consultative process was launched in January, 2011 as part of Project Next. The key deliverables were to:

1. provide opportunities for the campus community to listen, learn and share
2. build consensus and alignment for the future
3. articulate an inspirational strategic statement and institutional values
4. increase pride through clarity of purpose
5. establish a framework for decision-making and resource allocation

Over 4,000 students, faculty members, staff, alumni and community leaders participated in the process through a broad range of engagement tools including workshops, social media and one-on-one conversations. Based on this consultation process, the *Eyes High* strategic planning document was approved in June, 2011.

The *Eyes High* strategy articulates an inspirational strategy statement as follows:

*The University of Calgary will be a global intellectual hub located in Canada’s most enterprising city. In this spirited, high-quality learning environment, students will thrive in programs made rich by research and hands on experiences. By our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016, we will be one of Canada’s top five research universities, fully engaging the communities we both serve and lead.*

The *Eyes High* strategy is supported by three foundational commitments:

1. Sharpen focus on research and scholarship
2. Enrich the quality and breadth of learning
3. Fully integrate the university with the community

The *Eyes High* strategy served as a guide to planning, development activities, priority identification, and resource allocation, as well as measuring and reporting progress over the past five years. It also served as a beacon for change, elevating excellence and building a strong community around a shared future state.

Given that 2016 is the University of Calgary’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it is both timely and opportunistic to “energize” the *Eyes High* strategy so it can continue to provide the platform from which the University of Calgary leverages its momentum and aspirations. The process to energize the *Eyes High* strategy will be similar to that of Project Next. It will provide opportunities for the university and its primary stakeholders to review progress to date. Additionally, members of the community will be invited to share in the development of a new future for the University of Calgary.

This is one of five background documents that have been developed to inform the Energizing *Eyes High* consultation process. It describes where we started in 2011 and the path we would take to achieve success by 2016. I would encourage you to read this and the four other background documents as a starting point for the energizing *Eyes High* discussion. Thank you for taking the time to participate.

# Integrate the University with the Community

## WHERE WE STARTED

In 2011, when the *Eyes High* strategy was introduced, we recognized that the University of Calgary has always been an integral part of the community. The University of Calgary was created to serve the burgeoning intellectual, educational and research needs of Calgary and the surrounding region. As the city enjoyed increased national and global prominence, expectations of the university increased as well. Early on, we committed to building our global impact, becoming – like our host city – a destination for people with ambitious dreams.

We planned to enhance Calgary's profile through broad, two-way, mutually beneficial engagement with the community. This effort would encompass teaching and learning, scholarship and research, community leadership and ideas, and the everyday wellbeing and fulfillment provided by sport, culture, youth programs, adult learning and the outdoors. Our students, faculty and staff were integral to this community of engagement, creating the vibrant culture of a well-run organization and sharing in the expression of our collective community identity through our services and offerings.

The University of Calgary would create a portal to the best minds in the world, and at the same time elevate Alberta voices and ideas to the world stage. Locally, provincially, nationally and globally, we committed to acting as a nexus for ideas. The university would manifest as an institution of which all Albertans could be proud.

## OUR PATH TO SUCCESS FOCUSED ON FOUR KEY AREAS:

### 1. Engaging our Community

A key element of our strategy statement was the University of Calgary would become a global intellectual hub, purposefully engaging with the community by applying our academic and research strengths to address the challenges and opportunities facing our society. This meant that we would develop next-generation leaders, share new knowledge and discoveries broadly, enhance access to art and cultural events, and increase opportunities for our local and extended communities to engage in sports and recreational activities. We wanted to be recognized as a campus that provided a two-way connection to the international landscape of ideas, art, science and culture for all life-long learners. The following activities and initiatives were undertaken to increase community outreach between 2011 and 2016. We:

- directly engaged the communities surrounding our campuses;
- supported public events with internationally recognized speakers;
- collaborated with the community to offer arts and cultural events;
- increased access to our athletics and campus recreation facilities and events;
- increased the availability of academic experts to the media;
- developed extensive community partnerships with organizations such as Calgary Economic Development, Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Calgary Arts Development Authority, Calgary Public Library, Calgary Stampede and TELUS Spark.

## **2. Service to Community**

We understood that our role in the community would involve the provision of expertise and infrastructure. This meant that many of our faculty, staff and students would play an active role in civic projects and initiatives and that community members would make use of campus facilities. The following activities and initiatives were undertaken to increase our service to the community between 2011 and 2016. We:

- raised more than \$2.0 million for the United Way;
- became the home of the Calgary Youth Science Fair;
- established community clinics run by students with expertise in law, nursing and social work;
- supported 2013 flood relief efforts by housing 1,186 evacuees and 485 RCMP officers while deploying 1,094 volunteers;
- extended access to post-secondary education and English language training to Syrian refugees; and
- welcomed more than 1,400 evacuees from the Fort McMurray wildfires to our campus in 2016.

## **3. Collaborative Projects**

We held a firm belief that we all benefit when the University of Calgary collaborates with the surrounding community on solving pressing challenges and realizing new opportunities. That belief would require our students, faculty and staff to provide expertise to help the community address pressing societal challenges. Our expertise and infrastructure would be combined with other resources for the common goal of solving societal problems. The following activities and initiatives were undertaken to collaborate between 2011 and 2016. We:

- established the Urban Alliance, a unique research partnership with the City of Calgary, in which university academic and research expertise is applied to municipal challenges, over 200 projects and initiatives have been launched to date including the Advancing Canadian Wastewater Assets (ACWA) facility at Pine Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant;
- created the makeCalgary program – an interdisciplinary community focused research platform that brings students and faculty together with the City of Calgary, community partners and industry professional to help design a bright future for our city; and
- worked closely with local health and social service organizations to address societal and community health challenges in Calgary and surrounding areas.

## **4. Alumni Engagement**

We knew that one of our unique advantages was that a significant proportion of our alumni worked and lived in Calgary. Over the years, these alumni have moved into positions of leadership and made contributions on a global scale. We knew that the connection to our alumni needed to be strengthened to achieve our *Eyes High* vision. The following activities and initiatives were undertaken to increase alumni engagement between 2011 and 2016. We:

- developed and implemented a comprehensive alumni engagement strategy;
- created an Alumni Weekend program; and
- initiated faculty alumni councils.