



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



Academic Foundations

PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE UNIVERSITY PLANNING

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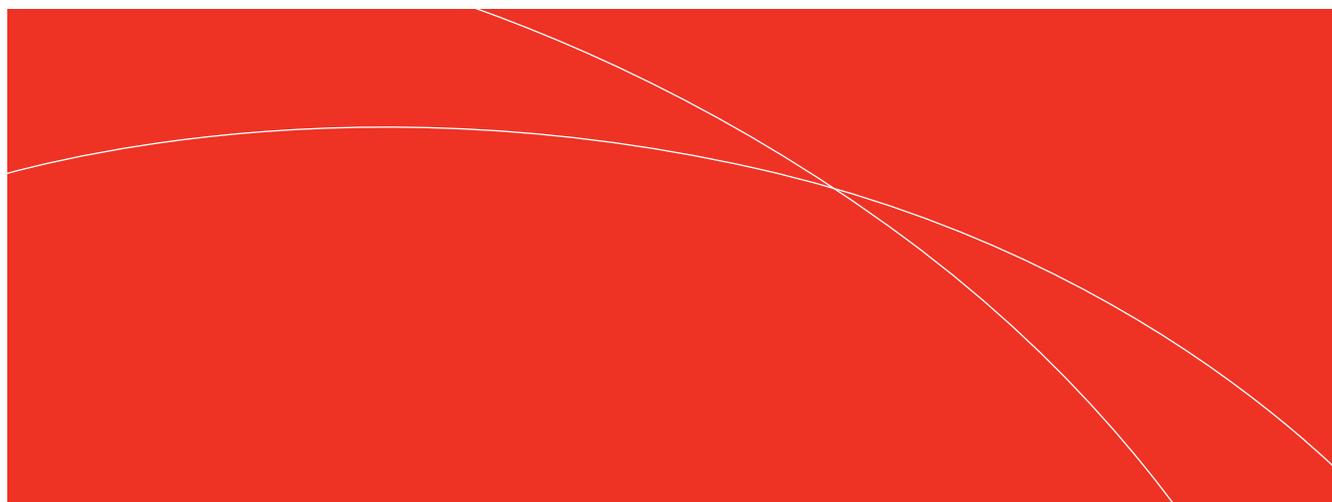


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Student success

Excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity

Interdisciplinary education and research

Return to community

- UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education, research, scholarship and creative activity are core activities of the University of Calgary:

- Education providing the highest and most current knowledge to our students, stakeholders and communities;
- Research and scholarship disseminated to a community of peers around the world, and applied for the benefit of humankind and the natural world; and
- Creative activity enhancing our world with an impressive range of integrative practices and expressions that cross our institutional boundaries, sustain and vivify our cultural past, and shape our cultural world for generations to come.

Our city, province and country provide a context for our future directions at the University of Calgary, as does our position in the international context. Along with our University's roles as critic, explorer and conscience, we will strive to align our own sense of purpose, priority and potential with society's needs and ambitions.

In all that we do, the University of Calgary is committed to the values of integrity and respect, which underlie the academic principles for our University:

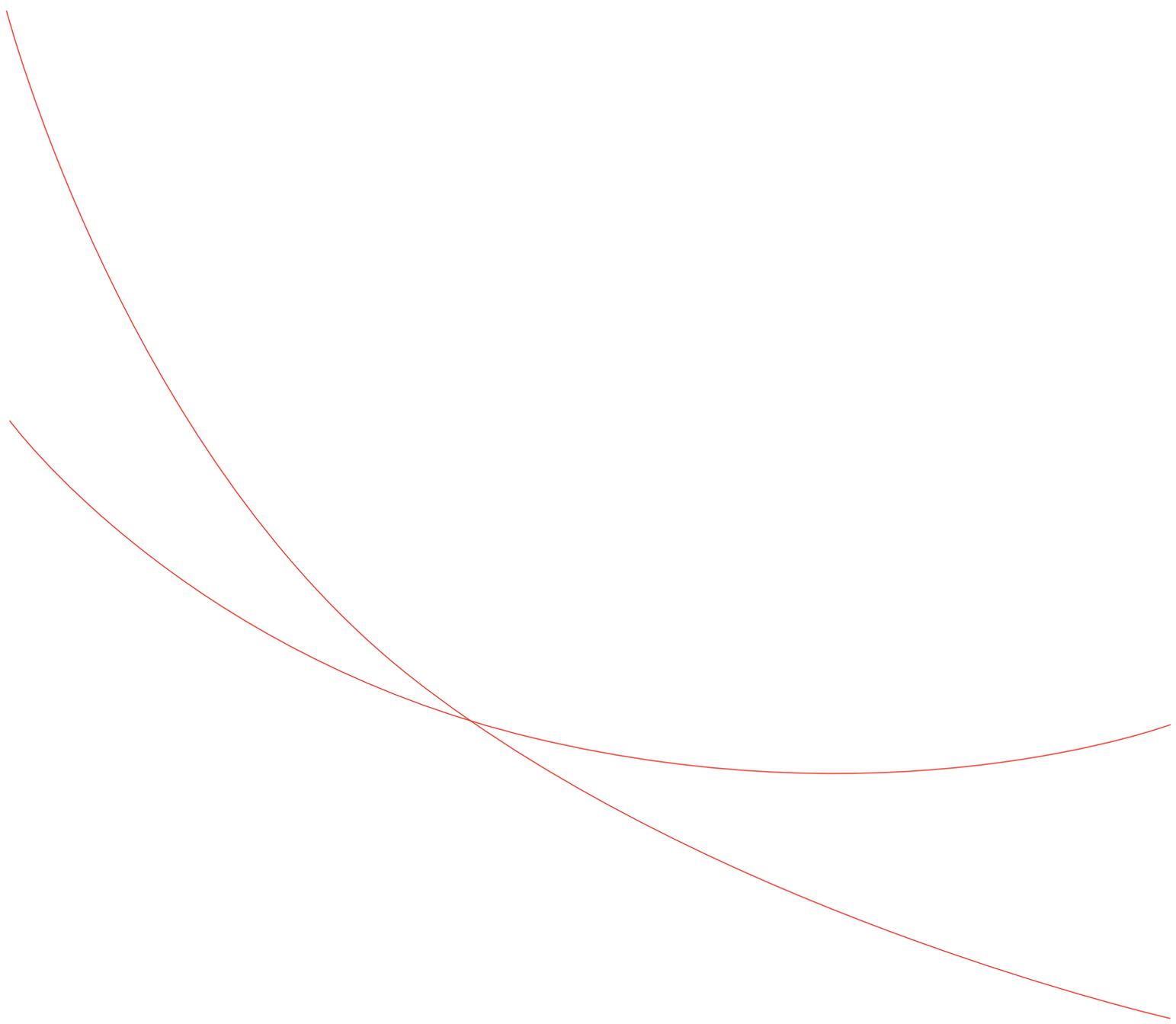
Student success;

Excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity;

Interdisciplinary education and research; and

Return to community.

Academic Foundations is a guide for the University of Calgary's broader planning framework and decision-making processes. Our efforts, our allocation of resources of various kinds, the work of our administrative and support units, our communication strategies, our fundraising objectives and our government relations will be aligned at all levels of the institution with the values and principles found within this document.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review and revision of the academic plan of the University of Calgary would not have been possible without the significant contributions of the University community. The Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Alan Harrison, and the Vice-President (Research), Rose Goldstein, led a wide-ranging consultation process, and extend their appreciation to the many students, faculty and staff who participated in the process through discussion at meetings about the refreshing of the academic plan that *Academic Foundations* replaces or by offering their comments at various stages in the subsequent development of this document.

We are living in an age of innovation and progress, where the keys to success lie with the ability to discover new ideas and create new knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

As an academic institution, the University of Calgary carries on a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages. Universities support the societies they serve by helping to conserve the understanding of the past and by discovering new knowledge. They also critique and oppose ideas or practices that their communities value, and history has shown that this critical role can be just as valuable in leading to societal progress as, for example, the role of universities in developing new ideas.

Academic freedom and collegial governance are at the heart of the unique opportunity offered by universities, “...the opportunity to give others the personal and intellectual platform they need to advance the culture, to preserve life, and to guarantee a sustainable human future” (Kennedy, 1997, p. viii).

We know that our city, province and country provide a context for our future directions, as does our position in the international context. Along with our University’s roles as critic, explorer and conscience, we will strive to align our own sense of purpose, priority and potential with society’s needs and ambitions. We will advance our civic engagement, or societal contributions, at all levels of the academy through engaged scholarship that is “predicated on the idea that major advances in knowledge tend to occur when human beings consciously work to solve the central problems confronting their society” (Gibson, 2006, para. 5).

The University of Calgary values the essential differences between universities and other institutions, and embraces its distinctive role. At the same time, we recognize such a mission relies upon trust from those who support us. We will honour this trust by pursuing the highest levels of excellence and integrity as we search for new knowledge and as we help to conserve, transmit, mobilize and renew existing knowledge.

These *Academic Foundations* for the University of Calgary articulate the principles that will inform the academic direction and resource allocation of our University. The document will support strategic decisions; that is, we will preferentially allocate our resources, both human and financial, and direct our fundraising efforts according to our values and principles.

Our paramount criterion for selective allocation of resources is excellence. The pursuit of excellence requires us to judiciously balance allocations to areas fundamental to a strong teaching and research University, with allocations to the selected areas of strategic priority singled out for particular attention in strategic research plans, business plans and other related documents.

Through the University of Calgary,
students become vitally connected to the world they inhabit,
a world of ideas, of challenges, of possibilities,
of relationships.

Education, research, scholarship and creative activity are core activities of our University (Appendix A, Mandate of the University of Calgary as granted by the Government of Alberta):

- Education providing the highest and most current knowledge to our students, stakeholders and communities;
- Research and scholarship disseminated to a community of peers around the world, and applied for the benefit of humankind and the natural world; and
- Creative activity enhancing our world with an impressive range of integrative practices and expressions that cross our institutional boundaries, sustain and vivify our cultural past, and shape our cultural world for generations to come.

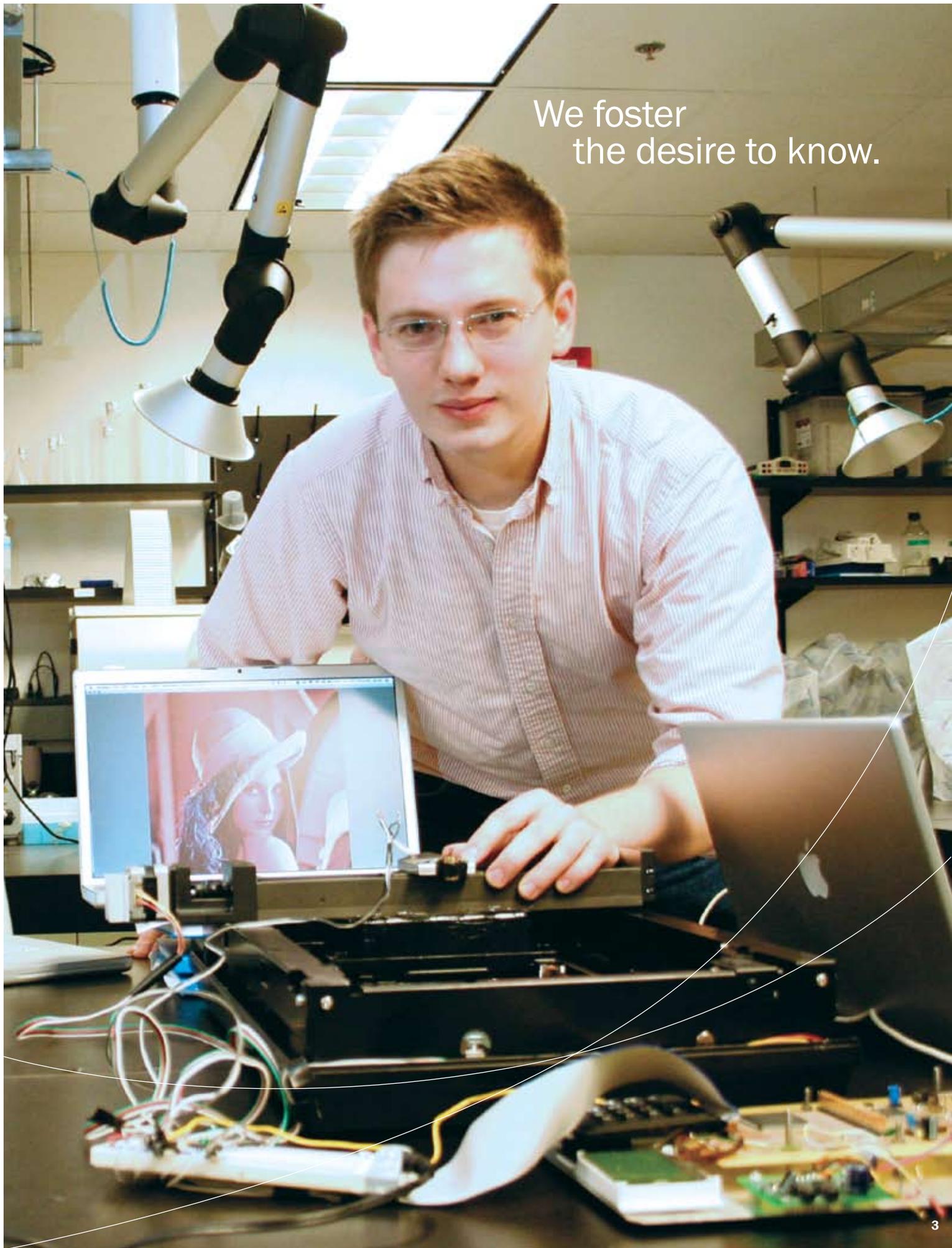
These activities are pursued not only to develop and share our knowledge base, but also to:

- Provide the highest quality education and learning environments informed and enriched through research;
- Enhance quality of life through the creation and application of knowledge;
- Generate the theoretical background and empirical data with which informed programs, policies and procedures can be developed and societal goals realized; and
- Support individual and societal development.

Education, research, scholarship and creative activities begin with the desire to know and the willingness to learn, and, as a University, we want to foster these qualities. We acknowledge the complementary relationship between disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs of research and teaching; both of which must be outstanding in order to be mutually beneficial.

It is essential to the integrity of *Academic Foundations* that our students, faculty and staff are engaged in any future revisions of the document. If they are to be applied, the values and principles herein must be meaningful to our University community as a whole.

We foster
the desire to know.



FOUNDATION FOR PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Academic Foundations is meant to be a touchstone or foundational document for our University’s broader planning framework and decision-making processes. Our efforts, our allocation of resources of various kinds, the work of our administrative and support units, our communication strategies, our fundraising objectives and our government relations will be aligned at all levels of the institution to our values and principles.

More specifically, *Academic Foundations* is the base for the University of Calgary’s four-year *Business Plan*, its *Strategic Research Plan*, its *Institutional Learning Plan* and other related plans, all of which draw some of their content from the research and business plans that are prepared annually by faculties and other units of the University. *Academic Foundations* is not intended to be the University of Calgary’s institutional business plan or its action plan in support of institutional priorities. Rather, as its name implies, it is the foundation of these plans.



The *Strategic Research Plan* is reviewed annually, and describes in some detail the research areas of strategic priority for the University. Among other purposes, it serves to inform the provincial and federal governments of these areas of priority. Major revisions to the *Strategic Research Plan* will occur in consultation with the University community, similar to the consultation for *Academic Foundations*.

The *Business Plan*, which is updated annually and covers a four-year planning period, together with the *Annual Report*, serves as our reports to the provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology. These documents are aligned with our mandate from the provincial government and with local, provincial, national and international issues. Academic planning, that is, curricular planning, is undertaken in the *Business Plan*, the *Institutional Learning Plan* and the *Institutional Access Plan*, and may be strategically addressed in other documents.

In this way, the *Institutional Access Plan*, the *Institutional Learning Plan*, the *Business Plan*, the *Strategic Research Plan*, the *Campus Master Plan*, the *Sustainability Plan* and other related plans serve as the basis for institution-wide planning and accountability, describing the specific activities that will be implemented to address goals and objectives, how those objectives will be measured and the expected outcomes.

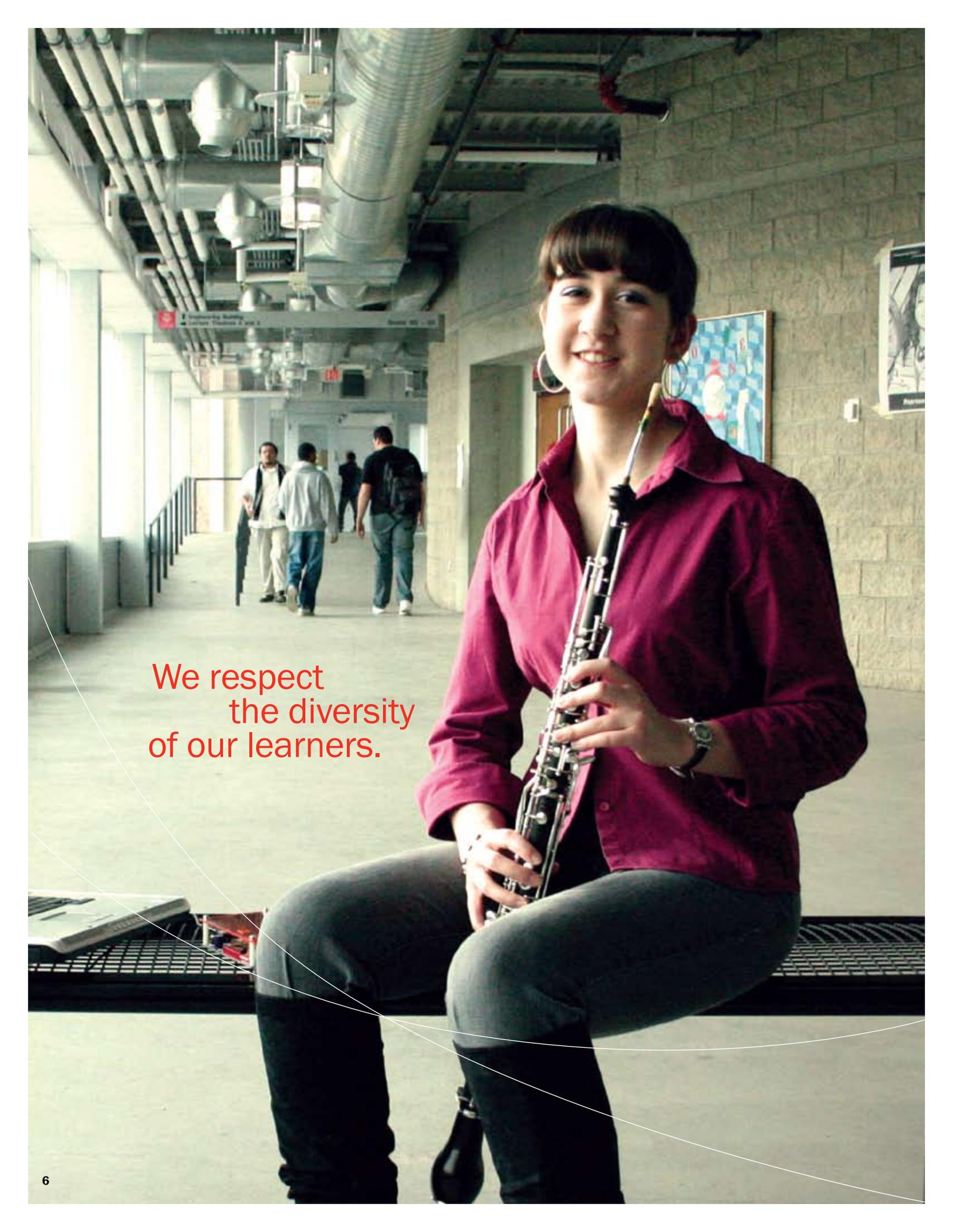
As a guiding document, *Academic Foundations* and its academic principles will also be applied in the following ways, among others:

- Reviewing all policies and structures, old and new, to ensure alignment with *Academic Foundations* (for example, policies and structures that encourage, rather than act as a barrier to, the academic principles);
- Creating new policies and structures to ensure *Academic Foundations* is supported (for example, a framework for interdisciplinary educational programs, both undergraduate and graduate, and appointments for interdisciplinary staff and faculty members);
- Developing key performance indicators and outcome-linked measures to support business planning and reporting in alignment with *Academic Foundations*;
- Developing and aligning rewards and recognition with *Academic Foundations*;
- Directing budget and resource allocations in alignment with *Academic Foundations*; and
- Applying values and academic principles in the setting of priorities and in decision making.

Reporting to the internal University community, and to external communities other than governments, is equally important. Established reporting occasions for these purposes are already in place, for example, the President's reports to community (internal and external), but we shall also identify other opportunities to communicate progress on the priorities of the University.

An essential aspect of planning and accountability is a regular reassessment of the values and principles in *Academic Foundations*: Are they still relevant and useful? If not, the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), in consultation with senior leadership and relevant governing bodies, will determine the extent of the needed changes and the involvement of the University community

The U of C is a young and innovative university,
one that has grown quickly from a few pioneering faculty
to its present status as a thriving research university
in the top tier in Canada.



We respect
the diversity
of our learners.

VALUES AND ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES

VALUES

In all that we do, the University of Calgary is committed to the values of integrity and respect that underlie the following academic principles. The entire University community—students, faculty, staff and volunteers—has a role to play in realizing and honouring these values.

Integrity is an intrinsic aspect of our actions and requires commitment to the highest standards of honesty and ethical behaviour. We will demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of the individual, regardless of his or her role within our University or the larger community. We will also demonstrate respect, in a broader sense, for the communities in which we are situated.

ACADEMIC PRINCIPLES

At the heart of this document are the academic principles that guide our activities, govern our priorities, and influence our strategic allocation of resources. These principles are enduring, since they are basic to our mission and to our key purposes. They are inextricably interconnected: each will influence the outcomes of the others. They are, additionally, all supported by our adherence to the fundamental tenet of academic freedom.

OUR PRINCIPLES ARE THE FOLLOWING:

STUDENT SUCCESS

A fundamental role of the University of Calgary is to educate our students to appreciate the complexities of the natural and human worlds in which they live and to prepare them to engage actively, thoughtfully and productively both in their careers and as citizens of their communities. For example, the option of internationalizing educational experiences through study abroad will enhance our students' adaptability, independence, cultural awareness and communication skills. We will engage our students in learning how to learn, challenging previously unquestioned assumptions, acquiring new skills and integrating new knowledge into an interpretive framework to help them evaluate information.

Recruiting high-caliber students and providing them with excellent and fulfilling academic experiences is essential to our broad mission and to our success as a University in delivering our mandate. The programs and experiences we offer must meet the highest standards of excellence. They must also meet society's need for graduates in many areas, and be meaningful and appropriate to the needs, aspirations and futures of our undergraduate and graduate students.

There are at least two facets of student engagement that lead to student success. The first of these is the time and effort students commit to academically purposeful activities, a critical component of which is the quality of classroom instruction. The second is the means by which the institution supports students in those activities. Student success is a result of institutional conditions and practices, such as experiential learning, that foster student engagement. When students are engaged in the learning process, they experience greater academic success and graduate in a timely fashion.

We acknowledge and respect the rich diversity of our learners, their communities, cultures and traditions, and aspirations and abilities. In particular, we acknowledge these unique dimensions in our engagement with Aboriginal learners and their communities.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

The University of Calgary is a resilient, responsive and adaptable institution built on a strong foundation of partnerships, coalitions and networks that operate in common purpose to create a fully participating learning society. We are committed to innovative research, scholarship and creative activity in all of their forms. Discovery, integration, application and teaching are the basis of our engaged scholarship and the heart of our comprehensive academic and research institution.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY CONTINUED

To assess excellence, we will evaluate our teaching, research, scholarship and creative activity against international standards. Peer review is an essential aspect of such assessment. We will learn from and adopt processes from our national and international peers.

Our University encourages and supports excellence in both basic and applied research, and excellence in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research. We understand that applied and interdisciplinary programs depend on solid disciplinary and interdisciplinary foundations, and we will support applied and interdisciplinary research where it rests on such foundations.

We will demonstrate high-quality teaching through the integration of education and research in the classroom. We will practise evidence-based teaching and apply best practices from research in the student experience. We are committed to the assessment of our teaching, and in particular the associated learning outcomes, according to the same standards of academic rigour that are applied to the assessment of our research.

As innovators, we will use information in creative ways to discover and implement solutions to society's complex problems. We will apply our discoveries and facilitate commercialization.

Our University will strive to be an example to the broader community, and use the insights such a role generates to enhance our contribution to research, teaching and outreach to the community.

INTERDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

“Interdisciplinary” education and research integrate two or more distinct fields of study or academic disciplines in pursuit of common goals. Interdisciplinary inquiry is often focused on complex issues, and although the University of Calgary appreciates the continuing importance of disciplinary inquiry, many major issues require interdisciplinary inquiry for their full understanding and resolution.

Any one of these major issues will be characterized by gaps in our knowledge that prevent a complete understanding of the issue and the identification of solutions to associated problems. Appropriately engaged scholarship¹ defines our task as designing a research program that addresses the knowledge gaps in a comprehensive fashion. In this way, researchers and scholars will collaborate, inquire, investigate, challenge and apply knowledge to solve pressing local and global concerns. In addition, we encourage the discovery of new questions, not necessarily related to issues as identified at present, and we support the development of interdisciplinary projects arising from those questions.



We support and promote interdisciplinary education and research at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. At the undergraduate level, this should result in flexible programmatic offerings, such as the ability to earn combined degrees. Across undergraduate and graduate curriculum, this should strengthen and facilitate programs that cross disciplinary structures and integrate interdisciplinary research. At the graduate level, in particular, it should result in multi-departmental and multi-faculty cooperation and collaboration, as well as the enhancement of current interdisciplinary programs.

1 “Generally, engaged scholarship: draws on many sources of distributed knowledge; is based on partnerships; is shaped by multiple perspectives and expectations, deals with difficult and evolving questions—complex issues that may shift constantly; is long term, both effort and impact, often with episodic bursts of progress; crosses disciplinary lines—a challenge for institutions organized around disciplines” (Holland, 2005a, in Gibson, 2006, para. 7).



We encourage
excellence
in research.

We graduate
our future leaders.



RETURN TO COMMUNITY

The graduates of the University of Calgary are our future citizens and leaders at international, national, provincial and local levels. The University of Calgary embraces its role of graduating highly-qualified, critically-aware and creative alumni who contribute to the growth and vibrancy of their communities.

The knowledge, discoveries, innovations and creative activities resulting from our alumni, and our students, faculty and staff, are broadly communicated and publicly available. The city and the citizens of Calgary are highly invested in the University of Calgary and, in return, we enrich the community through the application of research, learning partnerships and cultural activities.

As a publicly-assisted institution, we will be accountable for our performance with respect to our goals, which means that it is our responsibility to provide information to all stakeholders to allow an informed evaluation of our performance. We are committed to the determination of measurable outcomes and reporting on the results of those measures.

The University of Calgary contributes to the development of an increasingly inter-connected and interdependent society in the most innovative and effective ways possible, often in partnership with other institutions and corporate entities (public, private and non-profit). As a public University, we welcome our service role as we respond to and address societal needs. We must be mindful of the diverse needs of our society when articulating our role, developing and delivering our programs, designing and conducting our research, communicating our work and otherwise interacting with our communities, whether our communities are local, provincial, national or international in scope.

When we speak of return to community, we are referring to our contribution to society at large through means such as knowledge transfer, the application of technology and the facilitation of commercialization. We are also referring to how the broader concept of engaged scholarship influences and guides our relationships, that is, how our University engages with and contributes to society through research, teaching and service.

As part of our responsibility to community and as a signatory to the Talloires Declaration, the University of Calgary affirms sustainability, that is, development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

Our values and academic principles will guide the development of our academic priorities and, thereby, influence all aspects of educational, research and creative activity in our institution. Through this influence, and with yearly planning, monitoring and evaluating, we will strive to achieve a balance of priorities.

We support and nurture continued quests for excellence in all areas of scholarly endeavour, whether they are basic or applied, in keeping with our principle of excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity. In addition to this emphasis on excellence, we shall identify a small number of areas of strategic academic priority that will be elaborated upon in the strategic research plan and the business plan. These areas of priority will be nurtured through the preferential allocation and alignment of the resources available to us.

THE DISCIPLINES AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

While the University has been traditionally built on disciplines, and the disciplinary academic programs and research form the core of the institution, we acknowledge that interdisciplinary scholarship and education have become foundational to the academy. We need the disciplines and interdisciplinarity to flourish.

We know that the effectiveness of our priorities depends on a broad base of learning and research that must be adequately supported. We acknowledge that the disciplines are not confined to departments and faculties, and some, by their nature or history, are interdisciplinary in their inquiry or teaching.

Interdisciplinary, or cross-sectoral, academic priorities are only as successful as the comprehensive research-based programs that undergird them. In concert with the support of interdisciplinary inquiry and research, we also acknowledge the fundamental importance of disciplinary and interdisciplinary traditions to our principles of student success, excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity, and return to community.

The University supports strong faculty and unit-specific priorities, and looks for interdisciplinary opportunities that emerge at the intersections of disciplinary strengths. As these opportunities are identified, they will be assessed and some will be selected as University-level academic priorities.

Strategic academic priorities will be designated within the institution to receive additional attention and allocations in some years. These strategic initiatives will be chosen, generally, by the criteria in the next section, and are not confined to structures or disciplines.

CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF AREAS OF STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PRIORITY

The University will support a small number of strategic academic priorities at any given time. The criteria for selecting these strategic academic priorities are cumulative, not mutually exclusive. To be considered a University-level strategic academic priority, the initiative will be evaluated with respect to the following criteria:

- One or more of the University of Calgary's academic principles are strongly advanced by the initiative;
- Activity in the area has significant existing excellence, as demonstrated by peer review at the national or international levels;
- The area already benefits from, or is expected to receive, significant support, financial and otherwise, from external sponsors and organizations;
- The area reflects larger community responsibilities, which may be local, provincial, national or international;
- The area is one in which the University of Calgary has or ought to have a comparative and competitive advantage over other universities; and
- The University of Calgary has the potential to take a major step forward in achieving nationally and internationally-recognized quality and innovation in the area as a result of investments and alliances.

Strategic academic priorities may be disciplinary or interdisciplinary in origin and extent, and they are not limited to traditional administrative structures, such as faculties, departments, centres or institutes. Rather, they are supported administratively while being woven throughout the fabric of the University, and they invite contributions from an array of units, disciplines, methodologies and approaches. University-level strategic academic priorities will, without exception, involve both an education and research mandate.²

These criteria will be applied in concert with our values to ensure that our academic principles both inform the future development and review of programs at the University of Calgary and guide our thinking about the organizational structures that support and enable those programs. They will be used to identify, as a critical element in our recruitment and retention plans for all categories of staff, the need for a close fit between the principles we have adopted and the faculty and staff who work here. The process for applying these criteria will include consultation through collegial governance bodies.

CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

The University of Calgary is a large and diverse organization, a collection of many academic units, each of which has its own strengths and orientation, and some of which have accreditation requirements for their graduates. In all academic areas, both those with accreditation requirements and those without, teaching quality must be maintained and strengthened if we are to excel.

All academic units will continue to pursue excellence in their programs. They will continue to establish their priorities in relation to their aspirations and areas of excellence, and in alignment with Academic Foundations. Units can contribute to the definitions of emergent University-level strategic priorities, usually by their own academic planning and any of the resultant priorities that develop to this higher level.

At the same time, units will be encouraged to find opportunities to contribute to the University-level strategic academic priorities which will be defined in ways that make them amenable to interdisciplinary inquiry and curriculum. Such contributions could take many forms, including:

- Aiming for policies and structures that encourage, rather than act as barriers to, the realization of University-level priorities;
- Conceiving and proposing joint appointments for regular positions or for research chairs;
- Establishing or strengthening interdisciplinary research or teaching teams;
- Redesigning curricula and credentials to support interdisciplinary activities;
- Creating innovative programs that enable interdisciplinary instruction in problem-solving settings; and
- Engaging new partnerships in the pursuit of research or teaching programs.

² See Appendix B for examples of current (i.e., 2009) University-level strategic academic priorities.

CONCLUSION

Faculties, business units and administration will refer to *Academic Foundations* throughout the planning and accountability cycle of the University of Calgary. It will be a guide for educational and research development and planning, and for identifying and contributing to areas of priority for our University, among other decision-making and planning processes.

We have outlined herein the values and academic principles that will guide the University of Calgary and we shall adjust our course, if necessary. We shall also annually assess our progress in implementing our plans based upon these principles. We shall celebrate our successes internally to our University community, and we shall communicate our achievements externally to government and members of the public at large.

We are committed to the values of integrity and respect, and four foundational academic principles:

Student success;

Excellence in research, scholarship and creative activity;

Interdisciplinary education and research; and

Return to community.

These are the fundamental aspects of the University of Calgary as we advance excellence in our University through means such as enhancing the student experience and increasing the quality of educational and research programs. These principles describe our University as we explore and discover knowledge, and identify societal problems that require innovative interdisciplinary approaches for their resolution. The issues that society cares about are the same issues that interest and motivate students, and the same issues that drive research, scholarship and creative activity. The results of our University striving to meet our first three principles are, ultimately, our return to community.



We address
societal needs.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MANDATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

(Approved March 24, 1994 by the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology, Government of Alberta: currently under review. Found at: <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/college/Mandates/>)

The University of Calgary is a board-governed, comprehensive research university, offering degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels in education, engineering, fine arts, health sciences, humanities, law, management, physical and social sciences to students from Calgary, Alberta, Canada and the world. Within Alberta, it offers unique undergraduate and graduate programs in communication studies, social work, surveying engineering and graduate programs in environmental design.

Its faculty and students engage in research within and across the major disciplines comprising the program areas, and provide research expertise and services to the community and to national and international organizations.

The university is a partner in the social and cultural development of the province. It delivers a wide range of credit and non-credit courses and professional development programs to individuals and organizations directly, through the technologies of distance education, and, increasingly, through co-operative education programs.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF UNIVERSITY-LEVEL STRATEGIC ACADEMIC PRIORITIES AT JUNE 2009

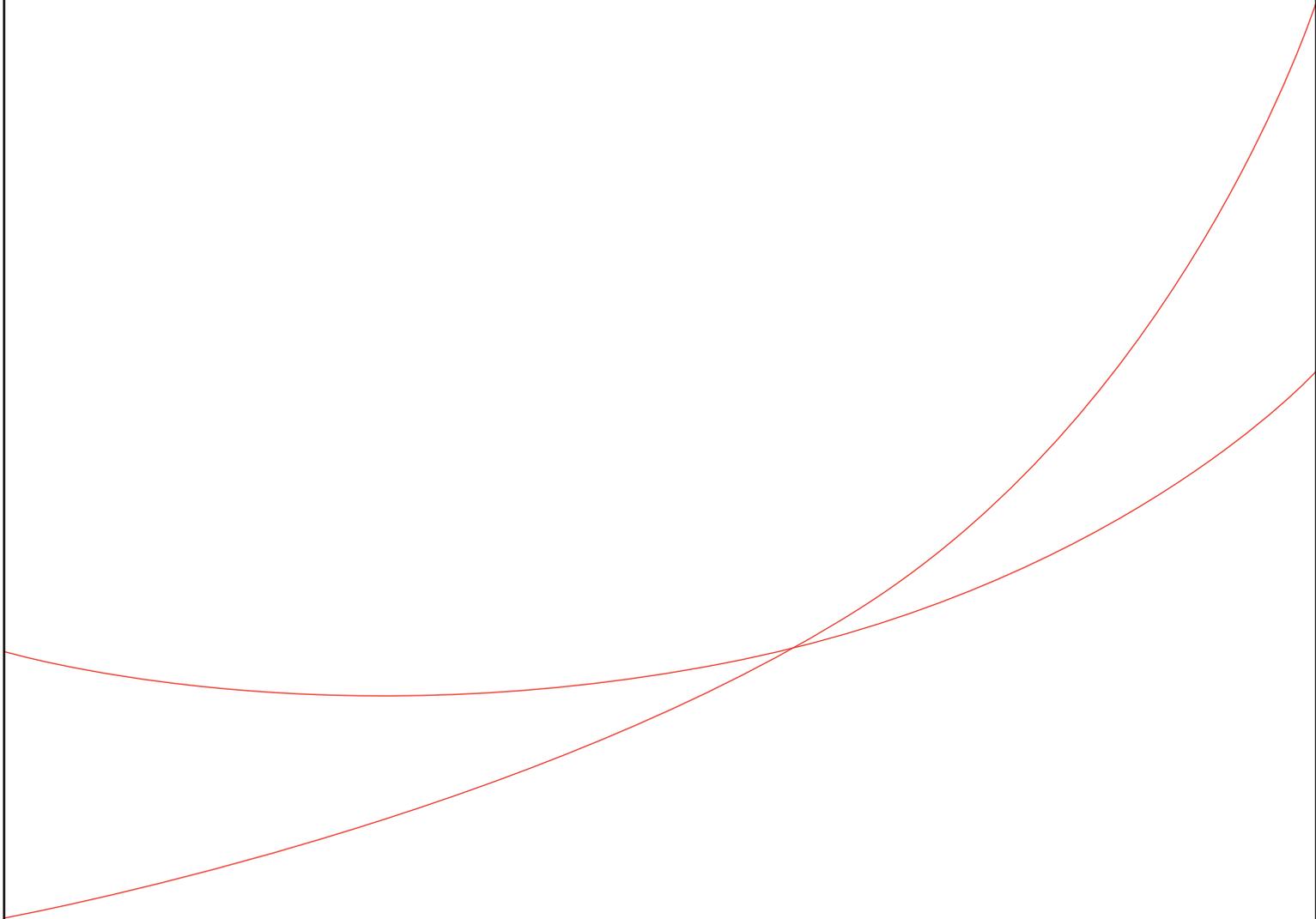
The University of Calgary has made significant progress in its work in biomedical engineering and, as a strategic academic priority that is supported centrally, will establish a national centre for innovation in biomedical engineering. This centre will promote interdisciplinary research and education by providing researchers and private sector experts with the opportunity to jointly address pressing health care issues. Priority areas of the centre will include bone and joint health, cardio-respiratory health, the brain, medical devices, enhanced imaging technologies and robotics.

Another example of a supported strategic academic priority is the Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy (ISEEE). ISEEE affords opportunities for disciplines and institutions to collaborate within the University of Calgary to find sustainable solutions for issues in energy, environment and the economy. To date, ISEEE has developed a strong interdisciplinary and multiinstitutional program through its Carbon Management Canada initiative and research in carbon capture and storage. ISEEE has also developed an interdisciplinary graduate program in Energy and Environmental Systems.

A final example of a supported strategic academic priority is the School of Public Policy, an international centre of expertise in policy studies, including government, defence, health, economics, and energy and the environment. The pan-university centre will focus much of its work on bringing policy experts together from all levels of government to study with faculty, colleagues and visiting scholars. They will engage in policy-related discussions to find novel approaches and solutions to social and economic issues.



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



ucalgary.ca/about/academicfoundations