



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Start
something.

Community Plan

Ahead of
Tomorrow

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY'S 2023-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN 

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

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

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

This draft Community Plan addresses the community strategy in *Ahead of Tomorrow* as well as general matters outlined in the strategy's mission and values. Activities and initiatives in this Community Plan are integrated with approaches described in the Academic Plan, the Research and Innovation Plan, and Operations Plan.

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



Introduction

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

The University of Calgary's Community Plan is a dynamic blueprint that places the community at the centre of our endeavours. With a profound connection to our place on Treaty 7 lands, the vibrant City of Calgary, the diverse country of Canada, and the ever-evolving global stage, we commit to navigating shared concerns and seizing shared opportunities. We aim to exceed tomorrow's expectations by leveraging our entrepreneurial spirit, fostering a culture of inclusivity, and supporting prosperity for all.

We are dedicated to fostering stronger community ties, engaging our alumni, partners, and community members in the life of the University, and ensuring greater access to the innovative thinking, teaching, learning and research that makes UCalgary a great research University. We partner with our many communities, supporters, and donors to ensure that the work we do is relevant to the needs of society. We are committed to enriching our communities by leveraging our resources, our people, and our innovative spirit and to ensuring that our communities truly understand and benefit from the innovative thinking and research that happens here.

Together, we are starting something extraordinary.

Community Ahead of Tomorrow: goals and objectives

As established by *Ahead of Tomorrow*, the goal of the University of Calgary is to enhance community relevance, and we will do this by locating community at the centre of all we do.

The University's community engagement is largely centered on our external communities with primary focus in Calgary, in Alberta and across Canada*. Community engagement activities include but are not limited to:

- Community engaged teaching and learning;
- Community engaged research and scholarship;
- Relationships and partnerships with alumni, with community members and organizations and with industry;
- Fundraising and philanthropy; and
- Communications.

We engage our communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a spirit of partnership and reciprocity.

To reach our goal of enhanced community relevance that is consistent with our mission and values, **three objectives have been set for 2030:**

- A. Become #1 University, U15, in community engagement.
- B. 25,000 students, faculty and staff annually contribute to community challenges.
- C. Engage 100,000 alumni, donors, and community members on an annual basis.

As committed to in *Ahead of Tomorrow*, we will ensure community is included by design throughout the process.

(*Note: the important work of engaging student and campus communities is covered in the Academic Plan)

MEASURING PROGRESS

Progress towards objectives will be measured in the following ways:

A. Community Engagement in U15:

- The U15, an association of leading Canadian research universities, will serve as our benchmark for measurement.
- While no common metric exists for community engagement across the U15, we propose a proxy comparative metric in the short-term, while we engage and develop a robust comparative metric.

B. Annual Contribution to Community Challenges:

- Contribution data (in aggregate) will include student, faculty, and staff participation in:
 - » Work integrated learning;
 - » Community-based research;
 - » Capstone projects with community partners;
 - » Co-curricular experiences involving community projects;
 - » Volunteering (i.e., board participation, etc.); and
 - » New and emerging initiatives associated with the increased integration of research experience, creative scholarship, and entrepreneurial thinking more broadly into curricular and extracurricular programming, etc.
 - » Additionally, as new “community challenge” activities emerge, participation will be tracked and added to this dataset.

C. Annual Engagement:

- Engagement data is currently captured by the Office of Advancement in Blackbaud CRM (“BBCRM”), a constituent relationship management solution.
- Currently, we consider a community member to be “engaged” if, in the last year, they have:
 - » participated in or attended an event;
 - » made a donation to the University;
 - » volunteered on campus;
 - » have been profiled in a UCalgary publication;
 - » have been honoured with a UCalgary award;
 - » have reached out to update their address and contact information; or
 - » had a documented significant interaction with a UCalgary staff member.
- We will refine this definition of “engagement” as necessary and improve clarity and comprehensiveness with the addition of participation in other engagement activities across the University.
- Additionally, as new engagement activities emerge, participation will be tracked and added to this dataset.

ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

To achieve these objectives and our overarching goal of enhancing community relevance, the following activities and initiatives have been identified for the Community Plan (2024–2027). Final initiatives and activities will be confirmed during consultation and the scale and scope of deliverables for final activities specified will be determined by resourcing available over this period.

Domain #1: Expand Meaningful Community Engagement

With over 35,000 students, 5,000 faculty and staff and more than 220,000 alumni, the University of Calgary is a large and complex community. At the same time, Calgary is flourishing as an increasingly diverse city, with the possibility of playing an increasingly vital role as a solution provider on the national and international stage. The University of Calgary has the opportunity to harness this untapped potential, adapting to the evolving landscape, and catering to the growing desire for community connection. While the University has invested in strengthening community engagement in recent years, there remains tremendous opportunity to further collaborate, fostering economic and social prosperity for the city, the province, the country, and our world.

Key Initiatives:

- 1.1** Encourage students, postdocs, faculty, staff to put community at the heart of what they do.

Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C

Recognizing and rewarding community-focused work fosters a collaborative, outward-looking, more connected university.

- a. Foster an environment that promotes academics to engage in community-focused work.
- b. Embed community-engaged learning in academic programs.
- c. Create University-wide tracking system and repository to gather and manage community-driven requests and issues that can then inform community-engaged learning and research.
- d. Increase supports for exploring community engagement in curriculum review and curriculum action plans.
See also: Academic Plan, section 3
- e. Develop a community engagement team with the mandate to support the development of and implementation of community projects with students-as-partners.
- f. Launch new graduate programs in transdisciplinary scholarship with significant and meaningful community engagement components. *See also: Academic Plan, section 2*
- g. Expand credits and scholarships available for community-engaged work.
- h. Review and assess existing possibilities for community-focused work.

Note: Community-engaged research and scholarship and community-engaged teaching and learning are foundational aspects of our community engagement work, involving a great many researchers and academics across the University. For more information on these essential aspects of our community engagement see the Research and Academic Plans.

- 1.2** Create position of Associate Dean (Community). *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Enhance engagement capacity through an academic leader that serves as a connection point for—and bridges to—the broader community.

- a. Work with stakeholders across the university and community partners to develop framework and mandate for the Associate Dean (Community) role.
- b. Integrate institutional processes, practices and working model with new role to optimize impact.

- 1.3** Seed and nourish local and global partnerships with community and industry. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C*

Foster entrepreneurial thinking, generate economic activity, and create opportunities for learning and knowledge exchange.

- a. Complete roll-out of Office of Partnerships to optimize connection and shepherd industry and community partnerships with institutional stakeholders.
- b. Build relationship management tools, frameworks and processes, including:
 - i. Governance bodies
 - ii. Legal frameworks
 - iii. Partnership tracking systems
 - iv. Marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Office of Partnerships
- c. Working with partners, support the growth of the University’s innovation ecosystem.
See also: Research Plan, sections 1, 2, 5; academic Plan, section 2
- d. Prioritize partnerships that deliver transformational impact for the University and our communities.
See also: Research Plan, sections 1, 2, 5; Academic Plan, section 2

1.4 Broaden alumni, donor, and community engagement. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C*

Efficient and scalable community programming that engages with the teaching, learning and research of the University supports a truly excellent student experience.

- a. Dramatically expand life-long learning opportunities for our communities. *See also: Academic Plan, section 3*
- b. Scale up alumni volunteering/mentoring to create opportunities for all students to benefit from community support and guidance.
- c. Expand research volunteer and Citizen Science activities so that alumni and community members can participate in and advance the research endeavors of the University.
- d. Expand use of digital engagement tools to facilitate meaningful, cost-effective engagement and support.

1.5 Provide a broader array of programming to increase engagement with Calgary’s diverse communities, both long-standing and emerging. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C*

Enhanced engagement amplifies the university’s role as a convenor and fosters opportunity, understanding and meaningful partnership.

- a. Collaborate with campus partners to engage Indigenous alumni and communities, along with the broader community, in support of ii’taa’poh’to’p. *See also: Research Plan, sections 1, 2, 5; Academic Plan, section 4*
- b. Expand existing work with diverse alumni and other communities in support of the University’s EDIA strategy.
See also: Research Plan, sections 1, 2, 5; Academic Plan, section 4

1.6 Activate key alumni, senators, leadership volunteers, and influencers—past and present—in a peer-to-peer engagement model to collect information and act as advocates and ambassadors. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C*

Mobilizing past and present university champions amplifies the university’s voice, ensuring its initiatives, goals, and successes are effectively communicated within and beyond the Calgary community.

1.7 Support community engagement and participation in the University’s planned Grand Challenge/Moonshot project to tackle one of society’s biggest challenges. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C; see also: Research Plan, section 2*

Engaging the broader Calgary community on pressing issues strengthens efforts and promotes collective action.

Domain #2: Increase Awareness, Understanding and Reputation in Our Communities

The University of Calgary's impressive journey showcases remarkable growth and a thriving entrepreneurial spirit. In less than 60 years, our dedicated students, faculty, staff, and community have come together to build a bold and innovative university. UCalgary has made significant strides in foundational commitments, research, student experience, and community contribution, pushing the boundaries of capability and quality. Although the depth, breadth, and impact of these changes are not yet fully recognized in Calgary or across the country, we are committed to sharing our story and celebrating the University of Calgary's outstanding accomplishments. Strengthening awareness, understanding, and reputation is thus vital for the University of Calgary to amplify our exceptional contributions, solidify our standing among leading Canadian institutions, and to foster continued community support and engagement. We invite our community members to be part of this exciting narrative—together, we can ensure that the University of Calgary's contributions are recognized and celebrated, both locally and nationally.

Key Initiatives:

2.1 Strengthen the University's reputation as a thought-leader and problem solver in key areas of focus.

Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C

Strengthening our reputation helps attract top-tier talent, partnerships that enrich the student experience, world-leading scholars—and increases the perceived value of a UCalgary credential.

- a. Implement an integrated program of flagship communications and events to drive reputation with key audiences.
- b. Build a framework to support events and programs run by campus-partners to encourage the incorporation of reputational strategies and goals.
- c. Implement an off-campus communications and engagement strategy that features university leaders, researchers, and students.
- d. Expand media relations activities.

2.2 Implement an integrated content strategy. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Adopting an integrated content strategy ensures we get the most out of all university channels, providing consistent and cohesive messaging across platforms.

- a. Develop and implement an integrated audience strategy for donor and alumni communications programs.
- b. Refresh University-wide key messages, stories, and narratives on a regular basis to guide our reputational programming.
- c. Advertise to global academics to increase share of mind for the University of Calgary.
- d. Coordinate and leverage communications work across campus to ensure narratives are presented consistently.

2.3 Scale and optimize advertising spend to strengthen perception of UCalgary's reputation as a leading entrepreneurial research university. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

A well-defined brand serves as a point of differentiation that supports recruitment, marketing, engagement, and philanthropic efforts—in turn improving the experience of students, postdocs, faculty and staff.

- a. Scale up regional and national brand advertising via Start Something campaign.
- b. Centralize advertising booking to increase effectiveness and efficiency.
- c. Raise awareness of UCalgary accomplishments to enhance University performance in key rankings.

2.4 Enhance brand recognition and coherence. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Reinforcing our brand across university programs, services and facilities helps our community be aware of when they are engaging with their University.

- a. Strengthen presence of University of Calgary brand across facilities, programs and community services.
- b. Strengthen presence of—and connection to—University of Calgary core brand among units and institutions of the University.

Domain #3: Increase Influence and Investment with Our Communities

Our historic success in fundraising has been a differentiator for UCalgary. As awareness and understanding expands, we envision even greater interest in investing in UCalgary, empowering our ability to pioneer innovative initiatives, fortify community ties, and further propel reputation. We recognize the immense opportunity ahead of us, as well as the need to adapt to emerging trends. As we move forward, it is crucial that we honor and strengthen existing relationships, acknowledging the vital role they play in our success. At the same time, our city is becoming increasingly diverse with new industries and communities of influence emerging, opening the door to new opportunities both in Calgary and beyond.

Key Initiatives:

3.1 Embed our philanthropic mindset deeper in the organization. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Celebrating the support of our community and embedding philanthropy more deeply in the mission of the university enables us to leverage university expertise more effectively and reach key philanthropic goals—funding student supports and life-changing research.

- a. Draw on university planning and goals to create clear philanthropic goals.
- b. Expand capacity for transdisciplinary fundraising.
- c. Invest in philanthropy training and coaching for academic leaders and other institutional partners.
- d. Create an Advancement Council that serves as an integrated team that aligns Advancement work and priorities across campus.
- e. Engage senior volunteers in our philanthropic endeavors.

3.2 Work to identify opportunities for community to financially support key programs emerging from *Ahead of Tomorrow* (e.g. First in Family, UCEED). *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Invite leaders, foundations, businesses, alumni and other partners to play a pivotal role in shaping the university's future trajectory.

- a. In collaboration with stakeholders, develop philanthropic and engagement priorities that aligns with the University's strategic goals.
- b. Fundraise to support *Ahead of Tomorrow*.

3.3 Foster growing support from our existing donors to achieve our philanthropic goals; identify and engage new supporters to accelerate transformative philanthropy. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.C*

Working with our community and helping the University of Calgary be the vehicle through which our generous community reaches its philanthropic ambitions.

- a. Steward existing philanthropic gifts and relationships to continuously build trust and future opportunities among our existing donors.
- b. Expand engagement with foundations and next generation philanthropists.
- c. Increase influence and philanthropic investment from Calgary's diverse and emerging communities.

3.4 Expand our family of alumni and community donors. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

Build the donor base, amplify the sense of collective ownership of the university and establish a foundation for future philanthropic success.

- a. Expand Donor/Alumni Experience Officer program to increase leadership and alumni giving.
- b. Partner with peer-peer alumni and community networks in support of joint community/University fundraising initiatives.

3.5 Enhance and expand donor engagement activities. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.C*

Ensure that our benefactors know they are valued, ensure they are connected, support meaningful long-term relationships built on trust and shared aspirations.

- a. Enhance and evolve existing donor relation activities to ensure mindful stewardship.
- b. Expand our use of digital stewardship and multi-media to retain and deepen our relationships with donors.
- c. Ensure effective gift implementation across the University.

3.6 Build a network of influencers, donors, and supporters beyond Calgary. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.C*

Open doors to new resources, collaborations, and opportunities, fueling UCalgary's growth and innovation.

- a. Identify and prioritize key strategic markets: Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, New York.
 - i. Engage key prospects and donors in identified strategic regions to expand our philanthropic reach.
 - ii. Engage key influencers and community members in identified regions to drive engagement and reputation.

Domain #4: Evolve and Strengthen Foundations to Maximize Effectiveness in Our Communities

Strengthening our foundations ensures operational excellence so that we can build on a solid and sustainable base to maximize the University's contributions to our community. By continuously evolving, we can adapt to changing needs and aspirations, ensuring our initiatives remain relevant and impactful.

Key Initiatives:

4.1 Develop a System of Record for all engagement information at UCalgary to increase visibility and support opportunities for collaboration. *Ahead of Tomorrow 3.A, 3.B, 3.C*

By providing a holistic view of engagement efforts, faculty and staff can identify gaps, trends, and opportunities, supporting efficient allocation and peer-to-peer collaboration.

- a. Identification of data sets, compatibility of systems to connect and/or ability to draw data from systems to collate information.
- b. Assess privacy and information sharing.
- c. Evolve best practices and governance for data identification, collection, and use.

See Operational Plan for additional information on critical initiatives related to people, process improvements and shared services.

TIMELINE AND PROCESS

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



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

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

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



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

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