



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Start
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Operations 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 Operations Plan addresses the operations strategy in *Ahead of Tomorrow*. Activities and initiatives in this Operations Plan are integrated with approaches described in the Academic Plan, Research and Innovation Plan, and Community Plan.

As with all University activity, the Operations 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.

University operations, in turn, exist to support that mission by creating, running and sustaining best-in-class processes and services that enable students, postdocs, faculty and staff to reach their goals and achieve their ambitions.

Operations *Ahead of Tomorrow*

As established by *Ahead of Tomorrow*, a goal of the University of Calgary is to make it simpler and faster to set ideas in motion here than at any other University.

We will do this through supporting our students, postdocs, faculty and staff—and by making our processes clearer, simpler, and better. In doing so, we will support an entrepreneurial university with effective, efficient, and user-centric processes and services.

Three objectives have been set for 2030 in *Ahead of Tomorrow*:

- A. #1 in U15, ease, speed, and availability of services and supports.
- B. #1 in U15, in investment in professional development for postdocs, faculty and staff.
- C. 90% of students, postdocs, faculty, and staff agree they have the tools and services necessary to manage their education or accomplish tasks.

As committed to in *Ahead of Tomorrow*, we will choose nimble, lightweight processes. Our services and supports will find ways to address needs—quickly. We will have clear processes, information and explanations for decisions. What we prioritize and how we approach our work will be informed by the needs of our campus community, by best practice, and by governance requirements. We will equip and invest in our operational teams and address problems in a systematic way, aiming to be excellent and continuously improve.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Progress towards objectives will be measured in the following ways:

- A. Ease, speed, and availability of services
 - Work with the U15 to explore development of common reporting.
 - Employee engagement survey.
- B. Investment in professional development
 - Professional development investment for postdocs, faculty and staff.
 - Work with the U15, and faculties and units on common reporting for professional development.
 - Employee engagement survey.

C. Tools and services necessary to manage education or accomplish tasks

- Regular collection of feedback from students, postdocs, faculty and staff will be used to measure the effectiveness of our tools and services.
- Employee engagement survey.

Baselines for all measurements will be established in 2024/25.

ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

Domain #1: Investing in people

As a university, we believe strongly in the power of education to empower individuals and improve outcomes. For postdocs, faculty and staff, professional development is a pathway to personal excellence and increased satisfaction. For the University as a whole, it provides the tools to deliver a best-in-class experience, tackle tomorrow's challenges and thrive in a changing world.

Our ambition is to be the leader among Canadian universities in providing professional growth opportunities. By prioritizing professional development, we aim to strengthen our position as an employer of choice and foster a culture marked by innovation, collaboration and adaptability.

Key Initiatives:

1.1 Increase investments in professional development. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.B, 4.C*

Providing postdocs, faculty and staff with meaningful professional development supports for career aspirations, differentiates us as an employer and keeps our approaches innovative and current

- a. Increase central and faculty/unit budgets for professional development.
- b. Prioritize professional development in planning process and strengthen its role within the annual review process.
- c. Leadership and management to actively create a learning environment and support employees' professional development.
- d. Provide time and resources to support individualized professional development.

1.2 Transform tuition support program. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.B, 4.C*

Leverage our natural advantage as an institute of higher learning to provide a broader array of learning activities and increase investment in our people.

- a. Re-imagine tuition support so faculty and staff can better take advantage of the learning benefits of working at a university.

1.3 Complete a review of existing professional development programs, supports and satisfaction levels.

Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.B, 4.C

Strengthening our understanding of programs and supports that exist across faculties and units allows us to leverage what works, close gaps in programming and ensure postdocs, faculty and staff are evenly supported across the University.

- a. Establish inventory of current professional development investments and initiatives across campus by employee group.
- b. Survey employee perceptions of existing professional development programs.
- c. Engage experts—including experts in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Indigenous Engagement; Mental Health; and Sustainability—on best approaches to meet our professional development goals.

1.4 Based on results of review, develop and communicate a new, best-in-class professional and career development blueprint. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.B, 4.C*

Strengthening our understanding of programs and supports that exist across faculties and units Focusing and elevating our approach to professional development to reach our goals of: being #1 in the U15 in our investments; and 2) equipping our teams with the knowledge needed to be #1 in ease, speed and availability of services.

- a. Establish a roadmap and inventory of offerings that address the needs of the university, employee groups and individuals including:
 - i. Self-directed learning supports and opportunities;
 - ii. Regular faculty-, group- and function-based continuous education;
 - iii. Coaching, mentoring and thought-leadership opportunities; and
 - iv. Deeper integration of enhanced professional development efforts with human resources processes.
- b. Finalize measurement plans.
- c. Broadly communicate—and track awareness of—professional development opportunities across campus.

Domain #2: Clearer processes

Transparent, simplified processes and procedures mean less time navigating complexities and more time dedicated to learning, teaching, researching and supporting our community. Well-defined, well-communicated, and easily found processes are the fundamental foundation of any effort to make it simpler to put ideas into motion at the University of Calgary than any other university.

Key Initiatives:

2.1 Design and implement a simplified service delivery model. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Clear focal points for all central services, easing navigation.

- a. Define and designate dedicated go-to resources within central service teams to serve as the focal point for relationship management.

2.2 Document key processes, procedures and measurements. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Well documented and easily understood processes mean less time spent tracking down what to do and less time spent reinventing the wheel. Common approaches to measurement improve interoperability and allow us to compare between projects, increasing our understanding of the relationship between actions and outcomes.

- a. Implement a structured process for updating and creating knowledge articles, process flows, and standard operating procedures.
- b. Create university-wide standards for measurement to simplify our operating environment and strategic decision making.

2.3 Define service catalogue and service levels. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Clearly defining what services are available and what can be expected when access those services increases accountability, reduces misunderstanding and enhances satisfaction.

- a. Documented supports and expertise offered within shared service units of the university.
- b. Establish an overarching vision for shared services to align stakeholders, guide decision-making, and create a unified direction to drive strategic focus and facilitate a successful delivery of supports.
- c. Work with clients in faculties and units to establish overarching vision for shared services and document service expectations. Ensure clear understanding of service delivery parameters, establish performance benchmarks, and create a unified direction.

2.4 Create central repository of templates and checklists. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Maintaining a repository of templates and checklists supports best practice, reduces reinvention and increases interoperability between teams.

- a. Implement a central knowledge management platform that consolidates existing templates, checklists, and other relevant resources.

2.5 Proactively communicate processes, procedures, service level agreements and existence of supports to campus community. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

By spotlighting available supports, UCalgary ensures that the community empowered and able to access assistance whenever needed, promoting a more supportive academic environment.

- a. Run annual re-orientation for postdocs, faculty and staff to build culture, develop skills, and become aware of supports and expertise available in teaching, research, community partnerships, and operations.
- b. Have central services conduct regular sessions with clients to showcase service areas and provide insights into functions.

Domain #3: Simpler processes

While processes exist for many legitimate reasons, a commitment to simpler processes benefit all students, postdocs, faculty and staff—as well as those across our community looking to work with the university. Simpler processes enable greater focus on the work that we are here to do. Liberating ourselves from unnecessary complications will also be necessary as the university looks to expand and support thousands more students, postdocs, faculty and staff in the coming years.

We aim to create an environment where the path from inspiration to implementation is straightforward as possible, setting us apart and supporting an entrepreneurial environment where ideas thrive.

Key Initiatives:

3.1 Create a simplified, single-point intake model for accessing central services. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Introducing a single-point intake model streamlines access to central services, offering users a straightforward entry point that instills confidence that their request will be addressed.

- a. Develop a standardized intake framework across central teams, in doing so creating an enhanced ServiceNow that serves as a single place to send requests for human resources, information technologies, communications, finance, facilities and other university services. This service should:
 - i. Simplify intake by not requiring people to know where to go to get support; and
 - ii. Improve transparency and line-of-sight on requests and timing

3.2 Redesign UCalgary.ca to be more user-focused *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Reflect our simplified, easy-to-access approach to services on our website and web operations.

- a. Invest in web improvements and simplifications.
- b. Re-organize web content to make it user, rather than portfolio, centric.

3.3 Optimize and standardize processes. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

By reducing complexity, we reduce points of confusion or error. This increases reliability and consistency. It also reduces effort, barriers and wait times.

- a. Work with university community to identify highest impact processes that are a top priority for streamlining and simplification.
- b. Conduct an end-to-end process assessment to identify areas for improvement.

3.4 Expand automation capacity. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Automation allows the university to handle larger volumes of requests or tasks without compromising on speed or quality.

- a. Implement automation as a core capability to streamline processes, improve efficiency and drive innovation such as using existing Robotic Process Automation opportunities.
- b. Increase use of automation to improve:
 - i. Workload for staff who provide services; and
 - ii. Ease and simplicity of access for users of services.

Domain #4: Better processes

In addition to being clearer and simpler than any other university, we want our processes to be better, and to actively support and add value to the world-class work being done by our students, postdocs, faculty and staff.

Better processes are high quality processes that we continuously improve, and that embed our university's foundational commitments to: sustainability; global engagement; Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Indigenous Engagement; Mental Health; Global Engagement; and Sustainability.

Key Initiatives:

4.1 Adoption of a process improvement framework based on Lean methodology. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Improve community satisfaction, eliminate wasteful processes, emphasize continuous refinement and keep the focus on innovation and improvement.

- a. Sustain a culture of continuous improvement through the introduction of a university-tailored version of the Lean methodology.
- b. Incorporate continuous improvement mindset into central university processes.
- c. Support leaders and process owners across the university in their own continuous improvement efforts.
- d. Eliminate processes and steps in processes that are not needed to meet our obligations and do not add value to our university community.

4.2 Integrate university's foundational commitments into processes and procedures. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.C*

Ensure processes reflect the mission and values of the University of Calgary.

- a. Incorporate the university's commitments to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility; Indigenous Engagement; Mental Health; Global Engagement; and Sustainability in operations, policies, procedures and practices.
- b. Continuously improve progress on sustainability through tracking progress on key performance indicators and using data to inform actions and initiatives in future years.

4.3 Expand business intelligence capabilities. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Evaluate the use of data tools to drive data-driven decision-making and gain valuable insights into core operations.

4.4 Maximize the use of existing tools. *Ahead of Tomorrow 4.A, 4.C*

Use existing tools where possible and create workflows to replace a myriad of disconnected processes.

PRINCIPLES OF OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The following principles will guide the university's work in operations:

- **We are committed to a culture of continuous improvement.**
We will stand out by driving innovation in our operations and delivering ever-improving supports and expertise to our students, postdocs, faculty, and staff.
- **We are data driven.**
We emphasize the role of information and feedback in improving our processes. We are strategic in how we focus resources in support of our campus community.
- **We focus on effectiveness and efficiency in central functions.**
By making services and processes clearer, simpler, faster, and more streamlined, we make working, learning, teaching, and conducting research easier at the University.
- **We focus on continuity.**
We aim to establish institutional resiliency. We endeavor that our processes are repeatable and do not depend solely on the knowledge of specific individuals. We seek to understand our most critical services and what is required to sustain supports needed across the university.
- **We are committed to teamwork and trust.**
We encourage honest and open collaboration across groups. We will work with operational teams and users on any improvement initiatives and we will be clear about our priorities and constraints. We aim to increase satisfaction and awareness of the supports and expertise provided.
- **We are committed to meaningful partnerships.**
Service delivery is done in partnership with leaders and operational teams across the university. We will nurture a culture of continuous improvement and customer centricity in our processes and services.
- **We live our university values.**
We aim at all times for a safe, inclusive, healthy, and respectful environment. We seek balanced lifestyles, we encourage the building of careers and taking initiative, and we recognize one another for our accomplishments. Through our work, we will demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, wellness, and intercultural capacity-building opportunities for the campus community. We honour our responsibility to truth and reconciliation and cross-cultural learning opportunities that promote awareness, education, and understanding. We demonstrate our institutional commitment to meaningful connection and interaction with the world around us through the diversity of our campus community and our partnerships.
- **We aim to stay *Ahead of Tomorrow*.**
We will, wherever possible, shape our future rather than react to it.

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.

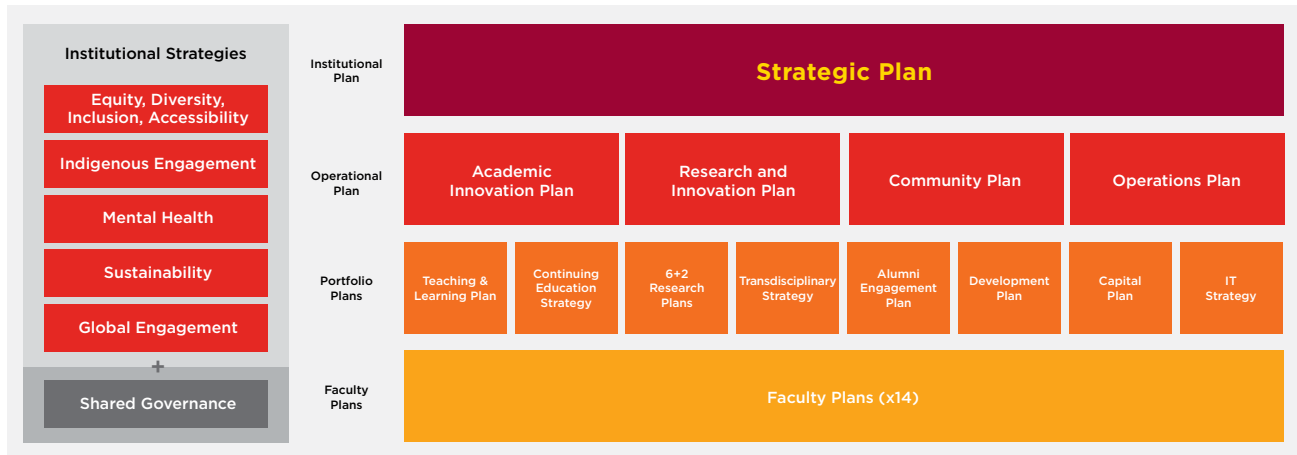


Figure A. The implementation plans are four of many plans at the University of Calgary. Collectively, these plans define our academic, research and operational environment, as well as our connections to the broader community.

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.

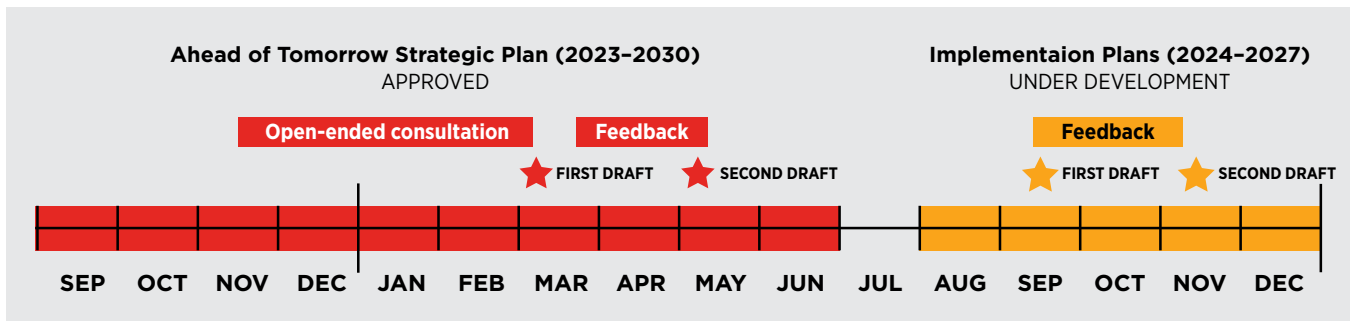


Figure B. The implementation planning process is a continuation of the strategic planning process. It addresses how and in what order the items in *Ahead of Tomorrow* will be approached in the next three years.

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.