

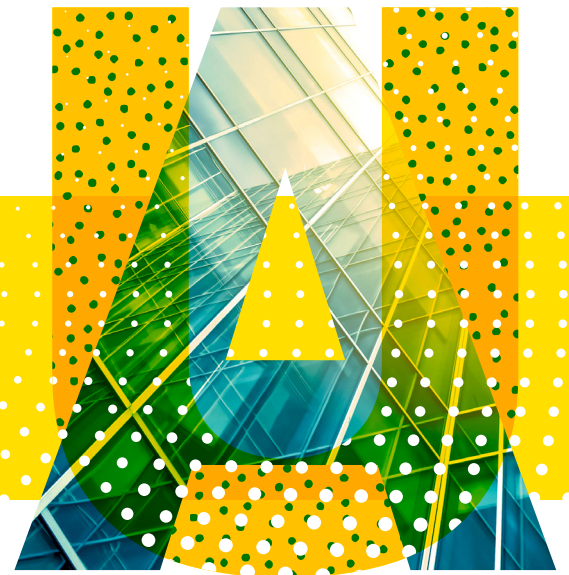


UNIVERSITY  
OF ALBERTA

April 2024

# PEOPLE STRATEGY **DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION**

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APRIL 18, 2024



*The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Sauteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence our vibrant community.*

# Contents

<b>Indigenous Teachings</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>A Note On Language</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Vision Statement</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Values</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Themes</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Theme: Creating Connections</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Theme: Prioritizing Health and Well-being</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Theme: Enabling and Empowering Our People</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Theme: Outstanding Leadership in an Environment of Shared Responsibility</b> .....	<b>14</b>

# Indigenous Teachings

**This strategy is animated by the Cree teaching of wîcihîtowin. It recognizes that humans are a collective and that we flourish when we offer each other mutual understanding and help.**

We are also individuals, with our own values and perspectives, striving to find expression within the whole. Wîcihîtowin teaches us that empathy and kindness help us to navigate our differences to make our shared community strong. At the University of Alberta, we aim to model this understanding, nurturing one another in our individuality while also embracing our collective and shared responsibilities and aspirations.

## A Note On Language

**Language is important, and it is important to find the right language that makes all people at the University of Alberta feel included and seen. Several key terms appear in this document to describe the University of Alberta community.**

- **“People”** means everyone who works at the university: faculty, instructors, researchers, academic and support staff, post-doctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate student employees.
- **“We”** means all of us: not just senior leadership or an abstract concept, but our whole interconnected community of people. This strategy intends to articulate a truly shared vision for the university’s culture and environment.
- **“Leader”** does not just mean the president, vice-presidents, deans and chairs. These roles have critical responsibilities, but every single member of the university community can exercise leadership competencies: supporting others, mentoring, creating welcoming environments and taking shared responsibility. Where we say “executive leadership,” we mean the president and vice-presidents. Sometimes we refer to “senior leadership,” which generally means administrators (whether academic or non-academic) at the level of president, vice-president, dean, vice-provost or associate vice-president, or equivalents.

# Introduction

**In *Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact*, the University of Alberta places our people at the foundation of everything that we do. The core of our mission – education, research and engagement – depends on all of us working together and contributing in our own roles. Supporting people is absolutely central to the university’s mission and vision.**

We cannot achieve our goals without creating an organizational culture and environment where our people can flourish and succeed. The People Strategy sets out a path for the university to realize such an environment.

The People Strategy will sit alongside *Braiding Past, Present and Future: Indigenous Strategic Plan*; our refreshed Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan; *Igniting Purpose: Student Experience Action Plan*; as well as the *Culture of Care Safety Action Plan* as organization-wide pillars that underpin our work. Much like *Braiding Past, Present and Future*, the People Strategy will be a crucial lens and point of reference for everything we do, and for all individuals – from the highest level of leadership to people on the front lines of our work. We know that understanding the employee experience is key to our vibrant future. The People Strategy is intended to underpin the institution-wide efforts we make as a university to address the opportunities and concerns we heard from the 2023 Faculty and Staff Engagement Survey.

The People Strategy is not about layering another set of commitments and responsibilities onto existing roles. It is about cultivating a vibrant and inclusive community where people at all levels thrive professionally and personally. Through the People Strategy, the university aims to attract, develop and retain top talent while promoting a supportive environment that values collaboration, well-being and continuous learning in the service of teaching, research and engagement. It is about refocusing on our culture and environment in ways that make us feel empowered, energized and supported – and that will make the U of A an employer of choice that supports its people to create long and rewarding careers.

## Vision Statement

*The vision statement for the People Strategy sets out an aspirational vision for the University of Alberta's future, guided by this strategy and the university's other foundational goals. Achieving this vision is a long-term journey, and we need to move forward together as a community.*

The University of Alberta is an inspiring workplace where high-performing people create flourishing careers. People are connected to one another and empowered, and are supported to innovate and grow. Senior leaders inspire trust, display integrity and cultivate an energized community where people at all levels are able to exercise leadership and can feel a shared responsibility for the university's future.

## Values

The U of A has values set in multiple places: *Shape* sets out core commitments; *Braiding Past, Present and Future* includes guiding values and principles; *Forward with Purpose: A Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation* articulates guiding principles; and the university's Statement on Free Expression sets out some of our academic values.

In developing the People Strategy, the university community has expressed a major opportunity: to engage the university community to develop an enduring statement of values, which will sit alongside our mission and vision at the core of who we are as a university. These values will extend beyond the time horizon of any individual strategy or plan. The People Strategy has this as one of its key goals.

The People Strategy itself is guided by the core commitments articulated in *Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact*:

- **Indigenization and decolonization:** We incorporate Indigenous identities, languages, cultures and worldviews across the university. This includes working to dismantle systemic barriers and celebrating the diversity, strength, complexity, resilience and beauty of Indigenous Peoples, cultures, languages and knowledge systems. *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan* is a crucial foundation for our next decade.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion:** We work to achieve a more diverse, equitable, accessible and inclusive environment for all who work, learn and live within our community. We value academic freedom, and welcome and celebrate a diversity of perspectives and experiences.
- **Safety:** We are committed to the physical, psychological and cultural safety of people at the University of Alberta, and to providing a safe and healthy work and study environment that facilitates high-quality education and research.
- **Sustainability:** We strive to be a sustainable institution because we know the well-being of our people depends on our long-term viability. We lead through the prudent stewardship of resources, and by stewarding our environment and the lands on which we reside.

- **Creativity:** We embrace opportunities to innovate to make things better. While coming together as one university to reach new heights, we break down barriers, transform systems and remain flexible to create the conditions that support all members of the university community to flourish.
- **Collaboration:** We succeed by working together, within and beyond the university and across traditional boundaries. We prize relationships and we create opportunities for mutual benefit. We celebrate each other's achievements and help each other to thrive.

## Themes

The remainder of this document presents the People Strategy's major themes, goals and priority areas for action. The strategy has four themes:

- Creating connection
- Prioritizing health and well-being
- Enabling and empowering people
- Outstanding leadership in an environment of shared responsibility

Two points are essential to understanding the People Strategy's goals and how they will be achieved:

- First, as with *Shape*, the goals sit at the institution-wide level and reflect areas for targeted, university-wide focus at the highest levels. This in no way diminishes the central importance of local action within departments, faculties, colleges and units. We will only succeed if our People Strategy vision cascades through the whole organization and is embraced across the university.

So we invite all areas of the university to reflect – and then act – on how they can support the kind of culture and environment in which we all want to work.

- Second, under each theme, the People Strategy distinguishes between two different, but equally important, areas of emphasis.

Under each theme, the document describes characteristics of our desired culture and environment. This outlines the norms we want to create, the behaviours we want to see, and the practices we want embedded in our everyday work– across the university, from the adoption of this strategy forward. We know that in many areas of the university, we are not there yet, and we know that these ideas will be realized differently in different settings. But we have also heard that it is important to articulate our expectations and desired norms as the basis for shared responsibility going forward.

Separately, we identify our goals and priority actions. These are more time-delimited and indicate specific areas for dedicated action. Accountabilities are defined at the vice-president level, but we know that participation at all levels will be essential to success.

***The People Strategy is a long-term journey. The following goals and actions are intended to embed this work into the university over multiple years. Some actions can be achieved in the short term, while others require us to build foundations for the future. We welcome community input on the top priorities for immediate action.***

***Measures of success are to be added in the next iteration of the plan – we welcome community input on what success under these goals looks like and how we will know when we get there.***



# THEME:

## Creating Connections

**People want to feel connected to each other, to the university and its mission, to our students and to the external community.**

Connection is about a sense of belonging, which means that we need to feel valued in our work. Connection is also about forming real, tangible relationships with immediate colleagues and with colleagues across the university. These relationships take time and effort to nurture, and we need an organization-wide commitment to making space for the work of connection. We also need a particular focus on building relationships and bridging perspectives between long-standing employees and those who have joined the university more recently.

Connectedness depends on, and also fosters, well-being, empowerment and enablement.

### Defining our culture and environment

Within a more connected University of Alberta:

- We are a community that values interpersonal relationships, both among each other and with the university.
- We make the effort to cultivate a shared work culture and to treat each other with respect, within the context of our commitment to excellence and authenticity.
- We understand and value building a positive team-based culture, underpinned by mutual trust.
- We are grounded in the more than 100-year history of the University of Alberta – and we value that the U of A is a space where we can pursue passions and make a difference.

### Goals and priority actions

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
Articulate clear values for the University of Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and disseminate a clear set of values for the University of Alberta that support people in making a personal connection to the university, and to establish a common basis for all work across the university.</li> </ul>	University-wide



GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
Promote and facilitate community connectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and support the scaling up of positive local practices.</li> <li>Review administrative service processes to identify opportunities for increased personal connection (e.g. use of names and individual addresses where possible).</li> <li>Create opportunities for connection both within individual teams and to the broader U of A community.</li> </ul>	University-wide  VP (USF) Provost & VP(A)  University-wide
Enhance recognition, both formal and informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase resources for formal recognition programs and awareness of existing programs.</li> <li>Establish support program for innovative and informal recognition of staff and colleagues, and tools to support supervisors in making recognition a regular practice within teams.</li> </ul>	VP (USF) Provost & VP(A)  VP (USF)
Establish a culture of inclusion and respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an institution-wide charter outlining expectations of behaviour, which members of the community can commit to upholding.</li> <li>Encourage the implementation of the EDI Action Plan at all levels of the university.</li> <li>Expand awareness of resources for disclosure and resolution of workplace concerns.</li> </ul>	President  Provost & VP(A)  VP (USF)

# THEME:

## Prioritizing Health and Well-Being

**We need to ensure as an organization we prioritize the health and well-being of our people, including supporting people by providing sustainable workloads, resources to mitigate work-related stress, and broad-based support for people experiencing difficulties both inside and outside of work. If we want people to flourish, we need to support them through challenges – both formally and informally.**

Promoting well-being requires a systemic approach, not just an individual one. It is difficult for individuals or even teams to adopt well-being-oriented practices in isolation – success requires the whole university to commit to creating a better environment. Our health and well-being depend on positive work environments, but also on managing priorities and workload differently. This includes improving systems and support services to reduce areas of inefficiency and enable people to focus on the most rewarding aspects of their roles

### Defining our culture and environment

In a University of Alberta that prioritizes the health and well-being of its people:

- Organization-wide, we display positive support for sustainable workloads, and the well-being of our people is a fundamental part of our daily operations. We lead and work with compassion and balance, grounded in purpose.
- People enjoy networks of support – including functional support from people in similar roles and in partner units, and are connected meaningfully as collaborators and knowledge sharers. This networking function is recognized and rewarded.
- People are encouraged to set healthy boundaries – examples include the opportunity to be open about capacity constraints without fear of reprisal; facilitating conditions so people can use their vacations and breaks; and encouraging teams to set practices around effective use of time to support well-being (such as meeting- or email-free times).
- Across the university, we reject the “do more with less” mentality. We acknowledge that to take on something new, we may need to re-prioritize or reduce work in another area. This means that, as an organization, we set clear priorities.

## Goals and priority actions

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>Adopt organizational- and system-level solutions to mitigate excessive workload</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize process and system improvements with greatest impact on employee workloads, including through the Continuous Administrative Service Improvement Project (CASIP).</li> <li>• Tie healthy practices into performance reviews – linking recognition, performance and well-being as core leadership responsibilities.</li> <li>• Ensure we are leaving appropriate time and space for people to do the value-added work that drives engagement.</li> </ul>	<p>VP (USF) Provost &amp; VP(A)</p> <p>VP (USF) Provost &amp; VP(A)</p> <p>University-wide</p>
<p>Establish practices for team- and individual-level priority setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement tools for team- and individual-level priority setting to support employees in setting priorities and managing workloads.</li> <li>• Renew college, faculty and unit plans to align with Shape, set clear priorities, then ensuring that team- and individual-level work plans align with these priorities.</li> </ul>	<p>Executive leadership</p> <p>Provost &amp; VP(A)</p>
<p>Empower individuals to access resources to mitigate stress and burnout</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue ongoing implementation of Culture of Care Safety Action Plan.</li> <li>• Continue to develop and deliver professional development on well-being for supervisors and teams.</li> </ul>	<p>University-wide</p> <p>VP (USF)</p>

# THEME:

## Enabling and Empowering Our People

**For our people to thrive, they need to be – and feel – empowered and enabled. This means having the support to perform, the tools to succeed, and the safety and autonomy to creatively solve problems.**

Empowerment has an organizational dimension. Our people are more empowered when we have high-functioning systems and processes that enable them to focus on their core roles, and when our roles and responsibilities are designed to allow and reward a solution-oriented mindset. Empowerment also drives the broader organizational culture in which we work, and feeling empowered depends in part on how we interact, support and celebrate one another to succeed. In an empowered and enabled environment, our people can see pathways to creating long and rewarding careers at the U of A.

### Defining our culture and environment

In a University of Alberta that prioritizes the health and well-being of its people:

- Our organization is geared to attract and retain great people and see them succeed. We support people to act, make decisions and exercise creativity within the parameters of their roles. We work with colleagues who are both competent and invested in the university and its mission.
- We streamline review and decision processes with a view to empower review and decisions at the appropriate level.
- We support each other through informal and formal communities of practice, and we recognize and reward the effort that such communities take to nurture.
- We are solution oriented – within a standardized structure, we recognize the need for and value of local innovation. We place enabling the academic mission at the centre of our work design.
- Everyone understands that safety comes first and underpins all other decisions. If it's not safe, we don't do it.

### Goals and priority actions

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
Improve supports, systems and processes to empower people to succeed in their roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to implement the Continuous Administrative Service Improvement Project (CASIP) to enhance quality of administrative supports.</li> </ul>	VP (USF)

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Chairs’ Council to develop an updated “roles and responsibilities” framework for chairs and staff supporting departments, in order to align with the new organizational structure and better support core academic functions.</li> </ul>	Provost & VP(A)
Empower employees to innovate and create solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a university-wide decision-making framework articulating principles for decision making at all levels, aiming to reduce redundancy and facilitate more efficient decision-making processes</li> </ul>	Executive leadership and university-wide
Increase access to and support for professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require supervisors to elevate the importance of advancing career development for their direct reports as part of the annual performance reporting process – including prioritizing resources for training in core job functions.</li> <li>• Develop guidelines to support enhanced succession planning to support long-term career development.</li> <li>• Explore developing institutionally recommended training curricula for specific roles.</li> <li>• Develop and launch a formal mentorship program.</li> <li>• Facilitate support for communities of practice in specific function areas, to support functional skill development.</li> </ul>	University-wide  VP (USF)  Provost & VP(A) VP (USF)  VP (USF)  University-wide
Enhance the university’s safety culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to implement the <i>Culture of Care Safety Action Plan</i>.</li> </ul>	University-wide

# THEME:

## Outstanding Leadership in an Environment of Shared Responsibility

**Leadership at the University of Alberta is both formal and informal. It includes the positional responsibilities of formal leaders, as well as the competencies and behaviours that can be exhibited at all levels of the organization.**

Leadership is intertwined with each of the themes above, and supportive leadership is a critical success factor for every goal in this strategy. There are also specific actions and commitments required by formal leaders (those in executive or senior leadership roles) to build trust and to help people flourish, which are expressed in this theme. These actions and commitments do not obviate the need for shared responsibility across the university, recognizing that people at all levels of the organization need to participate in creating a flourishing culture and environment.

### Defining our culture and environment

Within a University of Alberta characterized by outstanding leadership:

- We understand that leadership competencies are fundamental to supporting and empowering people.
- We communicate clearly and transparently about our processes, priorities and roles. We are consultative and collaborative.
- We cultivate a sense of shared responsibility for the university’s goals and success by empowering leaders at all levels of the organization to exercise judgment and creativity, to solve problems and to inspire others.
- Our senior leadership embraces its accountability to the university community, and acts at all times in a manner consistent with university values.

### Goals and priority actions

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
Rebuild trust in senior leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize visibility and availability of senior leaders (deans, vice-provosts, vice-presidents, president).</li> </ul>	Senior leadership

GOAL	PRIORITY ACTIONS	ACCOUNTABILITY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a clear accountability framework for implementation of <i>Shape</i>, with cascading accountabilities at the college/faculty/unit levels.</li> <li>Support formal leaders to clearly articulate priorities for their responsible areas, aligned with the university's broader strategic direction.</li> <li>Empower department chairs as a critical leadership level within the organization.</li> </ul>	<p>Provost &amp; VP(A)</p> <p>Executive leadership</p> <p>Provost &amp; VP(A)</p>
<p>Develop leadership competencies at all levels of the organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue investment in leadership development, including academic leadership, with emphasis on developing skills and competencies in mentorship and coaching.</li> <li>Review performance-review process and criteria for formal leaders with the intention of embedding university values.</li> </ul>	<p>VP (USF) Provost &amp; VP(A)</p> <p>Executive leadership</p>



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