



Strategic University Plan 2011–16

HIGHLIGHTS



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Introduction

Founded in 1970, Athabasca University operates as a comprehensive academic and research institution under the *Alberta Post-secondary Learning Act* (2004), and its government-approved mandate determines the scope of its activities. The university is a public, board-governed, open and distance institution, annually serving nearly 40,000 students from Alberta, across Canada and more than 100 countries worldwide.

Operating from four Alberta centres (in Athabasca, St. Albert, Edmonton and Calgary), AU is a key partner in Campus Alberta and eCampusAlberta and is committed to collaborating with other government and educational stakeholders to ensure a responsive and seamless advanced education system providing high-quality opportunities in support of lifelong learning.

Looking ahead five years, AU has identified a number of key goals for the university and presented them in the *Strategic University Plan: 2011-16*. These goals include attaining world leadership in quality distance and open education, adopting a sustainable and adaptable business model, recruiting and retaining the very best faculty and staff, promoting excellence in research and scholarship, and providing leadership and support to the various communities with which the university is engaged.

Our Mission

Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide. We are committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship and to being of service to the general public.

About The Strategic University Plan

The *Strategic University Plan: 2011-16* sets the direction that Athabasca University will follow in the next five years. The document is the product of in-depth environmental scanning and an inclusive planning process that has facilitated both strategic thinking and consensus building throughout the AU community and the external communities that it serves. Following the direction set in the plan will allow AU to grow as a leading provider of quality open and distance education and a leader in removing barriers to post-secondary education in Alberta, Canada and beyond.

The strategic planning process which underlies this plan began in 2009-10 with a comprehensive institutional self-study, undertaken to prepare AU for important upcoming planning initiatives, including renewal of the university's accreditation with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and development of this plan. Another important element was a joint AU Governing Council and Academic Council scenario creation workshop, facilitated by Alberta Innovates. The conclusions of this workshop, together with the findings of the institutional self-study and the *Strategic University Plan: 2006-11* were the primary background documents used in developing this plan.

The community-based, participatory planning approach used in developing this plan emphasized inclusiveness and collaborative decision-making. It ensured that every member of the AU community had an opportunity to participate in the planning process.

A Strategy for Athabasca University

The following statement summarizes the vision for the university as expressed by the AU community during the planning process: Athabasca University is recognized as a best practices university in research, teaching and service and as the leader in removing barriers to post-secondary learning. Based on the research and community consultation described above, five strategic goals have been formulated for realizing this vision during the next five years. Each goal is described below and followed by a list of associated strategic objectives (high-level objectives that will contribute to the achievement of the goal) and measurable key outcomes. Monitoring of these outcomes over the term of this strategic plan will ensure that progress is clear to all stakeholders and that AU can adjust to new challenges and opportunities that may arise during the planning period.



Academic and Research Centre
Athabasca, AB

Athabasca University main campus
Athabasca, AB





AU Student Lisa
Bachelor of Management
Halifax, Nova Scotia

GOAL 1: TO BE THE LEADER IN QUALITY OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

The goal is to leverage AU's knowledge reserves, research capacity and technological resources to provide post-secondary distance education of the highest quality, to provide open access to students from all regions and backgrounds, to promote access to scholarly information through AU Press and to provide access to the tools and skills development that are critical to success in the digital environment.

Strategic Objective 1.1: Strengthen the quality and responsiveness of undergraduate and graduate courses and programs.

Strategic Objective 1.2: Provide a superior, interactive and engaging student experience.

Strategic Objective 1.3: Become the university of choice for those seeking post-secondary education through online or distance delivery.

Strategic Objective 1.4: Recruit a diverse student body.

Strategic Objective 1.5: Continue to build and maintain strong alliances with other Alberta post-secondary institutions as a major contributor to Campus Alberta and eCampusAlberta.

Strategic Objective 1.6: Assume a leadership role in the development and adoption of learning technologies that enhance open learning environments.

Key Outcomes

- Student success rates are improved.
- Established evidence-based practice is consistently applied in pedagogy and curricular development.
- Students and researchers have easy access to excellent resources for research and learning.
- AU is the university of choice for graduate students in key program areas.
- Enrolment by members of targeted student groups is increased.
- AU researchers are recognized as leaders in learning technologies that enhance open access.

AU graduate Samuel
Bachelor of Management
Hobbema, Alberta



GOAL 2: TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY AND FOSTER ADAPTABILITY

The goal is to develop the financial and operating systems and the infrastructure needed for sustainable institutional growth and to encourage flexibility and versatility at all levels of the university.

Strategic Objective 2.1: Support continued growth through the development of alternative funding models and a culture that is entrepreneurial, innovative and able to adapt efficiently to societal change.

Strategic Objective 2.2: Enhance government relations through proactive engagement.

Strategic Objective 2.3: Develop and expand AU's physical and virtual campus infrastructure to support continued growth and excellence.

Key Outcomes

- Revenue increases are at or above the expected rate as indicated in annual budgets.
- Capital infrastructure is developed and maintained to allow sustainable growth.
- The Information and Communication Technology Capital Plan is implemented.

GOAL 3: TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN EXCELLENT PEOPLE

The goal is to recruit the very best employees and to provide exceptional opportunities for them to develop their professional skills and abilities.

Strategic Objective 3.1: Attract and retain excellent employees.

Strategic Objective 3.2: Foster and maintain an interactive and collaborative workforce within a healthy, effective and efficient work environment.

Key Outcomes

- Staff engagement levels are high compared to university benchmark levels.
- Staff development plans are implemented and integrated with performance management.



Dr. Robert Holmberg and Jingfen Zhang
Science Labs, Athabasca, AB

AU staff barbeque
Athabasca, AB





AU faculty, Dr. Kinshuk
iCore/Xerox/Markin Industrial
Research Chair in Adaptive and
Personalization in Informatics

AU Honorary Doctorate 2011
Dempsey Bob



GOAL 4: TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

The goal is to expand research and to encourage excellence in research and scholarship.

Strategic Objective 4.1: Provide appropriate support for faculty, staff and student research and scholarship.

Strategic Objective 4.2: Enhance AU's international reputation in key research disciplines, including technologically enhanced online and distance education.

Strategic Objective 4.3: Promote and expand the transfer of research findings for the benefit of students, society and the economy.

Key Outcome

- Research activity is increased at AU.

GOAL 5: TO BUILD COMMUNITIES

The goal is to promote collaboration, leadership and innovation in the communities served by the university.

Strategic Objective 5.1: Work with community groups and agencies and municipal governments to develop initiatives that foster healthy, prosperous communities.

Strategic Objective 5.2: Foster partnerships with business, industry and other strategic communities to advance mutual goals.

Key Outcomes

- The number of partnerships and collaborations is increased.
- The number and scope of strategic partnerships with business, industry and other stakeholders are increased.

Summary

As stated previously, the *Strategic University Plan: 2011-16* has been developed through a series of detailed consultations with faculty and staff members, students and other stakeholders. Implementing this plan will create a solid foundation for the university's future, allowing AU to provide a world-leading student experience in an open-educational environment, while strengthening and deepening the university's commitment to excellence in research, scholarship and learning.

Over the next five years, Athabasca University will focus on achieving results in five strategic areas:

- Leading quality open and distance education
- Ensuring sustainability and fostering adaptability
- Recruiting and retaining excellent people
- Promoting excellence in research
- Building communities



Convocation, Athabasca, AB



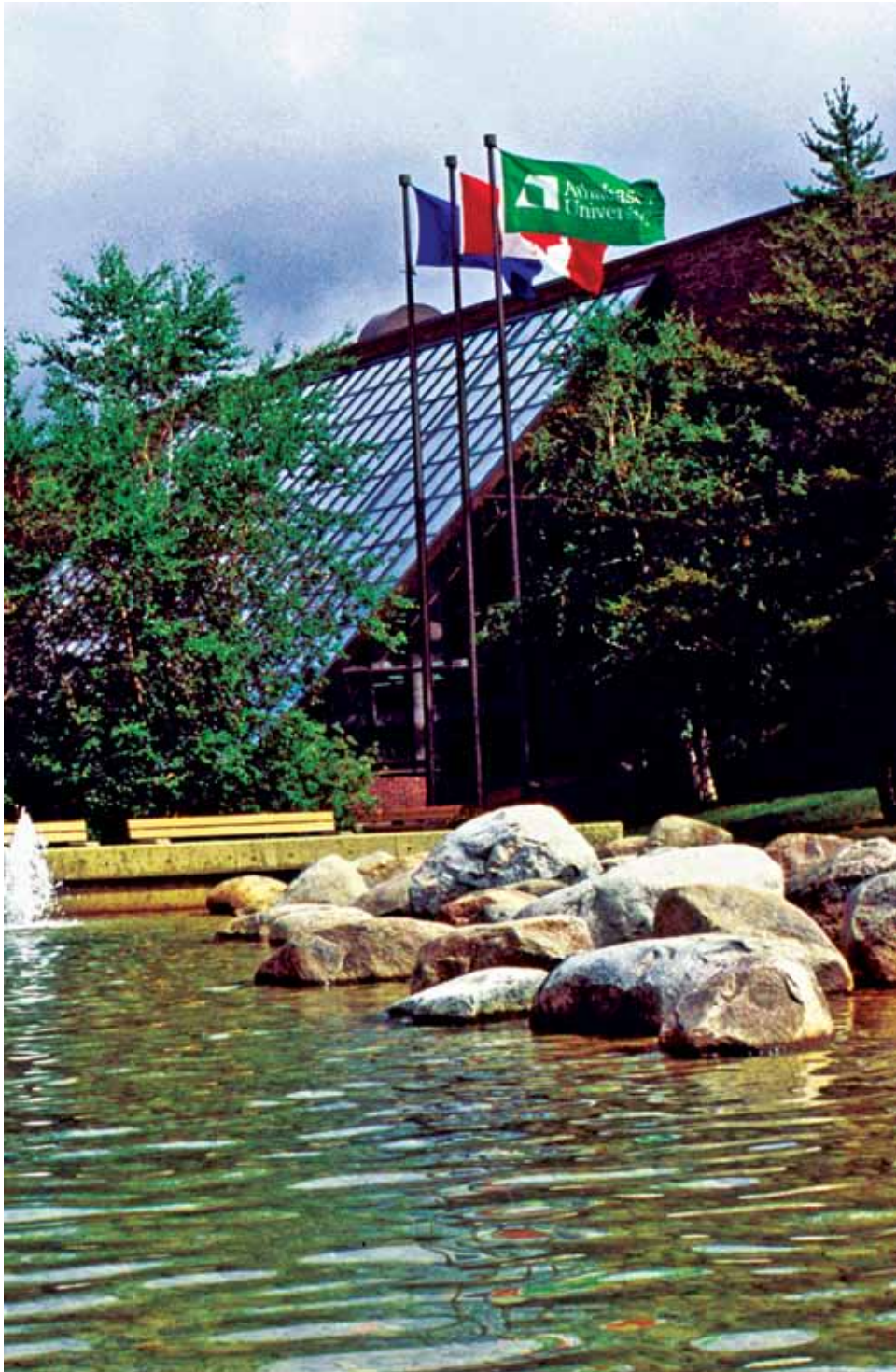
Academic and Research Centre
Athabasca, AB



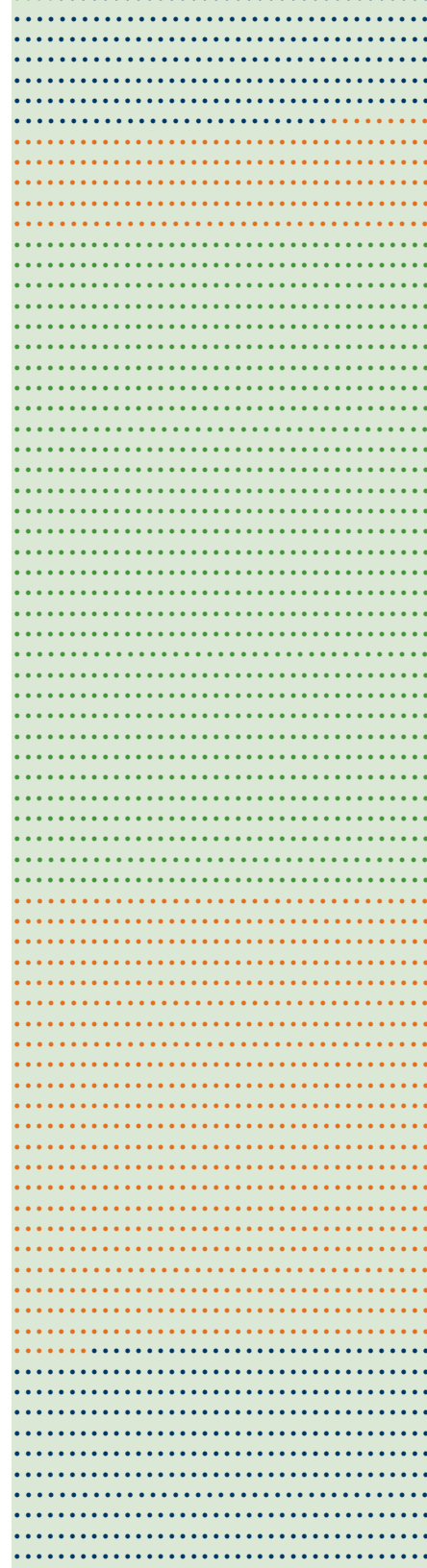
For further information about this Strategic University Plan
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Main campus, Athabasca, AB





Athabasca University 

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