

2023

Towards a Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation



Developing the SPRI

The draft Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation presented for consultation is the product of extensive internal consultation.

The development stage saw an iterative approach toward drafting the Plan, engaging a broad review of external plans and strategies to validate ideas articulated, and assessing our strengths, in consultation with internal discipline experts, in order to arrive at a set of research and innovation priorities for our University. This process has taken place over the course of nearly two years.

The initial framework of the Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation was developed by a Working Group that was formed in July 2021 by the Vice-President (Research and Innovation). The Group consists of 20 University academic, research, and administrative experts who developed the goals iteratively, in consultation with discipline experts across our institution. Based on discussions with researchers and academic leaders, and through conducting environmental scans for community, public, and private sector priorities and funding trends, they framed and articulated the research and innovation priorities that emerged from those discussions. The Working Group assembled the goals and priorities into a narrative, which now articulates a draft vision and sets directions to position the University of Alberta as a top global research institution.

Development of the initial draft of the Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation was completed in Summer 2022 and was followed by internal preliminary consultations through focus group cohorts. Preliminary consultations were conducted in Summer and Fall 2022 with:

- the Council of Deans in each College;
- the President's Executive Committee - Strategic (PEC-S);
- the Board Learning, Research and Student Experience Committee
- the Board of Governors;
- a focus group of College Deans and representatives selected by faculty deans;
- a focus group of Centres and Institutes Directors; and
- two multi-disciplinary focus groups of researchers from across the institution.

The feedback received from these consultations was supplemented by additional input from faculty deans and discipline experts through targeted discussions on specific themes in the Plan.

Preliminary Consultation Towards a Refined SPRI Draft Document

The development of the Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation has involved preliminary engagement with interested individuals and communities across the University of Alberta, as listed above.

These engagement opportunities were used to gather feedback and perspectives on the initial draft, including input on how its content could be enhanced or changed. Among the viewpoints expressed, the following themes consistently emerged:

- The major elements of the strategy should be threaded and connected by a strong narrative about the direction of research and innovation at the University of Alberta. This way, readers can better understand how the constituent elements of the strategy fit together to drive change.
- It is important to include and reference social innovation domains, in addition to those rooted in science, engineering and health. There are many established and emerging research opportunities in social sciences and humanities on which our University can capitalize, and we should make explicit provisions for doing so.
- Content speaking to the importance of people, and the development of people, will be much appreciated; focus is required in this area. This content should reflect that both attraction and retention are crucial elements for ensuring our University is home to recognized researchers and upcoming talent such as graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
- Commercialization and the development of innovative solutions are part of research for which our University wishes to be known. Fundamental research is also a vital part of the mix and similarly needs to be included and supported, as it is inherently valuable in its own right and can give rise to unexpected discoveries.
- Providing support for researchers is very important and having this in the strategy is welcome. To have significant research impact, our University must fashion a climate and conditions that enable researchers to succeed, including research support services. This is particularly critical after the major restructuring undertaken during the past two years.
- The inclusion of metrics in the strategy is positive, as it signals a commitment to measure ourselves and continuously improve. It also grounds the strategy in meaningful and achievable reality. Referring to them as key indicators and including more qualitative measures to complement quantitative measures would help provide a more comprehensive picture on how we are performing.
- Goals, objectives and tactics in the strategy should have a logical flow. Ensuring that identified tactics are well aligned and well connected to their associated objectives will enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the strategy. Similarly, goals should be structured so they are clearly aligned with achieving the vision.

The input gathered from participants has informed revisions to the Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation. In particular:

- Organization of the strategic goals and objectives has been changed to ensure the strategy brings attention to areas identified during engagement.
- Tactics in the content have been revised to ensure they are more strongly linked to achieving established objectives.
- Metrics in the strategy have been reframed as key indicators and expanded to include more qualitative measures, with the aim of building in more comprehensive evaluation.
- The latest revision aims to explain how all of the strategy's parts fit together to bring about a more focused direction for research and innovation at the University of Alberta.

Next Steps

Engagement will be undertaken between **April and May 2023** on the latest revision of the **Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation**. The feedback gathered from this round of engagement will be used to finalize the plan. Approval and initial rollout of the plan is expected in **Fall 2023**.



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