



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA

2024 -27

Alumni Engagement Strategic Plan



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Alberta, its buildings, labs, and research stations are primarily located on the traditional territory of Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, and Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe nations; lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7, and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems, and cultures of First Nations, Métis and Inuit nations.

Leading with Purpose

Our Alumni Community - We are “creative, collaborative and confident global citizens” making our mark on the world and the university. We are “change makers, community builders, and world shapers” (Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact, pg 8)

The Alumni Association - Builds a supportive and proud community of graduates through programs that celebrate alumni, promote volunteerism, advocacy and giving, and provide lifelong learning opportunities.

This three-year plan for alumni engagement builds on the 2019-2023 Alumni Association Strategic Plan by updating and evolving our strategies to address current priorities and needs. The plan aligns with *Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact*; External Relations priorities and other university plans, including *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan*. The goals and strategies for the plan were created with extensive input from the alumni community and volunteers, Alumni Council, External Relations staff, and faculty and campus stakeholders.



Values

We are guided by our core values as we engage with and involve more than 310,000 alumni worldwide:

- **Belonging** - creating accessible and welcoming spaces; celebrating our diverse alumni community, including those who have been excluded in the past or present.
- **Truth and understanding** - repudiating systemic racism; continuing to build respectful relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit alumni and community members; and promoting decolonization* education.
- **Community** - nurturing a supportive network of graduates to connect with the university, our communities and each other.
- **Service** - giving generously of time, expertise and financial support to help students, our alumni community and the university.
- **Innovation** - embracing a spirit of creativity while creating high-impact, responsive and relevant programs and services.
- **Leadership** - leading with purpose as ambassadors and catalysts of sustainable and innovative solutions that benefit alumni, the university and communities.
- **Lifelong learning** - embracing the positive impacts of research and teaching, exploring different viewpoints, sharing evidence-based information, encouraging curiosity and the desire to learn and grow.

*Decolonization is defined as a guiding value and principle in *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan* as: "repudiating the racist justifications and dismantling the colonial structures aimed at disenfranchising Indigenous Peoples of their legal, social, cultural, religious and ethnic rights; reclaiming Indigenous identity, language, culture and worldviews" (page 14).



Strategic Considerations

The university experience creates a unique bond among graduates.

Having benefited from a world-class education, alumni may choose to give back in many ways, such as supporting work experience and practicums, volunteering, giving to scholarships or research priorities, or serving as ambassadors for their alma mater. The Alumni Association and the University of Alberta engage with alumni by offering programs and services that support and strengthen this community.

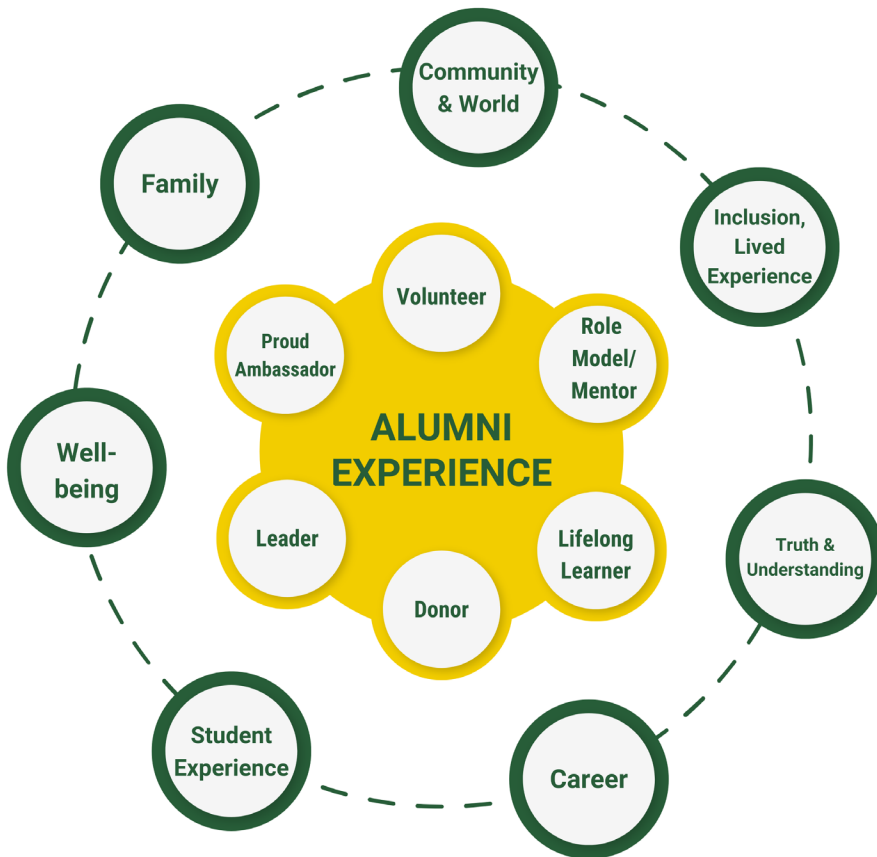
The alumni experience remains central to planning. Life experiences and priorities influence how graduates view engagement. We must be responsive and recognize that our community has different interests and challenges in their lives. We recognize that change is a constant. The Alumni Association strives to remain responsive and relevant to our alumni community within an environment of ongoing change.

The following considerations shape our programming priorities.

- **One University** – Advancing a “one university” message, while recognizing that alumni identity is often closely linked to a faculty, program, or campus (including Augustana and Campus St. Jean). This requires clear strategies when employing methods and resources to manage affinity and relationships. We are guided by the university’s strategic plans to establish priorities and create greater focus in our efforts.
- **Well-being** – Alumni selectively choose time commitments and prioritize their careers, self-care and family. Flexibility and accessibility in programming are needed as we engage alumni in volunteerism, services and events.
- **Flexible ways of connecting** – There is a continued demand for online and hybrid programming to engage diverse audiences and improve accessibility. This requires a variety of digital communication tools to engage alumni, while also offering in-person events to build community.
- **Truth and understanding** – The alumni community is enriched when First Nations, Métis and Inuit alumni join Alumni Council and other volunteer roles. It is important to work alongside First Nations, Métis and Inuit alumni and the university to meaningfully respond to the goals in *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan*.
- **Inclusion** – Our alumni community is diverse. To reflect our community, we will celebrate diversity of thought, create programs and services that foster a sense of belonging and continue to champion the recruitment of diverse Alumni Council members and volunteers.
- **Lifelong learning** – We are well positioned at the U of A, with our exceptional researchers and experts, to embrace curiosity and dialogue. Being proactive and creating safe spaces for the alumni community to explore topical and contemporary issues will increase our relevance and advance our brand as a world class institution.

Planning Context:

Alumni form a powerful network, united by their unique educational and social experiences at the University of Alberta and by the benefit of a world-class education. Engagement with this diverse community begins while on campus and continues throughout each life stage and alumni's unique lived experiences. The relationships within the alumni community and between alumni and the university are intended to be mutually supportive and beneficial. Cultivation of these connections is a shared responsibility involving the Office of Alumni Relations, development offices, faculties, campus partners, and dedicated alumni volunteers, both locally and globally, who give their time to nurture and inspire a supportive and engaged alumni community.



Many factors shape the alumni experience and how and when alumni may choose to engage with the Alumni Association and the university.

The outer circles illustrate how dimensions of our daily lives, our lived experience (the experiences and knowledges of an individual shaped by gender identity, ethnicity, race, class, location, etc.) and our community and world will influence our ability to participate. These dimensions of our lives are interconnected.

Ultimately this context will impact how we choose to engage with the university over the course of our lifetime.



Our Priorities

Goal
A

A: High Impact Outreach

Inspire the alumni community, elevate the university brand, and reinforce the impact of the U of A and its graduates.

Goal
B

B: Cohort-Based Engagement

Focus and refine alumni strategies to build relationships with cohorts based on differing needs.

Goal
C

C: Supportive Community

Create an inclusive, supportive network of alumni giving back to students, the alumni community, and the university.

Goal
D

D: Truth and Understanding

Take intentional and conscientious steps to acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and to foster understanding and respect.

GOAL A: HIGH IMPACT OUTREACH

Inspire the alumni community, elevate the university brand, and reinforce the impact of the U of A and its graduates.

As a leading global university, the U of A's brand inspires alumni to be "change makers, community builders, and world shapers" (*Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact*, pg 8). The university and the Alumni Association are uniquely positioned to inspire critical conversations that help shape society. The shared challenge is communicating the breadth and depth of innovations and discoveries at the university and the broader contributions U of A alumni make within their communities.

Graduates who have benefited from a world-class education can serve as advocates for their alma mater and as connectors to communities, professions, and industries. Communications, events, and programs should aim to inform core audiences globally, inspire pride, build community, and amplify university priorities. This effort is supported by needs assessment data that indicates that 80 percent of alumni are interested in educational presentations and lifelong learning.

Strategies

- 1) **Coordinating outreach** - In partnership with External Relations marketing and communications, tailor and increase coordination of communications across the university to manage the volume and impact of messaging sent to alumni.
- 2) **Identifying themes** - Choose compelling and memorable themes aligned to institutional priorities and alumni interests to inspire advocacy and underscore the university's reputation and ranking.
- 3) **Celebrating alumni** - Showcase the accomplishments of alumni and demonstrate the impact of U of A graduates within their communities and worldwide. Research the collective impact of U of A graduates and communicate their contributions to the economy, society, and communities within and beyond Alberta.
- 4) **Maximizing communication channels** - Develop an alumni voice that personalizes connection and invokes a sense of nostalgia and community to foster engagement across different channels, including social media.
- 5) **Developing a balanced program of in-person and virtual events and lectures** - Offer timely, topical and engaging events and programs that feature university discoveries, and experiences of interest to alumni. Develop online and in-person offerings that inspire conversation and bring thought leaders to our campuses to initiate dialogue and spark curiosity across diverse audiences.

"The university and the Alumni Association are uniquely positioned to inspire critical conversations that help shape society."

GOAL B: COHORT-BASED ENGAGEMENT

Focus and refine alumni strategies to build relationships with cohorts based on differing needs.

A graduate's relationship with the university varies according to student experience, degree, program, geography or lifestage. Needs assessment data indicates that 32 percent of alumni identify with the university as a whole, while 59 percent identify with their program of study, department or faculty. Recent grads express stronger connections to their program. Alumni in later life stages tend to have a stronger connection to the university overall. With this in mind, a cohort engagement strategy is required to foster deeper relationships.

An effective program will balance cross-faculty engagement opportunities with experiences that are customized to meet the unique interests of each discipline and profession. Strategic use of data will assist in planning how best to engage within a diverse alumni community. Exploring industry and professional trends will align our efforts to effectively engage alumni by cohort. University partners will help shape programs that engage recent grads, professional networks, donors, and regional communities – online and in-person.

Strategies

- 1) **Transitioning student to recent grad** - Leverage existing resources to welcome recent grads to the alumni community, targeting alumni 1 to 2 years from graduation. Many current programs and services – Campus Chapters, Faculty Engagement, Regional Chapters, alumni social media, career supports, and educational programming – will contribute to supporting this critical transition period to the workforce. This will include alumni who experienced primarily an online learning environment.
- 2) **Programming for Faculty and Campus Chapters** - Build an understanding of the unique culture of each program to design meaningful touchpoints that align with profession/industry interests. Maximize resources by seeking meaningful collaborations across campuses and colleges. Programming may include recognition, exploring industry-specific professional development opportunities, networking, supporting student mentorship/preceptorship, or connecting graduates to ongoing research.
- 3) **Engaging regionally** - Maximize access to a wider audience by capitalizing on the success of online engagement. Offer a balanced program of in-person and virtual events that reach more alumni participants worldwide and improves accessibility for participants.
- 4) **Understanding donors** - Partner with Development colleagues to understand donors and potential supporters of the U of A and consider how they may wish to engage in outreach activities offered by the alumni community.
- 5) **Using data** - Use segmentation and evaluation to inform program design and to assess the effectiveness of our communication and outreach to specific cohorts.

“University partners will help shape programs that engage recent grads, professional networks, donors, and regional communities – online and in-person.”

GOAL C: SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Create an inclusive, supportive network of alumni giving back to students, the alumni community, and the university.

Community building and social connections are facilitated through alumni programs, events, and volunteer opportunities by creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for all. Alumni volunteers give of their time in many ways – through experiential learning, involvement with chapters and committees, serving as mentors or role models, or positively impacting student mental health through the Alumni Student Support and Engagement Team.

Gifts of support to the university are transformative, advancing innovation and student success. As the university engages in a multi-year campaign to support students, alumni can rally our community to assist the next generation of change makers and world shapers.

Strategies

- 1) **Focusing on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)** - Serve as a catalyst for conversations about EDI with alumni, and create inclusive and accessible educational programming for the alumni community.
- 2) **Inspiring volunteers** - Continue the momentum of current programs that offer meaningful ways for volunteers to support students, inspire recent grads and mentor fellow alumni, and connect alumni with businesses, industries, and innovative projects (e.g. ThresholdImpact Venture Mentoring Service, Alumni Student Support and Engagement Team, and career supports).
- 3) **Fostering and advancing careers** - Prepare alumni as they transition to the workforce and adjust to career changes by providing mentorship and professional development and networking opportunities, using a range of tools and formats.
- 4) **Emphasizing donor impact** - Demonstrate the impact and importance of giving to students, teaching and research through campaign messaging. Ensure giving is accessible (through online giving, planned giving, and crowdfunding), stewarded, acknowledged, and recognized.

“As the university engages in a multi-year campaign to support students, alumni can rally our community to assist the next generation of change makers and world shapers.”

GOAL D: TRUTH AND UNDERSTANDING

Truth and Understanding - Take intentional and conscientious steps to acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and to foster understanding and respect.

Graduates are privileged to receive a world-class education at the U of A – an academic institution situated on Indigenous lands. Recognizing this, the alumni community strives to build supportive, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous alumni by acknowledging the individual and collective harms perpetrated against First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Gaining mutual understanding is a continual practice, which can be enhanced by learning and by sharing through the variety of educational opportunities offered by the Alumni Association to alumni and the broader community.

The alumni community can create and embrace safe and welcoming spaces. We can be allies, working together with Indigenous alumni to co-envision a program of Indigenous alumni engagement that is inclusive, builds community, and supports future generations. This work is guided by the University's Indigenous Strategic Plan, *Braiding Past, Present and Future*, and aligns with the institution's commitment to this plan and its role in Indigenous-focused work.

Strategies

- 1) **Delivering education** - Continue to offer diverse educational and cultural opportunities to understand the truth about residential schools and ongoing impact of colonial structures. Raise presence and profile through events to reinforce the "beauty, pride, and resilience of Indigenous people" (*Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan*, pg 40).
- 2) **Reviewing practices and processes** - Include Indigenous perspectives in reviewing our practices and processes as an alumni community. (e.g. Alumni Awards processes, recruitment to Alumni Council).
- 3) **Programming** - Co-envision an engagement program with Indigenous alumni, specifically advancing the following:
 - Working in partnership with an Indigenous Alumni Advisory Circle to consider the development of a future chapter.
 - Designing an online newsletter to connect Indigenous alumni and promote programs.
 - Increasing storytelling to raise the profile and presence of Indigenous graduates and to inspire award nominations.
 - Contributing to mentorship experiences for Indigenous alumni and students.

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Leading with Purpose.



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