



THE STEADWARD CENTRE  
for Personal & Physical Achievement

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
2015-2020



### ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & PARA-SPORT DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS

The Steadward Centre is an expert in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-Sport development, annually serving more than 1000 children and adults experiencing disability and training more than 250 students. As part of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta, the Centre's strong research and education focus allow it to deliver innovative programs and to share proven expertise with community fitness and sport leaders across Alberta.

## INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan will guide the work of The Steadward Centre (TSC) from 2015 to 2020. It is aligned with the directions, priorities and expectations of the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation and the University of Alberta. It is designed to position The Steadward Centre as a hub for pioneering, high-caliber, research-based Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport development.

The Mission, Practical Vision and Strategic Directions emphasize a focus on personal achievement in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport, from recreational to high-performance, and on improving access to opportunities for participation within Alberta. Research is also emphasized as essential to the development of innovative approaches and programs that can be widely shared across Alberta and Canada.

Relationships and collaborations will be fundamental to the success of this Strategy and central to the work of TSC. A progressive and dynamic funding framework will be critical to help secure and stabilize funding, which is expected to continue to be a challenge.

This plan considers the perspectives of a wide range of program participants, athletes, partners, community and sport organizations, researchers, educators and staff. Surveys, focus groups, interviews and workshops were used to seek input. The Strategy responds to the needs and opportunities identified, and the talent and potential of The Steadward Centre. It will be reviewed annually and supported by operational and program specific plans. See Appendix B for an overview of the planning process.

## MISSION - THE WORK WE DO

Inspire individual achievement in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport by conducting and applying innovative research, widely sharing expert knowledge and delivering highly successful programs for individuals experiencing disability.

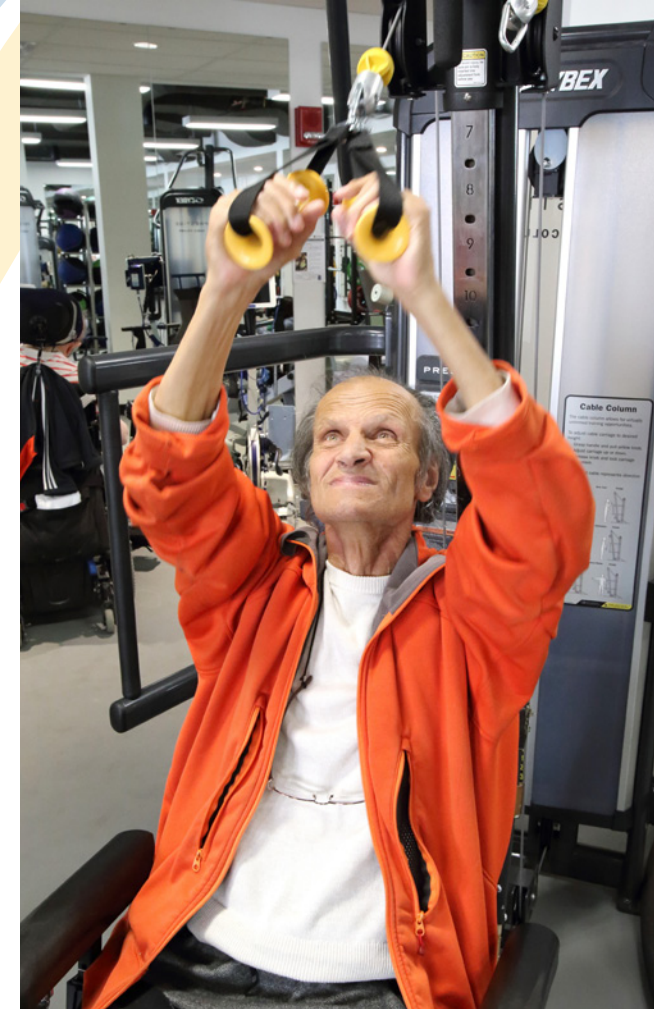
## PRACTICAL VISION WHAT WE ARE WORKING TO CREATE

The Steadward Centre is a hub for pioneering, high-caliber, research-based Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport development. Supported by:

- Embedded Research and Teaching
- Integrated Continuum of Physical Activity, Fitness and Sport Opportunities
- Comprehensive Athlete Development Pathway
- Strong Strategic Partnerships
- Progressive Funding Framework

## OUR PRINCIPLES VALUES THAT INSPIRE OUR WORK

- Living with an impairment is best understood by those with an impairment
- Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport development should be accessible by all who choose to participate
- Innovation is our expectation
- Our decisions and approaches are informed by research, and our work informs our research
- More can be accomplished in partnership than alone
- Meaningful inclusion requires communities and individuals informed about the possibilities



## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Many factors were considered and influence TSC's future directions. The following is an overview of the primary factors considered in planning. See Appendix A for details about TSC and its programs.

### 1 EXCELLENT REPUTATION ON WHICH TO BUILD

The Steadward Centre has an excellent reputation and good relationships with those familiar with its work. There is a high level of confidence in and satisfaction with its offerings and its unique role is appreciated by partners, athletes and program participants. Many feel it needs to be better known and connected inside the Faculty and University, and in priority communities.

### 2 TSC OVERALL DIRECTIONS STRONGLY SUPPORTED

Participants and partners strongly support TSC's mission and directions. Greater emphasis on Para-sport is very well supported by provincial and national sport organizations, athletes, funders and the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation. They identify an acute need for Para-athlete development in Canada, in particular for high-performance competitive athletes. Some program participants are concerned a renewed emphasis on Para-sport development could erode current programs and access. Ongoing advancements in Adapted Physical Activity programs and access for children and adults will continue. Conversations with participants and partners will continue to influence the work of TSC.

### 3 RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CRITICAL TO FUND STRATEGIC PLAN

Growing a strong and productive research program, building a hub for Para-sport and increasing access to Adapted Physical Activity opportunities across Alberta will require considerably more human and financial resources than are now available to TSC. Creative fund development and resourcing strategies are needed. Access to Faculty and University talent and networks, along with external collaborations and partnerships are fundamental to success.

### 4 NEW SPACE FACILITATES NEW DIRECTIONS

Moving into 17,000 square feet of new space with new equipment offers opportunities to expand Adapted Physical Activity programs and grow Para-sport development. The new environment is designed to be welcoming and easy to use and navigate. Programming and managing the space wisely is essential to advancing TSC's priorities and meeting participant and athlete needs.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND PRIMARY INITIATIVES

- DIRECTIONS AND STEPS WE WILL TAKE TO ACHIEVE OUR PRACTICAL VISION

## 1 BECOME A HUB FOR HIGH-PERFORMANCE ATHLETE AND COACH DEVELOPMENT

- Integrate Para-sport with U of A Green and Gold System and use sport science expertise to develop, mentor and support Para-athletes and Coaches.
- Focus on 2-4 sports where meaningful progress can be made within five years.
- Focus on next generation Para-athletes with podium potential.
- Establish training environments designed for the sports identified, including talented coaches and exceptional facilities and equipment.
- Stage Para-sport training events and camps to expose work of TSC, enhance networking and positioning, and build TSC experience and skills.
- Network, collaborate and partner with national and provincial sport sector organizations and training facilities to leverage knowledge, expertise and supports.

## 2 BE THE "GOLD STANDARD" FOR ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ACROSS ALBERTA

- Collaborate with the Faculty to develop and institute certification for an Adapted Fitness Provider offered to University students and community professionals.
- Establish recognized accessibility/inclusion standards for fitness/recreation/sport facilities in Alberta.
- Establish AltaStim FES exercise protocols as the "gold standard" across Canada.
- Secure and maintain state-of-the-art, barrier-free equipment and facilities for all abilities.
- Build a strong training program for TSC students and volunteers to enrich learning and to enhance the participant and athlete experience.
- Create consistent qualification standards for respective TSC staff roles.



## 3 BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES AND ACCESS TO ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WITH CLEAR PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND PARA-SPORT GOALS

- Work with University of Alberta and Mount Royal University to establish "The Steadward Centre South".
- Collaborate with fitness, recreation and sport organizations/facilities to increase access to fitness, recreation and sport opportunities regionally and provincially.
- Develop pathways to achieve personal physical activity, fitness and sport goals within the community.
- Support the transition of children and adults to community recreation, fitness and recreational sport opportunities, regionally and provincially.
- Provide opportunities and access to coaches and individuals living with impairment to engage in community sport programs.
- To facilitate pathways and transitions:
  - Establish consistent internal and external referral system within TSC programs and between TSC and external programs and services
  - Apply skill sets of staff members across all programs
  - Expose TSC participants to a wide range of physical activity, sport and recreation opportunities

## 4 EXPAND AND FULLY INTEGRATE RESEARCH, TEACHING AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES AND SERVICES

- Institute a focused research framework integrated with the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Strategic Research Plan, addressing: research priorities, researcher infrastructure, fee structure, roles, grants administration, etc.
- Build an environment attractive to researchers and students with a structure and process that supports facilitation and management of research and education activities.
- Identify and create opportunities to increase research focused on Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport development.
- Translate and broadly communicate research findings and new knowledge.
- Widely share TSC program models and approaches to broaden understanding of and access to Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport opportunities, and to increase exposure to TSC work.
- Broaden education opportunities for professionals in Adapted Physical Activity across Alberta.
- Use evidence to inform/shape TSC programs and education of Adapted Physical Activity professionals.
- Become an equipment and technology testing site.
- Build collaborative relationships with national and international organizations to take advantage of and contribute to research and education opportunities.



## 5 BECOME KNOWN BY KEY INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

- Clarify and demonstrate the “new” TSC brand as a progressive leader and expert in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport development.
- Market and communicate about TSC to:
  - attract athletes and participants
  - attract researchers, staff, students and volunteers
  - increase support and funding
  - identify partners/collaborators
  - build provincial, national and international networks in the disability and sport sectors
- Collaborate with and engage Faculty and University leaders in the evolution of TSC to a “flagship” Centre for the University.
- Seek the endorsement and involvement of “iconic” Paralympians.

## 6 INSTITUTE A PROGRESSIVE AND DYNAMIC FUNDING FRAMEWORK

- In collaboration with the Faculty and the University develop a funding model that supports growth, leverages partnerships and provides maximum flexibility to seek investment.
- Institute a fundraising strategy to seek support from foundations, corporations, sport organizations, affiliated individuals and organizations.
- Partner, when feasible, with sport and disability organizations/businesses to effectively use expertise, facilities and resources of all parties.
- Explore and identify opportunities to generate revenue, including:
  - tiered prices based on the level of service provided
  - accredited services and credential certifications
  - staging of Para-sport events
  - equipment testing
  - project-specific funds for new and short-term initiatives
  - available matching funds
- Institute an aggressive research program and increase TSC-driven research.



## MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

TSC programs, services and resource materials are grounded in sound empirical evidence. Rigorous, meaningful and thorough evaluation measures are employed, including qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Personal achievement is evaluated using a variety of program and participant information measures. Centre activities and deliverables are systematically reported, reviewed and tracked in accordance with Faculty, University and funder requirements. Measures tracked include:

### PROGRAM/PARTICIPANT

- Number and demographics of registrants for each program
- Participation rates (adherence and attrition)
- Satisfaction with and quality of programs, instruction and facilities by participants, parents (Free2BMe), volunteers and instructors, and perceptions of personal improvement
- Gains in individual motor skills, physical activity and fitness against set goals
- Reach of TSC programs and methodologies across Alberta

### EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- Number and nature of student opportunities provided
- Quality of and satisfaction with student learning opportunities
- Number and type of educational opportunities provided locally and provincially
- Number and type of presentations, conferences, workshops facilitated and attended
- Number and nature of research projects and collaborations
- Publication, presentation and communication of research activity and findings

### OPERATIONS

- TSC activities
- Type and value of grants
- Number and value of donations and gifts-in-kind
- Number and effectiveness of collaborations and partnerships
- Staff retention and engagement



Annual Operational Plans outline specific objectives, outcomes, deliverables and measures for each year of the Strategic Plan. A comprehensive tracking system records and summarizes all activity and success is measured and outlined in an annual activity report. Program and Unit reports are completed and shared quarterly, and each year ends with an Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement. Grant Funded Projects and Initiatives are reported on in accordance with granting guidelines, and identified outcomes, outputs and deliverables.

## APPENDIX A

### - OVERVIEW OF THE STEADWARD CENTRE AND ITS PROGRAMS

Founded by Dr. Robert Steadward in 1978, The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement is an internationally acclaimed disability research Centre supporting the sport and fitness goals of people experiencing disability with effective, research based, sport, physical activity and athlete development programs that promote health and well-being.

The Steadward Centre serves as a research, teaching and service delivery unit within the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. Our mission is to *"inspire individual achievement in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-sport by conducting and applying innovative research, widely sharing expert knowledge and delivering highly successful programs for individuals experiencing disability."*

#### WE RESEARCH, EDUCATE AND COLLABORATE TO INSPIRE:

- Leadership, independence and inclusion for people living with impairment
- Meaningful advances in Adapted Physical Activity and Para-Sport achievements in personal fitness, motor skill development and athletic performance
- Future leaders, educators, coaches and health care professionals

#### A DEDICATED TEAM OF 15 STAFF PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR 1,100 INDIVIDUALS AGES 4-84+ LIVING WITH PHYSICAL, SENSORY AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL IMPAIRMENT TO ACHIEVE THEIR PERSONAL FITNESS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND/OR ATHLETIC GOALS THROUGH FIVE KEY PROGRAM AREAS:

- Adapted Physical Activity Programs for Adults
- Athlete Development for Para-sport
- Community Exercise Transition Program
- Free2BMe Physical Activity for Kids and Teens with Disabilities
- Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) Exercise

Additionally, 275 post-secondary students receive training annually through the completion of community service learning projects, practicum placements, and volunteer experiences.

#### LOCATED WITHIN THE VAN VLIET COMPLEX AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, THE STEADWARD CENTRE OFFERS AN ACCREDITED FITNESS CENTRE THAT PROVIDES:

- Evidence-based Adapted Physical Activity programming
- A fully accessible fitness facility
- Specialized adapted fitness equipment
- Highly trained and certified staff
- Sport Science expertise for Para-athletes
- Individualized motor skill development and fitness training
- Standardized and modified assessments
- Opportunity for participation in research

Provincial in reach, our established partnerships with researchers, community leaders, health care and disability organizations, post-secondary institutions and school boards affords us the opportunity to share knowledge, learn from others, work collaboratively and demonstrate an impact that is recognized locally and around the world.



## APPENDIX B

### - PLANNING PROCESS

The Planning Process was initiated in January 2015. Input was sought from a range of stakeholders between February and May 2015. Plan drafting and discussions were undertaken between May and July. Prior to the start of the planning process eleven interviews were conducted with representatives of ten health and disability-related organizations to understand their perspectives on the role TSC can play in providing adapted fitness and exercise programs for adults experiencing disability. This input was also considered as part of the planning process.

1. Eight interviews conducted with University leaders, provincial and national sport organizations, a disability organization and TSC founder and fellow Management Committee members to seek their perspectives on the future directions of TSC based on their current and/or potential relationship with TSC.
2. Four surveys conducted to understand clients' satisfaction with the quality, delivery, success and range of programs offered by TSC, and their support for the role and directions of TSC. Surveys were conducted with: Adult participants, Athletes, Parents/Guardians of child participants, and Individuals transitioning to community fitness or sport opportunities.
3. Discussions held with the Scientific Advisory and Education Advisory Committees to seek committee members' perspectives on the future directions of TSC as a center for research and learning.
4. Three follow-up focus groups held with athletes, adult participants and parents/guardians of child participants to seek input on the quality and relevance of TSC programs and the role of TSC into the future.
5. Workshops held with TSC staff and leadership team to discuss opportunities and challenges, and identify the directions to be taken by TSC in the next five years.
6. An iterative process undertaken by TSC leadership to clarify and complete the draft Strategic Plan for review by Faculty leadership, TSC Management Committee, Advisory Committees and Member Advisory Group.

“When we focus on what is possible, we find a way. Adapting an environment for individuals with different abilities to work out, train, participate or play is far more than accommodating access. It is a philosophy. It is seeing the possibilities for an individual to achieve.”

#### **CONTACT US**

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#### **WHERE TO FIND US**

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