

STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 – 2023

WHAT WE DO

Our mission is to serve, engage, and represent students.

Four pillars support our mission:

- We offer services and businesses that provide for the needs of students.
- We organize events and programs that build community on campus.
- We advocate for student interests to the University, government, and the greater community.
- We provide and create space for students to relax, study, and socialize.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

We aspire for students to shape every aspect of the university experience.

Our vision of a successful future is one where students:

- Feel safe, accepted, and welcome on campus;
- Thrive in a diverse intellectual community;
- Are empowered and confident in their ability to succeed;
- Contribute to society as active citizens and effective leaders; and
- Know they have a voice and the power to effect change.

WHAT GUIDES US

Our values keep students at the core of what we do.

Do what's right, not what's easy.

Acting with integrity and respect is essential to an open, collaborative, and democratic organization.

Inspire change for the world.

Demonstrating students' power to effect change inspires the next generation of citizens and leaders.

Act with unbridled compassion.

Providing an inclusive and caring environment empowers students to make the most of any challenges they face.

Always keep moving.

Adapting and innovating fulfills the expectations of our dynamic community.

Learn from the past to improve tomorrow.

Understanding our history is key to building an equitable and sustainable future.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND GOALS

EMPOWERING OUR STUDENTS

To achieve our vision, the Students' Union must empower students to effect change. This means that we must provide students with the tools they need to shape their University experience and ensure that all students are able to engage with the Students' Union and its services.

- **Support and advocate for the creation of a charter of student rights.**
A charter of student rights will ensure the just treatment of students and empower students to advocate for themselves. The fair treatment of students should not be impeded by the broad array of documents that govern student conduct and behaviour.
- **Support and advocate for the adoption of more versatile, effective, and fair discipline and dispute mechanisms.** Student concerns can go unresolved due to limited needs-based options for resolving conduct and conflict issues. The Students' Union will support multifaceted approaches to address situations in which our students are harmed or experience injustice.
- **Ensure student leadership reflects the student body.** There are a number of financial and other systemic barriers to student leadership on campus. The Students' Union will use research and data to explore the need for, and the feasibility of, programs that help underrepresented demographics overcome barriers to getting involved in leadership roles, particularly political roles. Further, the Students' Union will design strategies to reduce these barriers and actively support diversity in leadership.
- **Invest in professional development opportunities for our student representatives, student groups, volunteers, and student staff.**
The more coordinated, invested, and knowledgeable our student advocates are, the more impact they will have. Supporting our student leaders will lead to stronger governance and organizational structures.
- **Improve access to Students' Union spaces, resources, and expertise.**
The Students' Union has a wealth of knowledge, experience, and materials for effective event execution. These assets should be accessible to student groups so that they can host memorable events, develop stronger programming, and create compelling content.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND GOALS

BUILDING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

The strength of our relationships is a key part of what defines our capacity. We need to work with others - our members, alumni, and the University community as a whole - to achieve our mission and vision. Our reputation is a critical asset in developing productive relationships, underpinning our ability to forge the collaborations we need to succeed. Our credibility and communication with our members and stakeholders are fundamental to both our legitimacy and our efficacy.

- **Differentiate between the responsibilities of the Students' Union and the University.** The Students' Union and the University of Alberta, although closely connected, are separate entities that often have competing priorities. The Students' Union should demonstrate its value to students and University partners in all relationships. We should develop resources that differentiate between functions of the Students' Union and University, and clarify responsibilities within existing partnerships.
- **Foster a collaborative culture between Students' Union governing bodies and operations.** Student stewardship of the organization is integral to effective decision making and long term sustainability. Enhancing training, resources, events and personal development opportunities for Councillors will help create a collaborative culture in which the organization and its governing bodies mutually benefit from each other's expertise. Implement internal recommendations about reconciliation and relationships with FNMI students.
- **Strengthen our credibility by sharing our research, best practices, and program knowledge.** A disconnected student movement puts associations at risk of duplicating research efforts or being detached from established best practices. Connecting with other student unions and associations, the Students' Union should widely share what makes us a leader in the student movement.
- **Develop stronger partnerships with cultural groups and the international student community.** Our campus community is increasingly diverse. The Students' Union should recognize that meeting the unique needs of students depends on a robust connection and discourse with all of our members. We should seek opportunities to increase outreach and collaboration to better serve members.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND GOALS

BUILDING OUR RELATIONSHIPS

- **Deepen our relationships with representative associations in order to increase connections with students.** Representative associations are unique and invaluable assets that help the Students' Union understand and improve student life. Sustaining and enriching a network of student leaders will create opportunities for joint advocacy efforts and program delivery.
- **Support initiatives that build a unified student voice.** United provincial and federal student voices are key to advancing the student movement. We should provide more opportunities for organizations with shared goals to connect with and participate in provincial and federal student efforts.
- **Develop a strategy for alumni to engage with the Students' Union.** Students who build a connection with the Students' Union during their time at the University may want to preserve their relationship after they graduate. The Students' Union can benefit from their knowledge and experience while providing an opportunity for alumni to give back to the community.
- **Work in partnership with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) student representatives and communities.** The Students' Union should build collaborative partnerships and relationships with representative groups to develop strong Indigenous policy positions and operational initiatives. Further, the Students' Union should continue to support and implement internal recommendations about reconciliation and relationships with FNMI students.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS AND GOALS

STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANIZATION

The stronger the Students' Union is as an organization, the better it can both serve students and advocate fearlessly on their behalf. We need to maintain a strong, stable, and growing revenue base, continuously review and improve our programs to be both more efficient and more effective, and ensure that the fundamental sources of our strength - our physical assets and our people - are secure and focused.

- **Develop and adhere to an improved student consultation framework.** Student feedback and participation are key when developing student-centric bylaws, policies, and operations. A stronger consultation framework will help us to make decisions that align with student priorities.
- **Enhance annual planning processes and implement multi-year forecasting to ensure the Students' Union can support the programs that students need.** The Students' Union must respond to emerging challenges and opportunities to remain relevant to its members. Continuous assessment of existing programming, services, and operations allows us to ensure value for students.
- **Encourage collaborative efforts between departments.** The Students' Union must promote and sustain interdepartmental communication and collaboration to maximize efficiency and prevent duplication of resources. Linking areas of expertise help us build capacity.
- **Promote an inclusive and engaged culture in the workplace.** The backbone of the Students' Union is its staff and volunteers. The Students' Union must improve and modernize its human resources technologies and processes for better communications, feedback, and access to information. Staff and volunteers should have the skills and resources they need to exceed student expectations.
- **Explore and pursue more revenue-generating opportunities.** The Students' Union should always seek to reduce its reliance on student fees. Strengthening our businesses and pursuing emerging revenue sources boost our ability to fulfill our mandate to students. The Students' Union should always be looking for grants, partnerships, and sponsorship to reduce investment by students.
- **Support the creation and maintenance of accessible online spaces.** Students increasingly use online platforms and social media to connect with the Students' Union. A modernized online presence helps the Students' Union meet students where they are, and adapt to the ever-changing best practices of the digital world.
- **Continue to refine and develop the brand identity of the Students' Union.** Effective communications are integral to showcasing the value of Students' Union membership. Producing creative, engaging, and thoughtful content promotes meaningful connections with our members.

THE ROLE OF THIS PLAN

SERVING ALL STUDENTS

We exist to improve the lives of our members, and to be successful we must do this diligently and fully. We need to keep our finger on the pulse of student life and provide students with the supports they need to succeed. By working with community members to address issues of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion, we will better recognize and dismantle systemic barriers to participation in student life.

- **Grow the physical presence of the Students' Union.** In order to provide the most value for members, the Students' Union should continue to integrate and expand its spaces across our campuses. Advocating for and investing in student-oriented spaces improves the accessibility and relevance of the Students' Union to all its members.
- **Support and encourage diverse programming across campuses.** A range of programming opportunities contributes to a rich, meaningful, and inclusive student experience. The Students' Union draws on the unique expertise and talents of students from different backgrounds to provide for the social and cultural needs of our members.
- **Remove barriers to community involvement and participation in Students' Union programming.** Co-curricular activities are essential in creating a flourishing campus community. The Students' Union recognizes that accessibility challenges and financial barriers may limit students' ability to participate. The Students' Union will commit to addressing these barriers.
- **Strengthen our collective voice by engaging students in advocacy.** Our advocacy efforts have more legitimacy when students are aware of, engaged with, and represented by our work. The Students' Union will develop the necessary resources for public involvement, external advocacy, and internal governance supports to engage students in advocacy work.
- **Connect students to academic and personal support services.** Knowledge of resources ensures that students are able to find support when needed. The Students' Union will continue to support initiatives that connect students to all relevant resources in a barrier-free manner. The Students' Union will work to ensure that students face minimal stigma and burden of proof when accessing such resources.

THE ROLE OF THIS PLAN

The Strategic Plan provides a broad framework that guides the Students' Union in its decision making and goal setting.

The Mission, Vision, and Values are the foundation of our culture and we use them in determining our actions. The Critical Success Factors and their associated goals are used to frame particular priorities for the life of the plan; these are the areas we must work intentionally to address. In this way, the plan provides long-term consistency to our actions, while permitting ongoing, annual revisions to how we execute the imperatives of the plan.

In conclusion, this plan and its predecessors are the documents that ensure our operations continue to best serve the students at the University of Alberta. This plan is a commitment to the long-term sustainability of our organization, advancing the student movement, and developing the Students' Union in ways that are important to students.

