

University of Alberta Students' Union

Strategic Plan

2011 — 2014

Mission

The Students' Union exists to serve and represent University of Alberta undergraduate students in order to support their pursuit of knowledge and enhance their university experience.

Values

Who we are is expressed, in large part, by the values we live by. As an organization, our shared values guide our actions and shape our culture.

Stewardship

We value practicing responsible governance by following accountable, transparent, and stable democratic processes within a collaborative culture of honesty and integrity.

Innovation

We value approaching challenges with openness, ingenuity, and initiative, while embracing change and encouraging creativity.

Compassion

We value respecting and supporting the rights, dignity, needs, and talents of all within an inclusive, diverse, and safe community.

Sustainability

We value ensuring the ability to serve current and future generations by being socially, environmentally, and economically responsible.

Citizenship

We value fostering an environment that encourages critical thinking, leadership, personal growth, professional development, and active participation in the community.

Vision

Our Students' Union will reflect the passion, ambition, and unbounded potential of our members. We will strive to exceed student expectations by championing their interests and needs, playing a central role in how they engage and connect with their university.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

These Critical Success Factors are strategic themes that the Students' Union must pay attention to in order to fulfill its Mission and Vision.

1) Good Governance

As a democratic, representative organization, good governance processes are the foundation of our legitimacy and effectiveness. Our governance processes should be characterized as:

- a) **Student-directed**, with the ultimate authority in the Students' Union resting with elected students;
- b) **Responsive to students**, accurately reflecting the needs and wishes of members;
- c) **Transparent and open**, ensuring accountability and enabling an ongoing dialog with students and stakeholders;
- d) **Well-understood**, with clear lines of responsibility and a shared understanding of our mandate;
- e) **Responsible and ethical conduct** in our daily operational and advocacy efforts; and,
- f) **Vibrant**, with competitive, fair, well-contested elections and an engaged student leadership.

2) Engagement

Our mandate to enhance the experience of students requires that we encourage and foster the involvement and engagement of students. We encourage engagement by:

- a) **Developing student leaders** and fostering an environment of empowerment;
- b) **Maintaining a strong image and clear identity**, distinguishing the SU within the larger University community;
- c) **Actively promoting strong campus spirit**, encouraging identification with the University community;
- d) **Providing opportunities for students** to make a real, direct, and positive impact on their immediate community; and,
- e) **Increasing the involvement opportunities** available and communicating them and the benefits of involvement to students.

3) Planning and Assessment (Continuous Review)

Improving how well we meet our mission and adapting as our environment changes requires that the Students' Union have strong planning and effective assessment practices in place. Key elements of those practices include:

- a) **Understanding the needs of our members**, and our other stakeholders, to ensure that our programs and activities are meeting their needs;
- b) **Effective planning and evaluation mechanisms**, to define what we want to do and how we will measure our progress;

- c) **Encouraging ongoing innovation and improvement**, by providing the resources, systems, and an organizational culture that empowers staff and volunteers to develop effective long-term solutions; and,
- d) **Transparency of success or shortfall**, being honest about what works and what doesn't, and using our experiences to learn and do better the next time.

4) Resources

To be successful, the Students' Union must have access to the appropriate human, financial, and technical resources, coupled with the required physical and space assets. This situation will be characterized by:

- a) **Sufficient financial resources** to support short-term flexibility and long term viability;
- b) **Motivated, qualified, and well-supported personnel**, both employees and volunteers, coupled with effective recruitment, retention, and staff development programs;
- c) **High-quality physical and space assets** sufficient to allow the organization to both deliver its existing program and to pursue new opportunities;
- d) **Efficient information systems and operating processes** that match program needs and allow for growth; and,
- e) **A sustainable approach** to resource use, keeping in mind the social, environmental, and economic impacts of our actions.

5) Continuity and Transition

With change being a defining characteristic of the Students' Union's organizational design, effectively managing for continuity and transition are essential. In our context, this requires:

- a) **Strong records management**, to ensure the accessibility and usability of current and past records;
- b) **Developing student staff effectively**, to allow elected and term staff to quickly learn their roles and how they fit in, and contribute, to the overall operations of the organization; and,
- c) **Strong internal communications**, to allow ideas and information to move easily throughout the organization.
- d) **Fostering a common identity and unifying organizational culture** within the Students' Union.

6) Credibility

As a representative organization, the Students' Union's credibility with stakeholders is essential to success. Our credibility is demonstrated by:

- a) **Establishing a relationship of trust with our stakeholders**, based on our open and honest communications with them;
- b) **Being consistent and fair** in our relationships with individuals and communities; and
- c) **Demonstrating competence and consistency** in both the actions we take and way we communicate.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The strategic goals outline the key priorities of the Students' Union, stated broadly. They drive the development of specific programs and objectives within individual departments of the Students' Union, as outlined in Executive goal statements, Operating Plans and budgets.

1. Effective representation and advocacy of student needs, and ensuring clear accountability of student representatives.
2. Establish an environment that promotes student spirit and involvement, and maximizes students' sense of ownership of the Students' Union and their university experience.
3. Develop an expansive communication infrastructure to support effective communication both internally and externally.
4. Ensure the seamless continuity and transition of elected representatives, staff, and volunteers on an ongoing basis.
5. Support the educational and university experience of students by providing relevant programs and services.
6. Provide sufficient and sustainable financial, human, capital, and technical resources to achieve the mission of the Student' Union.
7. Create and maintain systems and a culture that support continuous review, evaluation and ongoing improvement.