



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**

Changing the Story

An Integrated Action Plan for transforming our
vibrant and interconnected university community

Office of the Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging)

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A Note About Language

Language is powerful, and words carry worlds of meaning. Several key terms, each with meanings unique to this Integrated Action Plan, appear throughout the document. Each of these terms may not have been chosen five years ago and they may not reflect wise thinking two years from now. To help contextualize the use of these terms, definitions are provided below.

- **“Our”** means all of us — not just senior leadership or an abstract concept. When the words “our” or “we” are used, they are intended to represent the whole interconnected community of people who work, study and engage across all areas of the University of Alberta.
- **“Institutional Story”** refers to the narrative used to guide us, instruct us and give us a sense of shared identity.
- **“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion” or “EDI”** refers to a framework, process or commitment to promote meaningful participation and better outcomes for all. The three concepts of EDI are separate, yet interrelated. When used together in continuous and coordinated ways, they have the potential to create organizations that not only respect human dignity, but also encourage the development of learning and working environments shaped by curiosity, rigorous inquiry, mutual flourishing and respect.
- **“Institutional Ecosystem”** refers to the complex network of interacting, interconnected and interdependent parts (e.g., people, spaces, units, policies, technologies, to name a few) of our institutional whole.
- **“Institutional Decision Makers”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem where strategic decisions are approved and communicated to the university community.
- **“Coordinating Offices and Groups”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem responsible for coordinating institutional priorities and mandates with the needs and insights shared by community members at all levels of the university.
- **“Everyday Contributors and Advocates”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem that represents everyday actions and grassroots advocacy taking place in various locations across the university.
- **“Trajectories of Action”** is used to describe the interconnected paths required to build and sustain a vibrant and interconnected university. The word “trajectory” signals a shared direction, which may not be linear, and emphasizes the importance of approaching this work as ongoing, dynamic, responsive and perpetually in motion.

Honouring Lands and Relations

There is much to be learned from Indigenous communities about how to build and sustain an interconnected university. At their core, many Indigenous knowledge systems stress the importance of mutuality, reciprocity and responsibility. Embracing these principles is one way that acknowledges the University of Alberta's relationship with Indigenous communities is an essential part of this Integrated Action Plan.

The University of Alberta, its buildings, labs, and research stations are primarily located on the territory of the Nêhiyaw (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, Nakoda (Stoney), Dene, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe (Ojibway/ Sauteaux) – lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 and homeland of the Métis.

Out of respect for the treaties and histories of these lands, the University of Alberta is committed to working in good relations with and being held accountable to Indigenous Peoples and nations who, through the treaty processes and historical agreements, generously offered to share these lands. Our institutional commitment to being a vibrant and interconnected university is therefore a commitment to Indigenous resurgence and self-determination.

In this regard, we are grateful to the creators of *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan* for helping guide the way and for informing our efforts so that we can be better allies and accomplices. By recognizing the primacy of Treaty relationships, learning from the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous students, faculty and staff, and centring our shared relationship to the land, this document aims to ensure the mutual, reciprocal and interconnected thriving of our University of Alberta collective through actions that amplify and support the work of *Braiding Past, Present and Future*.

Rising above colonialism will only be possible through respectful nation-to-nation relationships. It is a journey that will require us to collectively reckon with the weight of our past and present, honour what both can teach us and take steps to imagine and create a different, transformative future.

Evolving from Institutional Commitments

Aligned Strategies

The University of Alberta's *Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusivity*, launched in 2018-19, reflected decades of expertise and advocacy. It offered direction for institutional commitments intended to promote meaningful participation and better outcomes for all. Since that time, the university has released a number of strategic documents and a new University Strategic Plan, *SHAPE: A Strategic Plan of Impact*. The institutional commitments expressed in the 2018-19

Strategic Plan for EDI no longer stand separate from other strategic documents, but now find their place within all university plans.

The Strategic Plan for EDI reached the end of its four-year horizon in 2022. In 2023, the Office of the Provost engaged in a number of reporting and consultative processes that have been instrumental in evolving our approach. A great deal has been accomplished to advance commitments at the department, faculty, college, unit and institution-wide levels. But the reports and consultations also suggest that there is still much more to be done.

Changing the Story: An Integrated Action Plan for Transforming Our Vibrant and Interconnected University Community enables SHAPE and related University of Alberta strategic and action plans to reach their stated outcomes. Positioned as a values statement, an aspirational goal or a key objective, our commitment to building a community in which all may thrive offers us a mandate for deliberate and purposeful action toward greater access and belonging across the three pillars of SHAPE: education, research and community engagement.

Drawn from the learnings and insights of the past, especially these past five years of rapid and disorienting – and at times life-altering – shifts, *Changing the Story* is intended to help realize the commitments offered in these strategic documents. It outlines the multi-level approach, practices and actions needed to successfully transform our vibrant and interconnected university community.

University of Alberta Strategic Commitments

- **Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact**

“Rooted in the university’s deep commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion, we envision a university where everyone feels included and valued” (p. 4).

“[O]ur initiatives will meaningfully integrate our commitments reflected in Braiding Past, Present and Future and our commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion” (p. 34).

- **Forward Together: The University of Alberta People Strategy**

“We work to achieve a more diverse, equitable, accessible and inclusive environment for all who work, learn and live within our community. We value academic freedom, and welcome and celebrate a diversity of perspectives and experiences” (p. 9).

- **Forward with Purpose: A Strategic Plan for Research and Innovation**

“Our university demonstrates strength in research that addresses systemic inequities and injustices for equity-denied groups through numerous researchers who bring a diversity of perspectives and knowledge. We are willing to have courageous conversations in support of our national commitments to reconciliation, the Scarborough Charter and the Dimensions Charter. Our university commits to centering the principles of equity, diversity,

inclusion and decolonization to embrace diverse ways of knowing, learning and doing” (p. 18).

“Our research excellence is underpinned by the principle of equity and the practices of inclusion and decolonization. By remaining accountable to these principles and practices, we strive to build a culture where diversity flourishes and where we work in partnership to dismantle systemic barriers with ethical integrity and social responsibility” (p. 21).

- **Igniting Purpose: The Student Experience Action Plan**

“[S]tudent experiences vary, and for some students, exceptional experiences are only attained after systemic barriers to equity and access are addressed” (p. 11).

- **A Culture of Care: Safety Action Plan**

“This strategic plan aims to embed equity, diversity and inclusivity into the culture of the University of Alberta community, from the grassroots to the senior-most levels” (p. 7).

- **Braiding Past, Present and Future: The University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan**

“One of my strongest commitments as college dean is to promote a college community that enables an equitable and inclusive society. One that acknowledges history and where equity and diversity are essential to excellence on campus” (p. 37).

“Align Indigenous-focused policy work with revisions of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) plan and implementation” (p. 53).

Written and Unwritten Histories

There is a long and rich history of initiatives at the University of Alberta that have shaped how EDI came to be understood on our campuses. Beginning as early as 1908, initiatives were introduced and risks were taken in the name of building a more equitable, diverse and inclusive university community. The timeline offers a small selection.

There is much to be celebrated, but this incomplete list cannot be offered without the recognition that it privileges some pivotal moments while excluding others. Many parallel lists run alongside this one — not only of initiatives and risks taken, but also of those not taken, of barriers fortified or erected, of injustices and harms unspoken.

Such lists also cannot account for the most impactful moments of the last century. Moments created by the thousands of people who dared and demanded to be in places they were never thought to belong, those who asked the challenging questions, those who opened their research and classes to new ideas and methods, those who leveraged their roles in this institution in ways that helped build university cultures in which more people and more ideas could thrive — those who were willing to change the story.

A History of the University of Alberta

1908: The U of A opens its doors, providing education to women and men of any denomination.

1908: In the first convocation address, President H.M. Tory makes the promise for the U of A to “uplift the whole people” and offer “recognition of merit irrespective of social distinction” (published 1923).

1911: Decima Eveline Robinson is the first woman to graduate from the U of A in the field of mathematics.

1972: The first ombudsman is appointed.

1977: Collège St. Jean becomes a faculty, becoming Faculté Saint-Jean and in 2005 Campus Saint-Jean.

1980: Student Support and Disability Services is established.

1982: Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and Technology (WISEST) is formed.

1990: The Office of Human Rights is formed.

1993: Safewalk, a free, volunteer-operated service that assists students, is founded.

1998: Archbishop Desmond Tutu gives the inaugural Visiting Lecture in Human Rights.

2004: Welcoming its first students in 1911 as Camrose Lutheran College, the Faculty of Augustana is incorporated as a predominantly rural-serving campus.

2005: The first Associate Dean of Diversity is established.

2006: The School of Native Studies becomes Canada’s first Faculty of Native Studies.

2008: The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services launches in the Faculty of Education, renamed Fyrefly Institute for Gender and Sexual Diversity in 2022.

2013: The Department of Women’s and Gender Studies is established in the Faculty of Arts.

2017: The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Scoping Group is formed.

2018: The U of A develops its first Canada Research Chairs EDI Action Plan.

2019: The U of A’s *Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity* is released.

2019: The position of Vice-Provost (Indigenous Programming and Research) is established.

2019: The U of A signs the Dimensions Charter in support of diversity research.

2019: The U of A conducts its first Workforce Diversity Census.

- 2020:** The Black Faculty Collective, a Black-led, grassroots group, is established.
- 2020:** The Board of Governors approves a major revision to the Recruitment and Selection of Employees Policy Suite.
- 2021:** The U of A signs the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education.
- 2021:** The U of A conducts its first Student Diversity Census.
- 2022:** The U of A launches *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan*.
- 2022:** The position of Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) is established.
- 2022:** The Black Academic Excellence Cohort Hire brings 12 new faculty members to the U of A.
- 2022:** The Black-led Research Network Initiative (BRNI) is created by a consensus of Black academics and researchers.
- 2022:** The all-gender washroom pilot program is launched.
- 2023:** The Council on Systemic Ableism is established.
- 2024:** The Primary-Affirmed Name Project is implemented.

Toward Integration

The gains we have made and the learnings we have shared in the name of equity, diversity and inclusion must not be undervalued. EDI is a useful framework for promoting fairness and increasing representation. The three letters have come to signal a shared understanding that to be truly excellent, we need all voices and perspectives at the table as well as a collective commitment from those responsible for writing, approving and implementing strategic direction to take courageous action. But barriers still persist. And we have made many mistakes and missteps in our efforts to build a more equitable, diverse and inclusive university – mistakes and missteps that have alienated and excluded people at all levels, across all disciplines and within all social locations. It would be easy to respond with defensiveness and a narrowing of our collective work towards a more 'right' kind of EDI. Instead, we must evolve the work of EDI.

Common themes that emerged in the reports and consultations over the last five years highlight the need for an integrated approach to meaningful participation and achieving better outcomes for all that 1) interweaves the various institutional strategies, plans and structures; 2) develops coordinated processes to support and amplify the work of faculties, departments, colleges, units and other institutional groupings alongside everyday contributors and advocates; 3) adopts shared outcomes that amplify the voices and experiences of diverse knowledge holders; 4) recognizes the need for institutional commitments that move beyond values statements and

instead translate into values-based practices that shift our culture; and 5) embraces the principles of mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interdependence.

With the release of *Changing the Story*, we mobilize these learnings towards embracing a plurality of practices, paradigms and approaches to action that will collectively enable all members of the University of Alberta to come together across many kinds of difference in order to co-create a different story – a story that acknowledges and builds on our past, reflects our present and helps transform our future.

Telling a Different Story: Adopting Values-Based Practices

Building and sustaining a vibrant and interconnected university requires that we tell a different and transformative story. Now, more than any other time in our history, we have the institutional support to create this story – to meet our varying needs as we build toward flourishing for all, now and sustained for years to come. But in order to do so, we must move beyond simply naming collective injustices and individual harms. We must create new narratives, identify new patterns and enact practices that centre mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interdependence.

These pages are an invitation to embrace a kind of unified disunity – to create a university community that challenges the politics of sameness by ensuring everyone has the freedom to be different while remaining connected. These pages are an invitation for us to change the story by learning from ideas that draw on varied disciplines, paradigms, ideologies and cultural traditions. A story where the values-based practices in the list below are no longer things we aspire to, but are foundational to how we collectively operate.

Some of the practices listed below might not feel like practices a university can, or should, embrace. But this does not need to be the case. Collectively, we must guard against the temptation to believe that our institutional boundaries define the limits of how we relate to each other and the outcomes of those relations. This list below, while not exhaustive, is intended to help us build the stamina and grow the capacities needed to take up the actions in this plan as well as support the commitments and principles of all our institutional plans. The practices offer new, more expansive, ways of conceptualizing our responsibilities to one another, with the overall goal of redefining what it means to study and work at the University of Alberta.

Embracing Our Interconnectedness

We are, as we always have been, already interconnected. No matter what unit, college, faculty or department we study or work within, our research, teaching, administration, service, supervision, mentorship and communication activities have been impacted by

interconnected pieces of the past and will go on to impact interdependent pieces of our future. “*This*,” as noted by the sociologist and activist Ruha Benjamin, “*is what disability justice organizers have been trying to tell us, and what Indigenous peoples have long asserted — that whether we want to accept it or not, we are connected, not just to other living things but to those yet born Interdependence is not only part of a sacred philosophy but also a guiding ethos for refashioning social and political structures*” (*Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want*, 2022, p. 9).

Engaging in Acts of Collective Remembering

Having collective understandings of history is essential when attempting to embrace our interconnectedness. Learning from the past through multiple, divergent perspectives and methods better equips us for understanding and collectively engaging with complex contemporary and future challenges. In this sense, history — when shared by a number of diverse voices — is a teacher. It teaches us about the injustices of the past, highlights the strength of those who have survived these injustices and reminds us that there is no such thing as a predetermined future. This is how collective remembering becomes a tool for collective action. If we look back with a critical curiosity we not only reckon with the weight of our past, we can also use this knowledge to build more loving, peaceful and joyous futures for all living and nonliving beings.

Promoting Mutual Flourishing for All

Mutual flourishing is the outcome of a world-making project that strives to ensure all living beings, both human and non-human, are thriving, peaceful and connected. The concept of mutual flourishing is rooted in an acknowledgement that all living things are simultaneously interconnected and interdependent. Those who are committed to the realization of mutual flourishing are therefore committed to transforming decision-making frameworks, interpersonal relationships and institutional cultures in ways that promote access, create belonging and cultivate healing.

Realizing the Possibilities of Uncomfortable Encounters

Encounters tend to be understood as new or unexpected meetings, within or across species, ideas or with the world around us. Everyone of us carries a history of encounters that contribute to who we are. Encounters contain within them the possibility to catalyze something new, such as a new perspective or approach; when not held with care, they can also make us less willing to engage with new ideas or perspectives. When thinking about encounters, the question isn’t, “How do we reduce or eliminate uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or disruptive moments?” Rather, the question is “How might we better support people through such encounters in ways that might enable more transformational learning and relationships?” Many social movements, cultural traditions and scholarly fields have developed approaches for supporting open minded and open hearted encounters (including in and through conflict), based on principles like dignity, consent, care, curiosity, humility, accountability and mutuality.

Engaging our Critical Consciousness

Engaging our critical consciousness is active intellectual work that is available to anyone. It requires becoming familiar with theories and tools that illuminate how particular systems, structures, policies and practices are inherently relational. This is a different way of thinking about the world. It suggests that our social, political and economic systems (such as colonialism, predatory capitalism, racism, ableism, sexism and other oppressive systems) are not “things” in and of themselves. Rather, they only exist because of particular interactions between people. When we awaken our critical consciousness we therefore acknowledge that oppressive systems — because they are upheld by the interactions of people — can (and must) be transformed. We can be part of transforming those systems.

Positioning Love as a Guiding Ethos

The word love, as noted by the civil rights activist James Baldwin, should not be used “*merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace ... of quest and daring and growth*” (*The Fire Next Time*, 1963, p. 78). Suggesting there is much to learn from those with whom we most differ, Baldwin encourages us to cultivate a deeper, more vulnerable human connection by leaning into the possibilities of love — not as an individual feeling, but as reciprocal and ongoing practice. When we love in this way, we exchange pieces of our humanity with one another. When we love in this way, we dare to become vulnerable with one another. When we love in this way, we deepen our collective kinship in ways that allow us to promote dignity and mutual flourishing for all.

Investing in Processes of Creation and Community Building

In order for us to build and sustain a different future, change needs to happen right now. We cannot wait to build tomorrow. There will never be a finalized vision of the future that we will all begin to work toward. There is only a present that moves towards what we choose to imagine, value and resource. By creating the communities where we reckon with the weight of our past, recognize our interconnectedness and continuously improve our relationships, we are acting in the present. And it is through these day-to-day actions that we will craft the cultures and strengthen the infrastructure — from our built environment in labs and classrooms to our human connections in student groups and work teams — required to build and sustain a vibrant and interconnected university community.

Our future is not predetermined. Telling different stories — ones that result in different futures — is therefore timely and necessary work. It is work that begins by noticing the ways small actions create complex connections that, in turn, shape larger ecosystems. No one person or no one decision exists in isolation. What we practice in our offices, our labs, our classrooms, in the field or in the library sets the patterns for the entire ecosystem. Whether we are contributing to our

university community as students and staff, as decision-makers, or through influence of committees and networks, we are impacted by and can impact our institutional ecosystem.

Changing the Story

A Multi-dimensional Model for Transformation

It bears repeating: we are, as we always have been, already interconnected. In an attempt to illustrate the relationship among existing forms of institutional coordination, the multi-dimensional model below has been organized around three interdependent sections of our institutional ecosystem: Institutional Decision Makers, Coordinating Offices and Groups, and Everyday Contributors and Advocates. Each section of our ecosystem is positioned as part of a larger wheel, which represents collaboration and steady movement. As the three interdependent sections make mutually beneficial decisions and take transformative action, the wheel gains traction and momentum across four trajectories, weaving them increasingly together. The four trajectories are: 1) Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters; 2) Enhancing Expansive Excellence; 3) Ensuring Access to Academic and Community Life; and 4) Nurturing Transformative Collaborations.

A detailed overview of each section of the model is provided in the following pages.

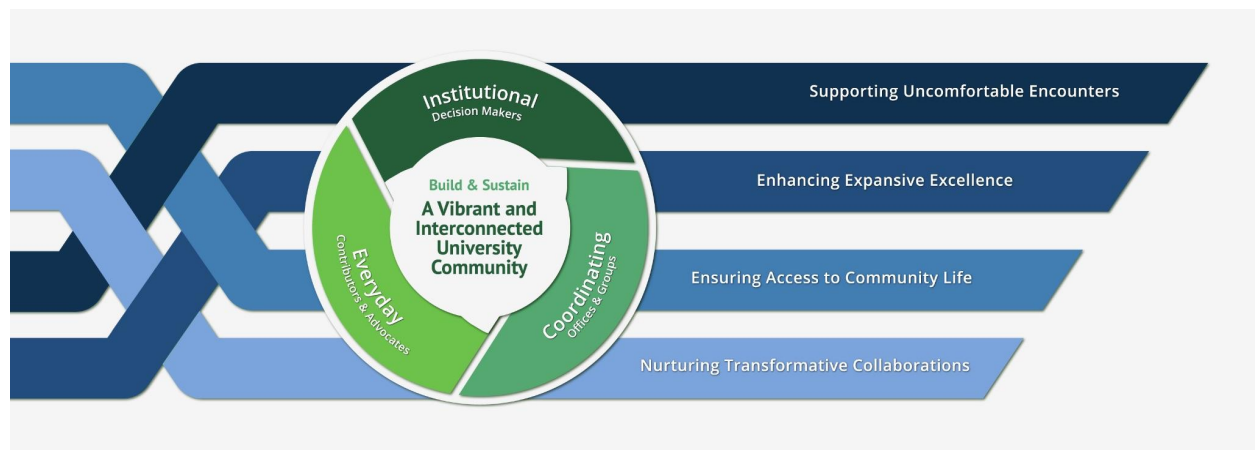


IMAGE 1. A MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL FOR TRANSFORMING THE U of A'S INSTITUTIONAL ECOSYSTEM

Interdependent Sections of Our Institutional Ecosystem

Universities are ordered and patterned in many ways, whether through academic disciplines and departments, service units, or policies and procedures. There are many ways the patterns and connections that exist across our institutional ecosystem could have been articulated. The three interdependent sections that are detailed in the model above are meant to attend to the

historical and structural relations that predate this document, while simultaneously accounting for the possibilities that exist when the relationships between and among these sections are reimagined. Each section should therefore not be viewed as static, nor the relationships unidirectional. New mechanisms and documents will be added as outdated ones are removed. Additionally, different groups and strategies will guide our work at different times and from different locations. It is for this reason that these core pieces of our institutional ecosystem are not overly detailed. Each section needs to allow for the ever-changing elements and collaborative constellations that come with our transformative action. By limiting the pieces of the ecosystem to the three sections detailed below, the model provides a tool to help conceptualize the differing roles and responsibilities, while also recognizing that these roles and responsibilities will (and must) adapt to changes in our institutional ecosystem.

Institutional Decision Makers

This section of the ecosystem represents the strategic decisions that are approved at the highest level and communicated to the university community. The decision makers at this level use both community engagement processes and collegial governance processes when defining priorities and formalizing mandates. Examples of institutional decision makers that are included in this section of the ecosystem include: U of A Senior Leaders; supervisors, directors and managers; U of A Senate; U of A Board of Governors, to name a few.

Coordinating Offices and Groups

This section of the ecosystem represents the mechanisms required for coordination between institutional priorities and mandates and the needs and insights shared by community members at all levels of the university. It includes the formal ways in which we gather. Those positioned within this section reflect a commitment to engage a plurality of voices and perspectives, support differing needs and amplify the work taking place in various locations. Examples of coordinating offices and groups that are included in this section of the ecosystem include: advisory and unit-level committees, departments, organizational teams, offices, networks and working groups; EDI Leads Network; Integrating Equity Group; Indigenous Advisory Council; Council on Systemic Ableism; Culture of Care Focus Group; Black-Led Research Network Initiative; Black Faculty Collective, to name a few.

Everyday Contributors and Advocates

This section of the ecosystem represents everyday actions and grassroots advocacy taking place in various locations across the university. Representing the wealth of knowledge and innovation among members of the university community, this section highlights the essential role of researchers, teachers, staff members and students. It also emphasizes the need for transformative community leadership and reinforces the importance of “nothing about us without us.” Examples of communities and

mechanisms that are included in this section include: community-driven initiatives; student groups and clubs; research labs and classrooms; faculty and staff collectives and all individuals attempting to influence systems and enact change in their own sphere of influence.

Trajectories for Action

Cutting across the interdependent sections in the model there are four trajectories for action: 1) Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters; 2) Enhancing Expansive Excellence; 3) Ensuring Access to Academic and Community Life; and 4) Nurturing Transformative Collaborations. The word “trajectory” has been chosen to signal that as a university and as individuals, we are not at the beginning, nor is there a specified end – instead, there is a shared direction, which may not be linear, with many indicators of success or opportunities for redirection plotted all along each trajectory. It also demonstrates that the work requires vertical, horizontal and cross-cutting relationships and interactions. There is not one entry point into the work, nor is it fixed – it is ongoing, dynamic, responsive and in motion. People, units and initiatives from all three areas of the institutional ecosystem can act in any trajectory at any point along our path to build and sustain a vibrant and interconnected university community. Small actions create complex connections that, in turn, shape larger ecosystems. As we collectively work to transform our institutional ecosystem we must remember that every person and every decision is part of a greater whole. What we practice in our offices, our labs and our classrooms sets the patterns for the entire ecosystem. Therefore, whether we are contributing to the ecosystem as students and staff, as decision-makers, or through influence of committees and networks, we have a role to play in changing our institutional story.

Collective Actions for Change

The stories we tell can guide us, instruct us and give us a sense of shared identity. As we look to evolve the work of EDI we have the opportunity to embrace a different institutional story. A story that suggests we are a university community capable of connecting across our differences. That we are a university community willing to embrace our interconnectedness in ways that promote mutual flourishing for all. That we are unafraid to engage in acts of collective remembering because we have the skills and the stamina to realize the possibilities of uncomfortable encounters. That we are a university community that remains loving as we work to awaken and enliven our individual and collective consciousness. That we will always, no matter what the political environment, choose creation and unity over destruction and division.

The actions in the following pages reflect our commitment to change our institutional story. Gathered through a series of engagements with members of the university community representing more than 1000 interactions, these actions are intended to contribute to work that is already underway, while simultaneously highlighting new actions that can be started over the next two years. Some actions echo, amplify and add weight to those in other institutional strategic and action plans, whether explicitly or implicitly. Others remain broad for now, in order

to offer as much creativity and unit-level input as possible; these will be built out with units and impacted communities once the plan is launched. The actions help us demonstrate where connections and relationships already exist, identify what bridges must be built, determine where efficiencies could be leveraged and highlight the need for mechanisms that engage and amplify a plurality of voices.

In the engagements with members of the university community, identification of barriers and inequities emerged that pointed toward commonality. To capture this shared experience, the actions have been crafted around specific issues (such space allocation, retention or mentorship) rather than particular identities. The actions therefore represent an intersectional and holistic approach to change rather than change specified primarily by race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status. However, this is not to suggest that experiences of barriers and inequities of all community members are the same, nor that the starting points and opportunities to address these are universal. Frameworks such as those offered by human rights, decolonization, EDI, or universal design for learning, among others, help move us along in this work in an issue-focused way. The high level actions begin with a recognition that there is so much that is shared in our efforts to change the story, but that community-specific needs must be thoroughly addressed during living implementation and measurement of success.

In each trajectory, the actions have been organized using a series of tables. Each table represents a different suite of actions in three domains: 1) Improving Structures that Guide Us (e.g., guidelines, policies, procedures); 2) Improving Cultures that Support Us (e.g., processes, resources); 3) Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge (e.g., transformative tools for communication, learning, celebrating). All sections of our institutional ecosystem – Institutional Decision Makers, Coordinating Offices and Groups, and Everyday Contributors and Advocates – have a role to play in realizing the actions in each domain. And while each action has been assigned ecosystem leads, success will only be achieved if we embrace our shared responsibility. As we move to charting the plan's living implementation, individual portfolios or units will identify their responsibilities for carrying out specific, context- and unit-based actions. This will include the development of individual workbooks and role-specific application guides with example actions to help this process.

Trajectory #1: Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters

Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters represents our institutional commitment to fostering spaces where freedom of expression, intellectual pluralism, individual consent and dissent can co-exist. Moments of tension, discomfort, disagreement and conflict can lead to significant harms, disciplinary divides and deepening divisiveness. However, if engaged consensually, supported skillfully and held with care, humility, mutuality, dignity, respect and accountability, these moments can be sites of immense personal and collective transformational impact. We need to equip U of A members with the skills they need to engage and succeed in a pluralistic

community. The actions in this trajectory are intended to help us build the skills, capacities and strategies required to meaningfully engage within and across difference.

Below are a list of questions — questions that align with our values-based practices — that should be considered as we realize the actions in this trajectory.

- How do we acknowledge that history is not singular and use the processes of **collective remembering** as a foundation for meaningfully and carefully engaging with tension, discomfort and disagreement?
- How do we ensure **love** (rather than fear, power, or comfort) is positioned as our guiding ethos when developing spaces intended to promote freedom of expression, intellectual pluralism, individual consent and dissent?
- How do we embrace our **interconnectedness** in ways that reject a politics of sameness?

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
1.1. Develop transparent principles aligned with the values-based practices of this plan to guide decision-making and official communications in times of conflict and crisis.	Institutional Decision Makers
1.2. Develop robust and relational ‘toolkits’ of institutional programs and policies that can be efficiently mobilized in response to emergent conflicts, crises (personal, institutional, local, global) and harms, and identify gaps.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
1.3. Develop transparent institutional strategies for supporting safety while forefronting freedom of expression in relation to contentious conversations and dissent-based events held on U of A campuses.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
1.4. Develop and implement non-disciplinary accountability options (e.g., restorative, skill-building, trauma-informed) that can be chosen in instances of interpersonal harm, conflict and breach of policy; develop structure and process to support their delivery.	Institutional Decision Makers

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
1.5. Assess, clarify and diversify trauma-informed supports and responses for community members in all roles who are impacted by personal, institutional, local and global crises, and identify gaps.	Institutional Decision Makers

1.6. Develop and share trauma-informed and power-aware resources that enable those in teaching, researching, service and leadership roles to support contentious conversations and uncomfortable encounters by drawing on and amplifying the work of everyday contributors and groups who offer innovative or exemplary critical approaches to prioritizing transparency and affirming dignity and respect for all.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
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Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
1.7. Develop and collaborate on regular gatherings, workshops and events in colleges, faculties and units that involve collective sharing, storytelling and building greater capacity for supporting uncomfortable encounters while also supporting the well-being of those engaging in the work.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
1.8. Develop mechanisms to clearly articulate how the U of A statements on freedom of expression and academic freedom are operationalized for different roles within the University, and in relation to human rights, Treaty rights and collective agreements, including the responsibility to serve and teach all community members with dignity and respect.	Institutional Decision Makers

Indicators of Success		
Completion Indicators	Engagement Indicators	Shifting Trends
Principles, toolkits, strategies, resources and processes (those listed in the actions above) are developed and available to all community members.	Online engagement: Website hits and trajectory specific resource downloads increase annually. Individual engagement: Number of people who attend/complete relevant conversation, gatherings, workshops and other learning modules increases annually. Institutional engagement: Colleges, units, faculties and departments meet their own interrelated goals through implementing portions of this action plan. Uptake of role-specific training and resource use.	Students, faculty and staff report increases in safety and wellbeing. Students, faculty and staff report increases in respect, affirmation and belonging. Students, faculty and staff report increases in trust and confidence in leadership. Increased usage of non-disciplinary accountability options. Shifts in kinds/directions of disclosures. Shifts in the types and numbers of appeals from students. Improvements in our institutional crisis response rollout and readiness.

Trajectory #2: Enhancing Expansive Excellence

Enhancing Expansive Excellence represents our institutional commitment to acknowledge the relationship among intellectual pluralism, diverse experiences, participation and quality. True innovation involves engagement not just with what we already know but with novel and wide-ranging perspectives, ideas, theories and methods that drive creativity. We will not achieve success in rankings, research, enterprise, enrolments or workforce readiness by staying narrowly aligned with that to which we have grown accustomed. Excellence requires us to think and act expansively, to enact evidence-based improvements to assessing merit in academic, research, educational and organizational performance and outcomes, and to do so with curiosity and bravery. The actions outlined in this trajectory are intended to contribute to the relational, structural and systemic changes required to attract and retain the students, faculty and staff who can best support the University's vision of outstanding achievements in learning, discovery and citizenship.

Below are a list of questions – questions that align with our values-based practices – that should be considered as we realize the actions in this trajectory.

- How do we promote **mutual flourishing for all** when developing new decision-making frameworks in the areas of admissions, hiring, promotions and recognition?
- How might we embed processes of **collective remembering** into our decision-making frameworks so that we can account for historical harms and ongoing inequities?
- What processes are necessary to engage our **critical consciousness** in ways that illuminate which systems, structures, policies and practices need to be transformed?

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
2.1. Develop formal and buttress informal structures and mechanisms for mentorship, peer-networks, community building as well as faculty and instructor development in key areas (e.g., research networks) that support colleges and faculties in their efforts to attract and retain innovators in strategic areas of global excellence and growth.	Institutional Decision Makers
2.2. Develop and recommend transparent practices, systems and infrastructure for chairs, deans and hiring managers to better enable strategic recruitment and retention that expands workforce excellence and continuity with accountability checks (e.g., onboarding of new leaders, principles for academic offers, approaches to partner-hires, fairness in negotiation).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
2.3. Develop and recommend frameworks and approaches to annual evaluation, awards processes and other forms of performance adjudication (e.g., faculty evaluation, academic and support staff evaluation, teaching evaluation, teaching awards) to reward excellence expansively and responsibly (including	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates

exploring values-enacted measures, community engagement frameworks, DORA, etc.), and enable individual and collective success.	
2.4. Explore, review and recommend opportunities for collaborative, transparent, fair and flexible work and workplace guidelines, approaches and practices, including through a more systematic approach to exit interviews.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
2.5. Develop and recommend guidelines and systems for graduate/undergraduate programs seeking to implement holistic recruitment/admissions that address multiple indicators of success while reducing known barriers.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
2.6. Review processes that support student rights to ensure transparency, consistency and reduce systemic barriers, such as those regarding appeals procedures, training for decision makers, or mechanisms to address concerns with supervision.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
2.7. Develop and integrate strategies during student transition to university that support retention and success, considering systemic issues and experiences that are impacting academic achievements for each community of students in order to support all students to succeed.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
2.8. Support peer-led affinity groups and/or spaces that help connect students, staff and faculty with mentorship, resources, advocacy networks and community for greater belonging and success.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
2.9. Develop, coordinate and support the adoption of resources on student assessment, course design and teaching practices that are learner-centred, evidence-based, expand excellence and promote fairness, accessibility, interdependence and success.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
2.10. Develop resources and coordinate strategies that enable all staff to learn about Indigenous, anti-oppressive, restorative, trauma-informed and emerging pedagogies and ways of working together.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
2.11. Develop and prioritize plans to bring student and employee census data together with data in administrative systems (respecting confidentiality), and support coordinated and data-informed decision-making around allocating resources and supports in a manner that expands excellence and promotes fairness, interdependence and belonging (e.g., to better understand the student experience lifecycle, research grant support needs, staff retention opportunities).	Institutional Decision Makers

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible

2.12. Communicate how existing benefits and policies can be leveraged to support and affirm employees and their goals (e.g., what suite of benefits can be accessed to support fertility, caregiving) and identify opportunities to address gaps through targeted initiatives (e.g., resources for front line staff/support roles vulnerable to secondary trauma).	Coordinating Offices and Groups
2.13. Create/review and circulate resources that support greater transparency and fairness in assigning or assessing teaching, service and workloads for faculty and staff.	Institutional Decision Makers
2.14. Develop and adopt principles that establish transparency on when and how institution-wide resources (e.g., print, services, training) should be created and/or offered in both French and English.	Institutional Decision Makers

Indicators of Success		
Completion Indicators	Engagement Indicators	Shifting Trends
Frameworks, guidelines, strategies, resources and processes (those listed in the actions above) are developed and available to all community members.	Online engagement: Website hits and trajectory specific resource downloads increase annually. Individual engagement: Number of people who attend/complete relevant conversation, gatherings, workshops and other learning modules increases annually. Institutional engagement: Colleges, units, faculties and departments meet their own interrelated goals through implementing portions of this action plan. Uptake of role-specific training and resource use.	Faculty and staff report having appropriate resources, development opportunities and pay and benefits. Increased understanding of the systemic issues that are impacting retention rates (for faculty, staff and students). Evidence of greater intention to achieve parity in career progression, compensation, work load, opportunity, etc. across a number of data points. Increased number of undergraduate and graduate programs that have holistic admission options. Increased understanding of systemic issues that are impacting workforce readiness and post-graduation career success among recent alumni. Shifts in student acceptance and completion rates with specific attention to communities with rates lower than the average for all students. Increased award rates in national and international research grants overall with specific attention to communities with rates lower than the institutional average; increase in funded research in social innovation

		and community-led initiatives. Rise in place on alternative ranking systems, such as the global sustainability rankings (THE) and open data rankings (Leiden), while solidifying or improving place in traditional global academic and research rankings (Shanghai, THE, QS).
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Trajectory #3: Ensuring Access to Academic and Community Life

Ensuring Access to Academic and Community Life refers to our institutional commitment to confirm that all students, staff and faculty have the support they need to flourish. There are many ways to reduce recurring and preventable barriers that interfere with access to institutional services, spaces, resources and thereby a shared sense of community. The actions outlined in this trajectory are intended to provide tangible solutions that can be applied across a range of areas and initiatives.

Below are a list of questions — questions that align with our values-based practices — that should be considered as we realize the actions in this trajectory.

- How do we promote **mutual flourishing for all** when deciding which barriers to remove or reduce?
- How might processes that engage our **critical consciousness** create opportunities to identify tangible solutions that can be applied across a range of areas and initiatives?
- How might processes that centre **creation and community building** increase access to institutional services, spaces and resources?

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
3.1. Develop detailed, transparent plans (including prioritization) for how various administrative offices will support and invest in the institutional commitment to cultural and psychological safety and well-being that recognize and account for the differential impacts of these safety considerations across communities.	Institutional Decision Makers
3.2. Develop and adopt guidelines and/or processes to ensure that new or revised policies, procedures and academic programs minimize the need for continuous exceptions and accommodations, resulting in efficiencies and increased belonging; ensure these are reflected in regular review mechanisms (e.g., Quality Assurance reviews).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
3.3. Develop and adopt shared access frameworks and access practices for determining, communicating and ensuring accessibility and community	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and

connection, reducing the need for exceptions and accommodations and resulting in efficiencies and increased belonging (e.g., in digital infrastructure).	Groups
3.4. Commit to and fund strategic, sustainable and impactful access improvements to the built environment, including commitments for all new builds and prioritized renovations as well as resourcing strategic access enhancements.	Institutional Decision Makers
3.5. Plan and coordinate space allocation to address under-met community needs (e.g., prayer and lactation spaces, affirming washrooms, sensory-safe spaces).	Institutional Decision Makers

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
3.6. Improve the student and staff accommodation process by promoting mutual and collaborative responsibility for access and accessibility across all levels of the organization alongside identifying opportunities for greater clarity around and potential improvements to formal accommodations processes.	Institutional Decision Makers/ Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
3.7. Develop more robust, transparent and intersectional wrap-around supports for international students, particularly in areas where there are known challenges and barriers.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
3.8. Clarify informal and formal mechanisms and processes (disclosures, complaints), and expand the Options Navigation Network (ONN) to include all forms of interpersonal and psychosocial harm (e.g., racism) and ensure ONN members are given support for training, role clarity.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
3.9. Develop and launch Disability Cultures and Access Hub to coordinate projects, information, and resources around access, accessibility, accommodations and disability services across all units and to secure access commitments from leaders (e.g., for U of A hosted events).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
3.10. Endorse a suite of resources that support community members to understand days of significance and other days of note or observance in order to increase critical consciousness, promote collective remembering, realize commitments to action and support students and staff through potential temporary accommodation.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups

Indicators of Success		
Completion Indicators	Engagement Indicators	Shifting Trends
Plans, frameworks, guidelines, resources and processes (those listed in the actions above) are developed and available to all community members.	Online engagement: Website hits and trajectory specific resource downloads increase quarterly. Individual engagement: Number of people who attend/complete relevant conversations, gatherings, workshops and other learning modules increases annually. Institutional engagement: Colleges, units, faculties, and departments meet their own interrelated goals through implementing portions of this action plan. Uptake of role-specific training and resource use.	Students, faculty and staff report increases in safety and wellbeing. Students, faculty and staff report increases in connection and collaboration. Students, faculty, and staff report increases in respect, affirmation and belonging. Shifts in kinds/directions of disclosures. Shifts in the number of accommodations requested by faculty, staff and students. Increase in space allocation for needs-based spaces.

Trajectory #4: Nurturing Transformative Collaborations

Nurturing Transformative Collaborations refers to our institutional commitment to not only come together across units, faculties, disciplines and paradigms, but also to question the boundaries of those entities in ways that transform how we collectively work, teach, learn and research. There are many ways to collaborate across institutional boundaries – there are interdisciplinary collaborations, transdisciplinary collaborations and transversal collaborations. All of these ways are relational and founded on the knowledge that a diversity of experiences, knowledges, approaches and positionalities leads to better outcomes. The actions outlined in this trajectory are not intended to highlight areas where collaboration might exist. Instead, they are intended to outline actions that will help us reimagine how we learn, relate and innovate together.

Below are a list of questions – questions that align with our values-based practices – that should be considered as we realize the actions in this trajectory.

- How can engaging our **critical consciousness** make it easier for us to come together to question and transform how we collectively work, teach, learn and research?
- How does embracing **uncomfortable encounters** allow us to question the boundaries of our units, faculties, disciplines and paradigms?
- How might processes of **creation and community building** increase the possibility of transformative collaborations?

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
4.1. Develop detailed and transparent plans that outline how administrative offices will support and invest in those who lead others and those who lead with influence to support change and institutional culture crafting.	Institutional Decision Makers
4.2. Develop and implement an audit framework for assessing systemic barriers to services delivery and access as part of the institutional review of shared services and to improve strategic partner models for increased collaboration.	Institutional Decision Makers
4.3. Develop a set of collaboration and community-engagement guidelines that can be used by groups wanting to enable values-based practices in reaching their project or team goals and to support networks recommended elsewhere in this plan.	Coordinating Offices and Groups

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
4.4. Develop and launch online learning modules and certification, as well as develop processes to encourage the uptake of these and related learning (e.g., Black Canadians, Indigenous Canada) for individuals, teams and committees (e.g., hiring, awards) looking to calibrate their professional development, activities or decisions around the principles of mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interdependence in order to increase success through access and belonging for all community members.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
4.5. Build more formalized processes for recognizing, accounting for, mentoring and supporting those who are often called on to engage in, support or champion community-oriented work to meet the goals of all institutional strategic and action plans, including embedding recognition into existing programs and developing novel recognition procedures (e.g., awards) for those advancing the goals of all four trajectories in this plan.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
4.6. Establish dedicated support for internal university groups and networks to host events or launch initiatives that amplify the core values-based practices and overarching goals of this plan or contribute to our collective capacity to enact this plan.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups// Everyday Contributors and Advocates

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
4.7. Create a resource hub for accessing all tools, resources, services and learning opportunities across the institution that support the four trajectories of the plan and identify gaps.	Institutional Decision Makers

4.8. Improve the communication of strategic commitments, goals and actions (including those in institutional strategic and action plans beyond this plan) that advance the principles of mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interdependence, including reviewing the structure and impact of equity-oriented coordinating groups as well as communication among and from institutional decision makers on matters relevant to the goals of this plan.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
4.9. Develop mechanisms by which individual action plans along with the activities of informal groups, units and champions feed into and are visibly impacting transformative institutional change.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
4.10. Champion the accessible and impact-driven mobilization of U of A research that can support the implementation and reach of this plan.	Everyday Contributors and Advocates

Indicators of Success		
Completion Indicators	Engagement Indicators	Shifting Trends
Plans, guidelines, modules, resources and processes (those listed in the actions above) are developed and available to all community members.	Online engagement: Website hits and trajectory specific resource downloads increase quarterly. Individual engagement: Number of people who attend/complete relevant conversations, gatherings, workshops and other learning modules increases annually.. Institutional engagement: Colleges, units, faculties and departments meet their own interrelated goals through implementing portions of this action plan. Uptake of role-specific training and resource use.	Students, faculty, and staff report increases in connection, collaboration and ways of working interdisciplinarily. Increased use/uptake of collaboration or community-engagement guidelines. Students, faculty, and staff report increases in trust of university leadership. Student, faculty and staff report increases in/increased uptake of development opportunities (including mentee/mentorship opportunities, leadership development, support with funding applications, etc.). An increase in the number of individuals leading collaborative, transdisciplinary research initiatives with a focus on social innovation. An increase in the number of people who are formally recognized for their efforts toward advancing the goals of all four trajectories of this plan.

Strengthening the Story: Actions for Shared Responsibility and Responsiveness

We recognize the work it will take to transform our vibrant and interconnected university community cannot be adequately captured in the pages of a plan. Nor can responsibility or impact be neatly contained in separate sections of our ecosystem. The work we are collectively doing to support uncomfortable encounters, enhance expansive excellence, ensure access to academic and community life and nurture transformative collaborations is messy and beautiful, difficult and generous, and it is being championed (in one way or another) in every corner of the institution. We therefore invite you to think of this living document as a portrait in time that will never fully capture the dynamic, expansive movement behind the words. The actions in the tables above are not, and can never be, complete; they can (and must) be built out, added to and adjusted as needs shift, capacities change and curiosities ignite.

For this reason, we need to have the structures in place to learn from our successes and mistakes as we begin to implement the actions above. We also need to have the processes and mechanisms to make decisions beyond a two-year period, in order to strengthen our story. The actions in the table below are intended to be a first step in building these structures, processes and mechanisms. This work has already begun with the strategic renewal of the Office of the Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) as the Office of the Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging). Led by this reimagined office, these below actions will allow us to continue to listen, learn and imagine new stories as/when necessary. They are a commitment to the community that we will steward this plan well.

But improving the ways we change and strengthen our stories isn't just the work of the Office of the Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging). Imagining different institutional stories requires all of us. Each of us can be pattern-changers, world-makers and cycle-breakers. And we can do so in our own way and with our unique skills. We therefore invite you to share your story by using the Individual Action Planning Workbook <LINK> to consider what role(s) you play within our institutional ecosystem and articulate your commitments to transforming our vibrant and interconnected university community.

Improving Mechanisms to Strengthen the Story Responsibilities of the Office of the Vice-Provost (Access, Community + Belonging)
5.1. Engage in values-mapping exercises and design an evaluative framework, in collaboration with key researchers and practitioners, to establish a baseline for change in order to assess how well individual units and the institution as a whole are progressing across all four trajectories that measure outcomes, process alignment and impact.
5.2. Develop a community-facing dashboard to communicate institutional goals and report on progress. The evaluative framework will provide the data to be displayed on the dashboard.
5.3. Establish mechanisms for continuous U of A community feedback, and for reviewing and updating the plan at

least every two years, or when stories need to be continued, closed, expanded, woven in and changed due to institutional shifts, demographic changes and community needs. This includes communicating updates to the plan to the community.

5.4. Ensure currency, relevance and accessibility of all outputs in this plan (e.g., resources, toolkits, guides); engage impacted communities in regular feedback, review and revision; establish data, access and sharing protocols to support implementation and tracking of impacts across all four trajectories.

5.5. Gather everyday contributors and advocates, coordinating networks and groups, decision-makers and community interest holders intermittently to share in constructive and solutions-focused conversations that propel the trajectories and actions of this plan.

5.6. Craft and lead a change management approach guided by values-based practices to support everyday contributors and advocates, coordinating networks and groups, decision-makers and the U of A community and to promote shared understandings, tools and frameworks that enable broad change through unit-specific and contextual transformations.

Improving the Ways We Co-Author the Story Sharing Responsibilities

5.7. Complete the Individual Action Planning Workbook using the worksheet available on the *Changing the Story* website <LINK> and upload your commitments at the link provided. You may also use the [Form](#) <LINK> to complete the questions.

5.8. Review the application guides available on the *Changing the Story* website <LINK> for inspiration regarding role-specific and unit-specific action planning (e.g., for deans, chairs, people managers, student leaders).

Indicators of Success

Completion Indicators	Engagement Indicators	Shifting Trends
The evaluative framework, the dashboard, the community feedback mechanism, and the change management approach are developed and available to all community members.	Online engagement: Dashboard hits and evaluative feedback responses increase quarterly. Individual engagement: Number of people who participate in evaluative and solutions-focused conversations increases annually. Number of people who submit individual action plans increases annually. Institutional engagement: Colleges, units, faculties, and departments meet their own interrelated goals. Uptake of role-specific action	Increased understanding of the overall institutional impact of this plan based on the shifting trends in each of the four trajectories. Shifts in how we gather and collect data required to report on the successes in each of the four trajectories.

	planning resources increases annually.	
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Open Endings: A Message from the Vice-Provost (Access, Community + Belonging)

Change doesn't only result from grandiose interventions. Building different futures is also made possible through small, everyday actions in varied areas of our learning and working environment. This means each of us, wherever we are located in our institutional ecosystem, can begin where we are.

I am deeply grateful to the *Changing the Story* writing collective; without you, the words on these pages would not be making the worlds imagined. My gratitude also goes out to the members of the Integrated Action Plan Steering Committee for their guidance and generosity throughout this process. Finally, my ongoing appreciation goes to the members of the EDI Leads Network past and present for their expertise, leadership and courage. And to all of you who participated in one way or another, whether on committees, in gatherings, or in hallway conversations: thank you.

The development of *Changing the Story: An Integrated Action Plan for Transforming Our Vibrant and Interconnected University Community* began in my first year as the U of A's inaugural Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion). It also began at a time when consultation fatigue was setting in. Repeatedly, we heard the need for change, and that actions should be integrated and intended to uplift, support and sustain those engaged in the work. After more than 12 months of consultation and engagement sessions, co-creation workshops, collaborative development and calibrations, *Changing the Story* launches with the energy and honesty of more than 1000 interactions with individual members of the U of A community. While many spoke of persisting barriers and varying degrees of frustration or even disillusionment, the dominant undercurrent was hope – hope that we can utilize this moment to catalyze a way forward that is informed by mutual flourishing; celebrates our vibrancy; and is mission-driven, proactive and rooted in our relations, interconnectedness and responsibility to one another.

The actions in this plan emerged from these many touchpoints, and have been crafted to attend to *each* individual experience while leading toward improved opportunities for *all*. *Each* and *all*. By focusing on intersectional and holistic approaches to change but also recognizing that the decisions we make and the actions we take have differential impacts on people from different communities, the plan strives to improve the well-being and thriving of every member of the University of Alberta. Knowing this is essential for how the actions of this plan are implemented across our institutional ecosystem. Our interdependence is our strength.

The story has already begun to change. With the strategic renewal of this portfolio as Access, Community and Belonging, we hope to reflect the wide range of priorities highlighted by students, faculty and staff during the consultations. This renewal is not about endings, but about openings. We will continue to honour the efforts that have brought us to this point, while also inviting new contributors, questions, imaginations and approaches as we transform ourselves towards an increasingly vibrant and interconnected university community, one that is resilient, tenacious and responsive in the face of the greatest challenges of our time.

Carrie Smith

Vice-Provost (Access, Community and Belonging)