

Alberta 2030: building skills for jobs

10-year strategy for
post-secondary education



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Minister's Message



Global trends are reshaping post-secondary education and the skills our students need for success, around the world and right here in Alberta. Rapid technological change is poised to disrupt the labour market as many Albertans currently work in careers that may face disruption due to automation. A growing shortage of skilled trades professionals also threatens workforce shortages in key sectors of our economy, and the skills demands of employers are rapidly changing as more people seek to strengthen skills including new digital, critical thinking, communication, social skills, and collaboration skills. We must do everything possible to ensure post-secondary graduates and other adult learners are equipped with the skills for jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated many of these changes, bringing even greater importance to ensuring our citizens are prepared for a changing world of work. As Alberta's government moves forward with an ambitious strategy to create jobs and to build and diversify our economy, it is essential that we build a highly skilled and competitive workforce, strengthen innovation and the commercialization of research, and forge stronger relationships between employers and post-secondary institutions. Rapid change requires all of us to work together to support Albertans' aspirations to be resilient and future-ready for success in the 21st century and beyond.

This is more than a challenge. It is a remarkable opportunity to respond by further strengthening our world-class post-secondary system to inspire and equip Albertans with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed in their lifelong pursuits. Our system will be highly responsive to labour market needs, allowing our programs, services and policies to keep pace with the changing needs of industry and our economy. Through innovative programming and excellence in research, we will contribute to the betterment of a prosperous Alberta – a place that draws and nurtures talent, a place of opportunity where people and businesses stay and grow.

Building this kind of post-secondary system for Alberta starts with a vision and plan. I am proud and excited to present **Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs**, a 10-year strategy for advanced education in our province. This made-in-Alberta strategy is the result of Alberta's first comprehensive post-secondary review in 15 years. It is based on comprehensive engagement, evidence-informed analyses, best practices from other jurisdictions, and Alberta's unique context. It is the most significant undertaking in my Ministry today, and for the foreseeable future.

It is vital that this strategy have the support of stakeholders and a shared commitment to take action for a prosperous future. Alberta 2030 is founded on broad and meaningful engagement with Alberta's post-secondary institution leaders, students, faculty and staff, industry and employers, experts in higher education, community members, and others who care about improving our outcomes. Thousands of Albertans participated through online surveys and workbooks, telephone town halls, roundtable discussions, in-person meetings, one-on-one interviews, and direct submissions.

This is the start of working differently, as an ecosystem, and this strategy is just the first step on the journey. As we carry this forward momentum into the next stages of implementation, I know that the exciting work of transforming our post-secondary system for a 21st century global economy is underway, and will continue over the months and years ahead.

I offer my most sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to shaping this vision and strategic direction. Acting on your insights will prepare our learners and graduates to become highly skilled, resilient, and job-ready for success here in Alberta, in Canada and in an increasingly global world.

Demetrios Nicolaidis

Minister, Advanced Education

Executive Summary

In 2019, the Government of Alberta convened the MacKinnon Panel to investigate the state of Alberta's finances and competitiveness.

The *Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs* strategy is an important part of Alberta's ambitious plan to create jobs that get people back to work and to diversify Alberta's economy. As an essential part of building a prosperous Alberta, we need a post-secondary system that will equip graduates with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed now and in the future. Alberta 2030 supports a new path to prosperity where Alberta stands out from the rest of the world as the best place to work and live, invest, and find the talent needed to grow your business.

The MacKinnon Panel underscored that Alberta's future prosperity depends on having one of the most highly skilled and well-educated populations in the world, and that our post-secondary system lacks an overall direction. The panel recommended that the Alberta government consult with stakeholders – including industry – to set a compelling vision for Alberta's economic future and to develop a long-term plan for the province's post-secondary system. The panel also found that Alberta's situation required urgent action, and that transformation was required to strengthen innovation, competitiveness and prosperity.

In response to this needed transformation, Advanced Education set out on a thoughtful process to establish an evidence base and diagnostics to understand the changing context in Alberta and around the world. The initial stages looked at global models and trends in post-secondary education and assessed Alberta's existing post-secondary system, governance and institutions. Minister Nicolaides believed it was essential that stakeholders learn about the issues Alberta was facing. It was also essential that this new vision be built with extensive consultation, exchange of diverse perspectives, and collaboration to illuminate next steps and shift the way we work. The quality of contributions was outstanding and a shared vision began to emerge.

While the scope of the review focused on the 26 publicly funded post-secondary institutions in Alberta, insights and feedback related to the broader adult learning ecosystem will be further developed over this multi-year strategy.

The purpose? To do everything we can to ensure that more of Alberta's youth and workforce set bold aspirations and are well-positioned to succeed in rewarding careers today and tomorrow. This is our path to prosperity and we want as many Albertans as possible to benefit.

Alberta has an incredible opportunity to build on its many strengths – and its most valuable resource: people! With thanks to all who have shaped this direction, it is hoped that you may similarly participate in bringing this strategy to life and shifting the outcomes of post-secondary education in Alberta from good to great¹.

Here are the strategy's vision and goals, at a glance.

¹ In 2011, Jim Collins coined the phrase "good to great" in his book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...And Others Don't* (Harper Business, 2011).

Goals and Vision

This strategy will achieve six goals:

- 1. Improve Access and Student Experience:** Ensure all Albertans have access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities and that the student experience is coordinated and integrated.
- 2. Develop Skills for Jobs:** Ensure every student has the skills, knowledge and competencies to enjoy fulfilling lives and careers and that they have greater transparency around labour market outcomes.
- 3. Support Innovation and Commercialization:** Contribute to Alberta's innovation capacity by supporting post-secondary research and strengthening its commercialization potential to create new knowledge, develop future skills and diversify the economy.
- 4. Strengthen Internationalization¹:** Become a leading destination for top talent to drive the growth of skills, ideas and innovations, locally and globally.
- 5. Improve Sustainability and Affordability:** Provide institutions greater flexibility to generate own-source revenue and strengthen student aid.
- 6. Strengthen System Governance:** Modernize governance of the system to increase collaboration and drive outcomes.

Vision

Alberta's world-class post-secondary system will equip Albertans with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed in their lifelong pursuits. The system will be highly responsive to labour market needs and, through innovative programming and excellence in research, contribute to the betterment of an innovative and prosperous Alberta.

If we want to achieve our vision, goals and objectives, we need a system in which all players work as a team to strengthen the system's governance and improve financial sustainability.

Institutions, businesses, students, faculty, and other key stakeholders will have integral roles to play in refining and implementing Alberta 2030 initiatives and meaningfully moving the dial for Alberta's future.

This strategy is intentionally dynamic. As we move forward with implementing the vision and flagship initiatives, there will be room for agility, innovation and leadership from across our ecosystem in the face of our rapidly changing context and future opportunities.

¹ Developed as part of Alberta's International Student Strategy (February 2020)

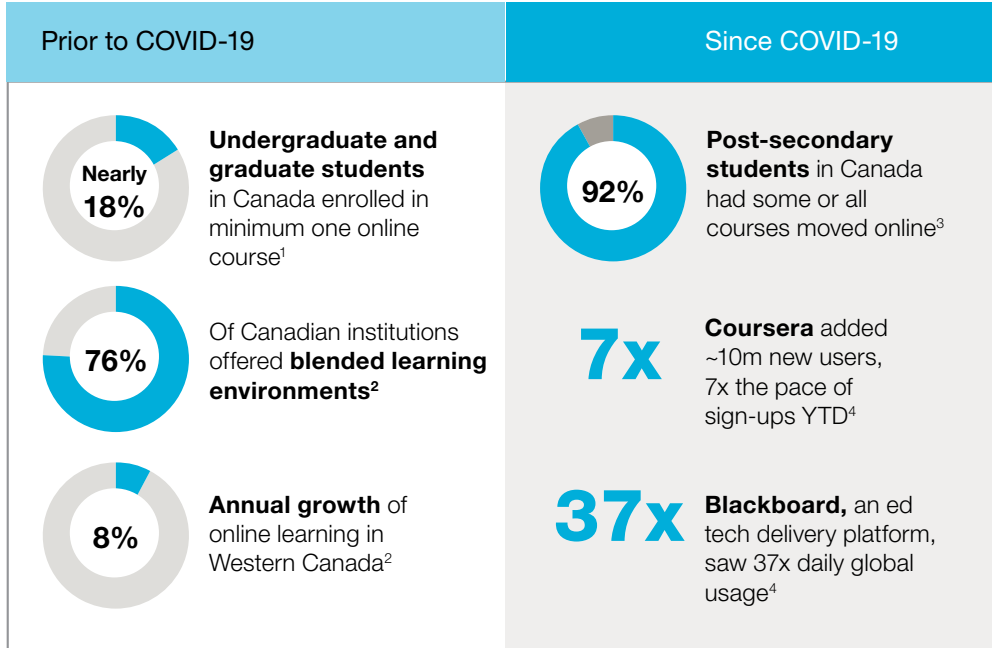
The Case for Change

Alberta 2030 surfaced many examples of where post-secondary in our province shines, as well as concrete areas where there is room for improvement.

The case for change recognizes five trends that are reshaping post-secondary education globally, as well as some issues specific to Alberta. While these trends began to be recognized in recent years, some have been amplified or accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. While Alberta 2030 will institutionalize forward-looking strategic planning, some trends that have already been identified – and to which the system must respond – include:

- The profile of post-secondary learners is changing. Students and families are bearing a greater share of the total cost of education at the same time that more people are aspiring to pursue higher learning, reskilling and upskilling. The pandemic has increased pressures and further raised the profile of mental health and sexual violence as issues within our post-secondary system that require further attention. Post-secondary student demographics are shifting, and international enrolment has grown in recent years, with resulting shifts in funding sources and opportunities for growth.

COVID-19 HAS ACCELERATED THE ADOPTION OF REMOTE AND ONLINE LEARNING



¹ 2016/2017 numbers reported in the 2018 Canadian National Online and Digital Learning Survey

² 2017/2018 numbers reported in the 2019 Canadian National Online and Digital Learning Survey

³ Statcan (COVID-19 Pandemic: Academic impacts on postsecondary students in Canada)

⁴ Press searches

“As the global economy changes, so too must our provincial strategy and approach.”

Alberta Colleges Economic Recovery Task Force

- COVID-19 forced higher education to go remote almost overnight. Adoption of remote and online learning is creating new pathways to delivery. Investments in educational and network capability for advanced education are also growing quickly and challenging traditional ways of providing post-secondary education. In a post-pandemic learning environment, high-quality delivery models of in-person, online and experiential learning will most effectively meet learners’ needs.
- The nature, and future, of work are being transformed. Demand for technological, social, emotional, higher cognitive, critical thinking and leadership skills is increasing. Lifelong learning is becoming increasingly salient as people reskill and upskill to match the pace of technological and other changes in the workplace. In what is increasingly becoming a knowledge-, data- and digitally-driven economy, the learning, skills, research and the innovation needed to compete are crucial to our future prosperity. For example, according to RBC’s Humans Wanted report, even before the pandemic, more than 25 per cent of Canadian jobs were predicted to be heavily disrupted by technology in the coming decade, and fully half will go through a significant overhaul of the skills required (p. 3). This is leading to what RBC terms “a quiet crisis of graduates who feel overqualified for the jobs they are in, unemployed youth who weren’t trained for the jobs that are out there, and young Canadians everywhere who feel they aren’t ready for the future of work” (p. 2). As the pace of change increases, it puts pressure on businesses, institutions and government to adapt, and can also lead to new opportunities to work together to find solutions. In this respect, post-secondary institutions, employers and other key stakeholders have critical roles to play as we align efforts and reposition for success.

DEMAND FOR SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND COMPLEX THINKING SKILLS IS INCREASING

Automation and artificial intelligence have impacted demand for different skills in the US and Western Europe¹

Type of skills	Hours worked in 2016 (billions)	Forecasted change in # of hours, 2016-30 (% of time)
Physical and manual skills	230	-14
Basic cognitive skills	115	-15
Higher cognitive skills	140	8
Social and emotional skills	119	24
Technological skills	73	55

¹ Western Europe includes Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom
 note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding

“In an environment where many organizations are transitioning to a more highly skilled workforce, worried about impending retirements, and competing with other firms for skilled talent, Alberta employers are seeking post-secondary-educated recruits to meet their future skills needs.”

Conference Board of Canada, Building Skills Connections Series: Key Alberta Sectors

- While public research spending is increasing, it is nevertheless being outpaced by GDP growth in many jurisdictions. This situation has led some reports to describe Canada as being stuck in neutral, and there are calls for increased private and public sector investment in research, innovation and productivity to enhance our competitiveness. Institutions are reorganizing their research efforts to diversify and grow research funding and partnerships. The pandemic has also highlighted the societal and economic costs of creating investment gaps in public/private research, commercialization and manufacturing chains, with renewed calls for building appropriate domestic capabilities to fill the gaps and to apply new ideas and solutions to address the greatest challenges of our times.
- Public funding remains under pressure. Public investment as a share of total spending on post-secondary education has been steadily declining here and in other western countries, intensifying income challenges for institutions. However, this is also creating opportunities to free institutions to be more entrepreneurial, while exploring how to leverage resources more effectively from other public and private investments, and access more stable funding streams.

Here in Alberta, these global trends are reflected in post-secondary challenges and opportunities, including:

- Enrolment is not increasing despite a changing mix of post-secondary learners.
- Program completion must better align with labour market demand to help address the recent drop in employment.
- Research needs to be translated into real-world technology and products to attract capital and support innovation.
- Alberta’s government and post-secondary institutions are facing increased fiscal pressures.

“Talent, not capital, will be the key factor linking innovation, competitiveness and growth in the 21st century.”

*Preface, The Human Capital Report
2015, World Economic Forum*

COVID-19 and the collapse of the oil market are driving possibly the most challenging economic situation Alberta has seen in the last century. Together, we must face the accelerating financial pressures, shifts in learning and delivery models, as well as the demand for skills, application of research and new opportunities. We must work together to shape our future.

Technology, innovation and educated, skilled and knowledgeable people are the main drivers of economic growth, productivity and prosperity. However, our ability to meet challenges by leveraging new insights, business models, and game-changing technologies may erode if we do not work together to transform our post-secondary system.

We can revise provincial policy, legislation and the funding model. However, change will not come fast enough unless we face this once-in-a-generation opportunity together. Throughout its history, Alberta has been known as a place of opportunity. A place where hard work and skills led to good, stable jobs and careers. Our younger generations are looking to take hold of those same opportunities, and we want to make sure that they have the knowledge, competencies and skills they need to do so. Alberta 2030 is about moving us forward to give the current, and next generation rewarding opportunities and jobs, so that they know Alberta is where they want to be, now and in the future.

Engagement

From the start, Alberta 2030 has been based on extensive engagement, beginning in summer 2020, with interviews to gather initial hypotheses and perspectives. A Guiding Coalition of thought leaders provided critical feedback and enabled dialogue on complex issues throughout. Guiding Coalition membership included post-secondary system leaders, student and faculty representatives; industry members; Indigenous community members; and subject matter experts. The Guiding Coalition's offerings of frank and thoughtful input, generous investment of time, and diverse perspectives were invaluable.

The Guiding Coalition examined issues and developed options as the research and diagnostic analysis was prepared, with input welcomed at each stage. Roundtable participants gave input that helped to frame key issues and refine the first integrated view of the draft strategy. Online surveys and an online workbooks gathered detailed input. Institutions, student and faculty groups, business associations, and other representative organizations provided direct submissions. Telephone town hall discussions confirmed input and perspectives to date, shared strategic themes and options, provided facts and benchmarks, and invited new feedback.

Specific stakeholder groups engaged in the process included:

- Industry and employers
- Post-secondary board chairs
- Post-secondary presidents, faculty and staff
- Post-secondary students
- Indigenous community members
- Representatives of the K-12 education system, foundational learning and other educational providers
- General public
- Members of the broader tertiary ecosystem such as Community Adult Learning Providers, Private Career Colleges, and First Nations Colleges



To ensure that leaders from across the post-secondary system had the opportunity to be fully engaged in the process and were learning directly about what was heard, the Minister and Deputy Minister invited board chairs, presidents and others to interviews, roundtables and dedicated meetings. There was also a great deal of cross-ministry collaboration and engagement, particularly on priorities related to economic diversification, innovation, labour, Indigenous communities, K-12 education, and opportunities to strengthen shared outcomes.

In all, the engagement attracted the broad participation of stakeholders, including:

- More than 115 one-on-one interviews to gather initial hypotheses, perspectives and concerns
- 10 Guiding Coalition meetings
- 31 roundtables
- 5,600+ online survey completions
- Over 200 workbook submissions
- Almost 1,500 participants in six telephone town hall discussions
- Numerous direct submissions from stakeholders

This extensive engagement helped to galvanize a shared sense of urgency, forge stronger relationships and build a strategy that reflects the current and future needs of learners, institutions and job providers.

Highlights of What We Heard

“Albertans no longer have the luxury of relying on abundance of opportunity. Instead, we have to retrain and reskill our workforce to meet the needs of tomorrow.”

Student Association Submission

“Students need clear communication on where programming can take them--types of jobs and opportunities, salaries, etc.”

Workbook submission

“For Alberta’s future, it may be important to set a few bold stretch targets. For example, on student experience, what if we aimed for something like ‘Alberta will deliver a distinctive in and out of classroom experience to achieve a competitive advantage and higher completion rates?’”

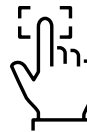
Vendor, Senior Partner

“We need pathways for Indigenous learners, and to authentically do better.”

“One of the biggest challenges is around internet accessibility and infrastructure.”

Participants in an Indigenous Round Table

Many participants and respondents took time to make this strategy as representative and relevant as possible. Successful implementation will depend, in part, on continued engagement and collaboration among all players. While a more comprehensive summary is available in the standalone What We Heard document, the following high-level summaries are included to give a flavour of the high-quality input received regarding the six goals of the **Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs** strategy:



Improve Access and Student Experience

Learners, whether from urban, rural or remote areas, shared their unique experiences and barriers. They emphasized that strengthening inclusion and focus on individuals, as part of the goal to improve students’ access and experience, is important. Participants valued supports, including those related to mental health and addressing sexual violence. Online learning was viewed as an opportunity to overcome some of these barriers and a potential means to offset costs, but many stakeholders caution that it is a supplement and not a replacement for in-person learning. Online education during the pandemic met basic needs, but led to questions of whether students feel they are receiving full value. Future learning models will likely offer a richer blend of in-person, online and experiential learning. Current system strengths include diverse programming and institutions, and flexible learning delivery options. Areas that could improve participation in, and access to, post-secondary education include breaking down financial barriers, improving the transfer system, providing more and better training and labour market information, and addressing learners’ different needs.

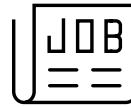
“We need lifelong learning, and we need it now, because the tasks we do and the related skills we need are changing at an exponential rate, and we need to keep adapting our skills.

“Post-secondary should develop exceptional candidates, who will go where the opportunities are, and where their talents are best recognized.”

Industry Round Table participant

“Work-integrated learning needs to be tied to definitive outcomes that are interwoven with course material and there need to be options to weave learning into existing work arrangements. As we get more people upskilling/reskilling, we should find opportunities to help people integrate new skills/knowledge into existing work.”

Student submission



Develop Skills for Jobs

Stakeholders agree that the post-secondary education system plays a crucial role in education as a whole and is essential to preparing learners for careers. As such, it should focus on broadly applicable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership and communication. The system should also ensure that learners and institutions have access to data on the labour market and future workforce needs in order to make informed decisions. Many value new forms of experiential and work-integrated learning, but feel that access is a concern and that participating students should be compensated for their work. There is general support for collaboration among employers, institutions and levels of government on work-integrated learning programs; however, there is no consensus on the level of involvement that industry and employers should have in program development. It is clear that Albertans value education in its truest sense; however, they also agree that Alberta’s entire system needs a new level of responsiveness to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.



“If there is public investment into intellectual property then there needs to be public return for all the Alberta tax dollars that are being invested – commercialization offers some way to recoup the funding that Albertans pay, through taxes.”

Industry Member, Research and Innovation Roundtable

“We are now in a global competition. The fastest two things that move around the world are money and talent and we need to give talent a reason to come and reasons to stay.”

Industry Member, Research and Innovation Roundtable

“The Government of Alberta provides a generous amount of provincial research funding, often through Alberta Innovates, but these funds are far more directed than our comparator provinces’ research funding. This unevenness of provincial funding is one of the reasons why our researchers do not capture more federal funding.”

Faculty/Researcher Submission



Support Innovation and Commercialization

Stakeholders recognize that Alberta has world-class research talent and urged support for researchers and research commercialization, especially as research is shifting more to multi-disciplinary and global collaborations. Stakeholder suggestions included supporting faculty with more resources (such as grant-writing support and commercialization training) and time to pursue research. Stakeholders also identified the need for adequate funding, identification of priorities and the specific need for more public funding for innovative projects that may not attract private investment. Both basic and applied research are important and intellectual property rights must be valued to ensure the appropriate incentives. It is timely for the province to look at all of the roles it can play to strengthen related research and innovation ecosystems.

Collaboration and communication are key. Barriers to collaboration among institutions, industry and government include differing goals, ineffective administrative processes, misaligned planning cycles and organizational culture. To go from good to great, the public sector must innovate and collaborate more effectively to make continuous strides in this area. Students lack awareness of available entrepreneurial and innovation-based programming, and there are opportunities to boost awareness of the pathways into emerging research and innovation.



Strengthen Internationalization²

As discovered through the pandemic, having capabilities within our jurisdiction for research, innovation and related supply and manufacturing chains is important for security and also for competitiveness. Some of the fastest and best discoveries were achieved through the leadership of global collaborations, having enormous impact on the depth of economic loss and speed of recovery. Alberta is keen to build its capabilities and reputation to contribute to such partnerships.

“We don’t have competitive provincial recruitment to attract international students to Alberta, and to compete with other provinces.”

Institution Executive, Roundtable

“We are no longer in a bubble. We are in a globalized world, so we have to think about what makes Alberta attractive to those outside it. We need to figure out what the story is that we want to tell to the outside world.”

Industry Roundtable Participant

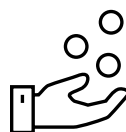
Engagement further revealed the nuanced value of our international students, describing their positive impacts on campuses, research and academics, and their contributions to our province economically and socially. Stakeholders said the need to diversify institutions’ revenue resources should not fall solely on international students. Some expressed concern that reliance on international tuition revenue may reduce domestic students’ access, underscoring the need for thoughtful design and balance in strategies.

It is important that internationalization also be about supporting students in broadening their global experiences. Stakeholders said recruiting international talent is equally vital and supports a more unified and collaborative recruitment strategy. In general, Alberta would benefit from greater emphasis on global connections, perspectives and partnerships.

² Developed as part of Alberta’s International Education Strategy (2020).

“If the vision is to have a more sustainable model that draws less on public funding, then we need less government intervention and regulation – government needs to clear the way to allow PSIs to become more entrepreneurial.”

Institution Executive, Round Table



Improve Sustainability and Affordability

We heard our stakeholders urge an increase in funding predictability and affordability for students, at the same time that they acknowledge Alberta is facing extreme fiscal challenges. Stakeholders said that investment should be student-focused, and care must be taken if the mix of public and private revenue is shifted. Funding should reach students through the classroom, with high-quality education and improved labour market outcomes being the primary goals. Many agree on a need for funding transparency, but there were mixed responses to linking that funding to performance metrics. It was cautioned that metrics should be tailored to institutions and not necessarily limited to graduate salaries and employment rates. Some suggested linking funding to enrolment. Many were not previously aware of the growing use of outcomes-based funding in other jurisdictions to incentivize improved value for investment.

Stakeholders are interested in institutions being able to make long-term investments. They suggested ways to generate revenue and lower costs, such as new program delivery opportunities, partnering with industry in research and development and eliminating duplication. In general, it is acknowledged that priorities such as lifelong learning and encouraging industry investment in research and commercialization offer significant growth opportunities.

“It is our view that the Alberta university system has benefited significantly from the fact that its universities have, over the years, been allowed, and in fact encouraged, to develop and grow. This includes in ways that built on their differing strengths and histories and that left them free to vigorously grasp opportunities for innovation and change that came their way, while preserving the core structures and programs that any comprehensive university needs.”

Faculty Association Submission

“Incentivize institutions and their partners to explore deeper alliances with each other to solve common problems, align similar processes and systems and share best practices.”

Student Association Submission

“We need to focus not only on the issues of today, because over the next ten years, post-secondary is facing an existential crisis.”

Board Chair, Post-Secondary Institution



Strengthen System Governance

Stakeholders shared many perspectives on how to strengthen governance in our post-secondary system. Some value the current system’s diversity, stating it encourages participation of many types of learners. Others believe it creates a hierarchy and drives institutions to extend beyond their mandate. Governance structures and processes need to ensure the system is competitive on the international stage, as well as being nimble and representative of the people the system is designed to serve.

Stakeholders felt that institutional autonomy is crucial and expressed overwhelming support for local boards in order to protect regional perspectives and needs. Finding innovative ways to enhance system-level coordination and responsiveness, while maintaining local engagement and vibrancy of partnerships, can keep the system agile, leverage community resources and serve increasingly diverse needs. Many feel government should clear the way for our post-secondary system to innovate and avoid red tape. Suggestions for change include reducing the level of government control over factors such as institutional finances and board appointments, and ensuring boards have diverse perspectives and skillsets. It is important that appointments be timely, not political, and board members be experienced and highly competent. There is an increasing need to model exemplary systems leadership to navigate change. Numerous submissions and input noted that, given the pace of change and pressures Alberta is facing, Alberta institutions should collaborate as a system and compete like never before with the world to capitalize on opportunities for growth and prosperity.

Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs

Vision

Alberta's world-class post-secondary system will equip Albertans with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed in their lifelong pursuits. The system will be highly responsive to labour market needs and, through innovative programming and excellence in research, contribute to the betterment of an innovative and prosperous Alberta.

The Strategy

Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs aims to achieve this vision over the next 10 years. Alberta 2030 is a key support in Alberta's Recovery Plan, which is a bold, long-term strategy to create tens of thousands of jobs by diversifying our economy, attracting investment and building core infrastructure.

The Alberta 2030 strategy is organized to show how it will achieve six goals for Albertans:

1. Improve Access and Student Experience: Ensure all Albertans have access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities and that the student experience is coordinated and integrated.

- 2. Develop Skills for Jobs:** Ensure every student has the skills, knowledge and competencies to enjoy fulfilling lives and careers and that they have greater transparency around labour market outcomes.
- 3. Support Innovation and Commercialization:** Contribute to Alberta's innovation capacity by supporting post-secondary research and strengthening its commercialization potential to create new knowledge, develop future skills and diversify the economy.
- 4. Strengthen Internationalization:** Become a leading destination for top talent to drive the growth of skills, ideas and innovations, locally and globally.
- 5. Improve Sustainability and Affordability:** Provide institutions greater flexibility to generate own-source revenue and strengthen student aid.
- 6. Strengthen System Governance:** Modernize governance of the system to increase collaboration and drive outcomes.

Each of the six goals includes specific objectives that support achieving the goals. During the journey to realize the full vision of Alberta 2030 in the decade ahead, a wide range of initiatives will support each of the objectives. While the initiatives will evolve and be implemented over time, this strategy identifies a number of flagship initiatives that have been identified for leading system transformation.

Goal 1: Improve Access and Student Experience

Alberta aims to lead Canada in providing world-class, affordable, and innovative post-secondary experiences and credentials. While 93 per cent of Alberta high school students say they want to pursue post-secondary education (up 15 per cent since 2015), this increase is not translating to growth in post-secondary enrolment. Greater focus on improving the student experience, program transferability, and delivery methods will engage prospective students, provide a smoother journey for current students, and expand opportunities for non-traditional learners to participate in post-secondary education.

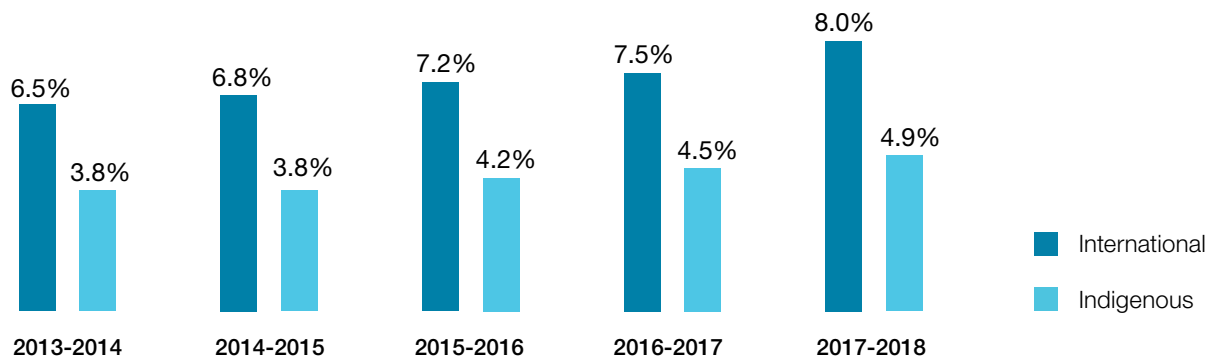
Students and families are carrying a greater share of learning costs, and the proportion of learners in Alberta who are accessing financial support is growing. Students will feel more confident in their program choice, and their ability to achieve financial stability, if they have access to information about labour market opportunities. It is clear that being prepared

to compete in the labour market is a valued outcome for our students. According to a 2016 Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) report, “preparing for a specific job or career” was selected as the most important reason by the highest number (44%) of first year students (pg. 12).

Students also need other kinds of supports to succeed. In 2019, more than half of Canadian students reported depression, up 13 per cent since 2013, and more than two in three reported anxiety, up 12 per cent. Aligned with increasing global awareness of and response to sexual violence, post-secondary institutions must do more to prevent and respond appropriately to campus sexual violence. They can do this through a survivor-centric approach that supports victims in post-secondary communities. In addition, COVID-19 has transformed online learning almost overnight, increasing the need for additional supports for this kind of program delivery.

IN RECENT YEARS, THE MIX OF POST-SECONDARY LEARNERS HAS BECOME MORE DIVERSE

The proportion of International and Indigenous students in Alberta is increasing¹



² Student headcount population estimates on July 1st, by age and sex
Source: Post-secondary Learner Enrolment Reporting System

Increased supports for Indigenous learners are also needed. According to RBC's 2019 report *Bridging the Gap: What Canadians Told Us About the Skills Revolution*:

Wide and persistent gaps in income, education and labour participation between Canada's Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations have resulted in billions in missed economic and societal gains. This cohort of youth represent perhaps the strongest case for closing the skills gap – and fast. Yet automation may have an outsized impact on Indigenous workers, due to their concentration in jobs at higher risk of disruption. Equipping the next generation of Indigenous workers with future-proof skills is vital to supplying tomorrow's economy (pg. 12).

Working in partnership with stakeholders from Indigenous communities, we will continue to support efforts to increase access to an array of learning opportunities so that Indigenous learners can achieve their desired outcomes.

By removing barriers to access and strengthening the student experience, Alberta 2030 will help encourage all Albertans to pursue their aspirations and realize their potential.



“My dream is for all Indigenous people to have access and find a way to succeed, where we support them to succeed.”

Indigenous Participant, Roundtable

Objectives

1. Empower learners to make informed decisions on post-secondary pathways.
2. Ensure that students have a high-quality experience.
3. Improve the transfer system and foster flexible career and education pathways.
4. Prioritize the expansion of digital infrastructure and support distance education to reach students where they are.
5. Develop targeted strategies to strengthen the inclusion of Indigenous learners.
6. Improve support for foundational learning and create integrated pathways for learners.
7. Support the expansion of Open Educational Resources, such as course materials and textbooks.

Flagship Initiatives

- Empower student decision-making by streamlining and simplifying the post-secondary application process.
- Improve the transfer system so that no student repeats equivalent coursework due to transferability challenges.
- Expand access to digital infrastructure for online learning in rural and remote communities by collaborating with other ministries to pursue federal funding and explore industry partnerships.
- Continue to equip institutions with resources to support students' mental well-being.
- Modernize the existing provincial framework to address sexual violence in Alberta's campus communities, and work with institutions and students to strengthen relevant policies and practices.
- Work in partnership with the federal government, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders, First Nations colleges, Indigenous learners and other stakeholders to improve foundational pathways, transitions, access, participation, completion and labour market outcomes for Indigenous learners.

Goal 2: Develop Skills for Jobs

“In order for Alberta to be competitive as a place to live, to work, to open businesses, and to invest capital, we need to focus on having a highly trained workforce. We should be removing as many barriers to education as possible, to entice corporations to expand here and to promote local entrepreneurs to grow new businesses.”

Student, survey participant

“Businesses learn from their students, too. In addition to integrating their ideas in work, at the end of 4 or 6 months, we always ask them to make a research-based presentation related to what they built while they were here.”

Industry Participant, Roundtable

Alberta needs to ensure every student has the skills, knowledge and competencies to enjoy fulfilling lives and careers at every stage of life. Post-secondary institutions support comprehensive learning and growth opportunities in their role in the discovery, preservation, and transmission of practical and theoretical knowledge. This includes helping to teach learners the future-proof skills and competencies they need for successful careers.

According to the Conference Board of Canada’s *Alberta in a Nutshell* report on changing skill needs, our province, in particular, has “a growing need for creative skills such as problem-solving, thinking outside the box, and examining ideas from different perspectives” (p. 15). These skills must be a focus for students in all programs. Our goals are to strengthen programming, enhance learning pathways to current and future careers, and solve some of our greatest societal challenges. All graduates should have a strong foundation to achieve success in the career path of their choosing.

For Albertans who are struggling to see where their career might take them, or which program might bring them the best opportunities, we want to give them hope that there will be good jobs ahead and they will have the entrepreneurial skills to make their own opportunities. To make sure that we are keeping young Albertans in the province, and drawing talent from around the world, we need the best possible policy environment to drive the best possible learning, research and training opportunities. With the rapid changes that we are seeing in business models, skills needs, and digitization, our policies, and the way we work, must keep up with the pace of business. Where there are labour shortages, we need to identify and respond to that demand. In response, we are investing significantly in work-integrated learning. By providing new hands-on learning opportunities, we are ensuring more students gain the practical skills that work-integrated learning provides. Not only do internships and other types of work-integrated learning benefit students, they help industry partners achieve their innovation potential, respond to current business challenges, and grow their competitive advantage.

Alberta 2030 is closely aligned with the Skills for Jobs Task Force, which was launched in September 2019. The Task Force was appointed to strengthen apprenticeship education and skilled trades opportunities to address the labour shortage predicted for Alberta. The Task Force focused on building awareness of what skilled trades are and how people can begin working in them, and to explore how and where apprenticeships can be increasingly implemented in traditional and emerging sectors. As a result of their work, the *Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act* has been tabled in the Alberta Legislature. If approved, it will modernize skilled trades and apprenticeship education in Alberta and create a more flexible and efficient system.

Objectives

1. Become the first province in Canada to offer every undergraduate student access to a work-integrated learning opportunity.
2. Expand apprenticeships in careers of the future.
3. Reduce the skills gap by fostering the strongest employer, industry and post-secondary partnership environment in Canada.
4. Develop strategies and approaches to measure employment-related skills in students.
5. Develop a provincial framework to guide the development of micro-credentials.
6. Streamline the program approval process to allow institutions greater ability to respond to labour market needs and develop innovative new programming.
7. Strengthen the role of post-secondary institutions in the reskilling and upskilling of our workforce.

Flagship Initiatives

- Become the first province in Canada to offer access to work-integrated learning to 100 per cent of students.
- Build, fund, and establish policy to support apprenticeship-style programs in a wide range of occupations, including emerging high-tech trades.
- Encourage more young Albertans to pursue careers in the trades and work to create a parity of esteem between trades and academic learning.
- Provide high-quality labour market data to support students, employers and institutions in making informed decisions regarding programs and pathways.
- Establish an agile program development process to ensure post-secondary institutions can provide nimble, relevant and effective learning opportunities, including micro-credentials.
- Support institutions to become the go-to providers of employer-paid upskilling programs.

Goal 3: Support Innovation and Commercialization

Alberta has much to be proud of in our post-secondary system's research and innovation activities. The type of leadership in research that we see at our institutions has drawn global recognition, including a recent Nobel Prize. The cutting-edge discoveries and products being developed at our institutions are improving the lives of Albertans every day. We now have the opportunity to go from good to great when it comes to unleashing post-secondary research that creates new knowledge, capabilities and companies capable of global competition. There is a lot of talent in Alberta already, and we are continuing to capitalize on the entrepreneurial mindset that has been the bedrock of so many great innovations in our province. These are the types of skills that employers and researchers alike are harnessing in their work. For example, the Conference Board of Canada's *Building Skills Connections* report found that, "creativity and continuous improvement skills; risk assessment and risk-taking skills; and relationship-building and networking skills" (pg. 8) were the top skills seen as driving innovation and commercialization in Alberta – skills that we will continue to grow as we raise Alberta's profile as a global research destination.

"We need a 'Campus Alberta' approach to commercialization and tech transfer. We also need greater clarity – it is often hard for post-secondary institutions to understand the rules and policies around IP commercialization – often very bureaucratic and unclear."

Institution Executive, Roundtable

Alberta is making progress to strengthen alliances and draw other sources of funding, to further catalyze the excellent work happening in our province. This will help Alberta better leverage broader investment in research at a time when, globally, investments in research have grown, but have not kept pace with growth in Gross Domestic Product.

As a result, Alberta will position itself as a research leader in emerging technologies (such as artificial intelligence and quantum science), smart agriculture, precision health and virology, and new energy technologies, including carbon capture and hydrogen development. Already, we are seeing that many post-secondary institutions are reorganizing their research efforts towards future-facing priorities, and growing research funding and partnerships. Priority sectors of energy, agriculture, health and technology are beginning to receive investments that align with our province's economic diversification goals. This type of collaboration is vital for unlocking the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit that is at the heart of Alberta's competitive advantage. This spirit, and the measurable entrepreneurial attributes and attitudes (as measured in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor survey), are elevating our province. This growth will continue as we build and accelerate our research and commercialization capacity, seed innovation, nurture talent, and contribute to the growth of vibrant communities.

In 2020, the Research Working Group, composed of industry, government and post-secondary institution representatives, began the important work of strengthening Alberta's research and innovation ecosystem to attract national and international investment to Alberta and contribute to economic growth and diversification. This included a focus on:

- Building industry/post-secondary/government partnerships to commercialize research.
- Creating alliances with strategic partners to influence federal research investment decisions for Alberta's priority sectors.
- Developing priority sector research commercialization strategies to strengthen Alberta's economy and global leadership.

Now, the Research Commercialization Working Group will continue this work to strengthen the partnerships and mechanisms for commercialization and global market adoption of innovative products in priority areas such as energy, agriculture, health and technology.

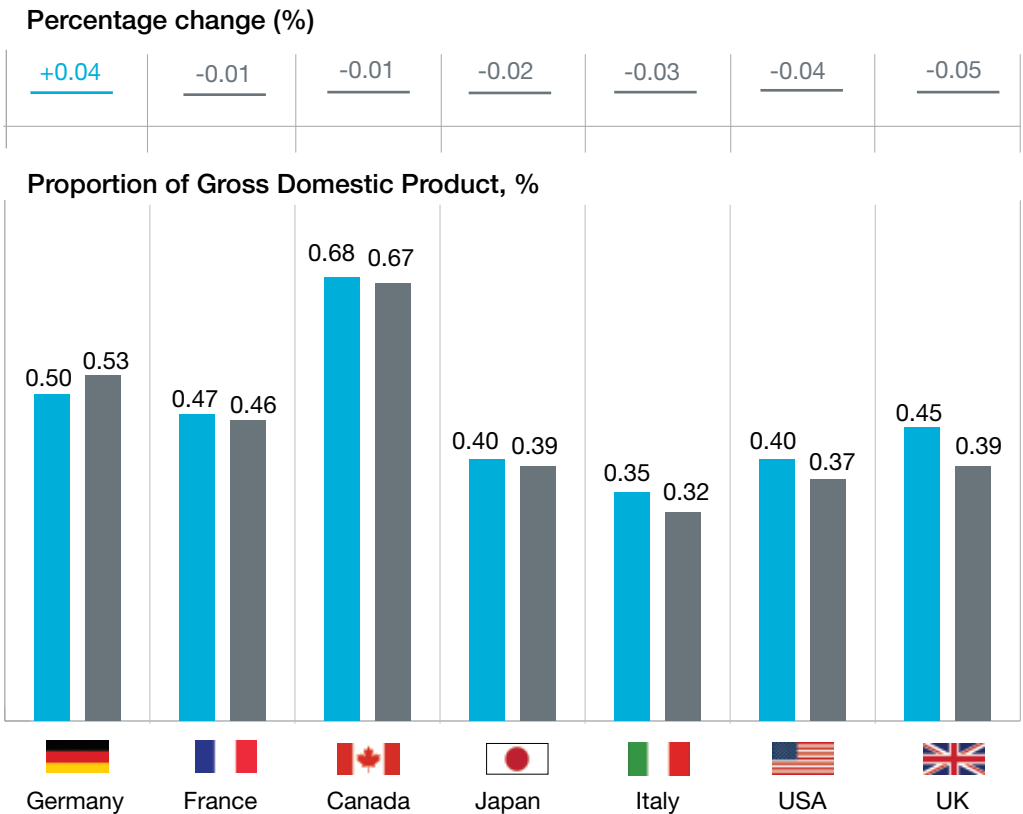
Objectives

1. Attract and nurture world-class faculty and students.
2. Drive Alberta's competitiveness in critical areas by aligning resources and incentives.
3. Set a national standard for policies and practices that foster commercialization.

Flagship Initiatives

- Convene institutions, industry and potential investors to advance cutting edge research and innovation collaborations and grow federal and industry investment in priority areas.
- Strengthen research and innovation planning, and work across entities to align provincial contributions for post-secondary research to promote commercialization to meet economic diversification priorities.
- Work with ecosystem partners to establish and fund a central entity to build and provide first-rate commercialization and entrepreneurship capabilities system-wide.
- Support implementation of an intellectual property framework for Alberta, which will include fostering industry/institution collaboration, and adoption of faculty promotion and tenure policies to incentivize faculty to pursue entrepreneurial activities.

DESPITE OVERALL SPENDING INCREASES, CANADA AND MOST G7 COUNTRIES SAW A DECREASE IN PROPORTION OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT USED FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



Goal 4: Strengthen Internationalization

Alberta needs to become a leading destination and source for top talent to drive the growth of skills, ideas, and innovations locally and abroad. In a global economy, ensuring that Alberta has a strong international reputation and students gain international experience will help them, and Alberta, be competitive in business, industry, innovation and job creation. Attracting international students and helping them settle in Alberta communities or maintain their networks after graduation will keep our population and economy growing.

Having an involved community of international students who build international connections, investment and business supply chains and give back through mentorship can be a powerful factor in global success.

“For economic transformation, it is important to provide an education with global experience and keep people in the province. Brain drain is a major challenge.”

Industry Participant, Roundtable

Alberta approved and published an [International Education Strategy](#) in 2020, which forms the foundation for the connection of this goal to the Alberta 2030 strategy. While COVID-19 has affected the ability to implement the strategy since its announcement, Alberta is well-positioned to regain momentum on internationalization and we look forward to accelerating action on many of these initiatives, in partnership with system stakeholders.

Objectives

1. Attract talented international students to Alberta's post-secondary institutions and communities.
2. Equip learners with international skills and competencies.

Flagship Initiatives

- Develop an Education in Alberta brand and promotional materials to demonstrate the top reasons to study in Alberta and increase visibility of Alberta's international education offerings.
- Implement an international marketing strategy including signature international education events and Team Alberta missions to priority markets that have growth potential for international student mobility and align with Alberta's economic priorities.
- Define and monitor outcomes and key performance indicators for international education in Alberta (e.g., domestic enrolment targets, international students' experiences, ratio of international to Alberta students, impact on local labour market and communities).

Goal 5: Improve Sustainability and Affordability

We know that revenue is an incredible catalyst for transformation – offering new avenues for growth, and new ways to evolve. By reducing red tape, better meeting programming needs and clearing the way for innovation, our post-secondary institutions will be empowered to access more diverse options for revenue, allowing them to be financially stable and strong. We have heard the leaders of post-secondary institutions: outdated approaches to compliance have added an administrative burden and contributed to the areas where Alberta needs to improve. Many of the larger post-secondary institutions are ready and able to flourish with a higher level of autonomy from government.

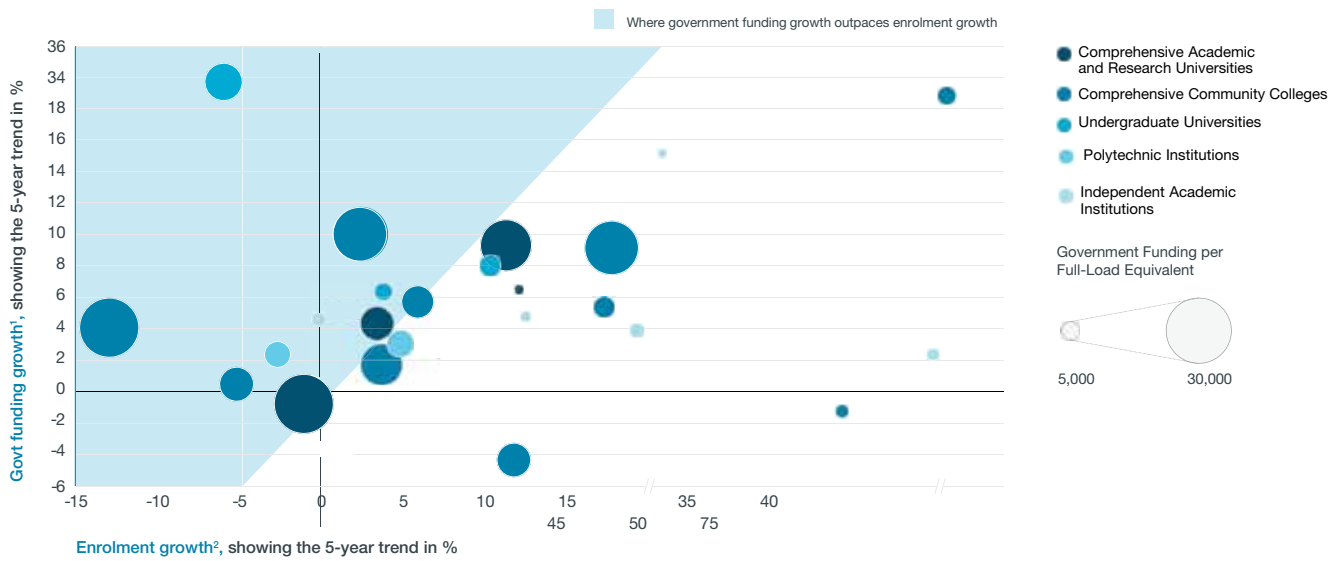
“If the vision is to have a more sustainable model that draws less on public funding, then we need less government intervention, regulation – government needs to clear the way to allow post-secondary institutions to become more entrepreneurial.”

Institution Executive, Roundtable

Accessing diverse revenue streams will also keep our institutions agile as our economy continues to shift, creating space for new ways to support learners in their lifelong learning pursuits. This may mean testing out different programming and delivery options, as well as shifting business and operational models so that Albertans can continue to gain the skills, competencies and knowledge they need.

As we transition to a future world of work where skills needs are changing quickly, Alberta needs a post-secondary system that is strong, agile, and able to adapt to protect the lives and livelihoods of our learners and their communities. It will be essential for post-secondary institutions to achieve long-term sustainability while providing students with access to the skills and knowledge they need to achieve their lifelong pursuits – affordably. We must do this by investing in people, infrastructure, and research capacity in our post-secondary system. As a result, we are continuing to invest in post-secondary capital projects to enhance and revitalize campuses across the province, creating modern learning spaces and hundreds of new, good jobs. These investments will help create modern learning environments, helping students put their best foot forward. We will also continue to evolve our related accountability frameworks in accordance with changing governance and financial models.

OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS, GOVERNMENT FUNDING HAS SURPASSED ENROLMENT GROWTH AT 8 OUT OF 24 INSTITUTIONS



Objectives

1. Set a global bar for efficiency, transparency and accountability.
2. Enable institutions to compete for and grow non-provincial sources of funding while preserving access for all Albertans.
3. Deconsolidate certain institutions to reduce red tape and strengthen innovation and entrepreneurialism.
4. Implement a funding formula to determine allocations to institutions.
5. Prioritize future student aid funding to grants and bursaries.
6. Explore the modernization of student aid to support diverse learners and the needs of the economy.

Flagship Initiatives

- Sponsor a shared service centre for academic (e.g., enrolment) and non-academic areas (e.g., human resources, finance).
- Ensure tuition remains affordable, competitive and predictable.
- Increase need-based financial aid to ensure Albertans have the financial support they need to pursue post-secondary programming.
- Reduce financial controls to provide institutions with greater financial flexibility to grow their own-source revenues and enable financial deconsolidation of some institutions from government.
- Implement a performance-based funding model that ties funding to outcomes that align with this strategy.
- Expand availability of needs-based grants through Alberta Student Aid.

Goal 6: Strengthen System Governance

World-class governance enables strong leadership, drives change, and improves system outcomes. Alberta needs to renew and strengthen its governance framework for the post-secondary system to ensure better value and accountability for taxpayer investment. To this end, many stakeholders have encouraged Alberta's government to review its relationship with institutions and explore options to reduce red tape, so post-secondary institutions can more freely innovate, and generate their own revenue sources. As a result, government will explore a new relationship with an initial group of institutions to consider removing controls and further reducing red tape.

While local governance is the foundation of Alberta's post-secondary system, on their own, institutions cannot fully achieve the vision, goals and objectives of the Alberta 2030 strategy. Alberta needs to augment its current governance framework to add a system lens, while at the same time strengthening and empowering local boards to govern their institutions. This will create a foundation for more effectively working like a system, institutionalizing systemic strategic planning and enabling collaborative initiatives, including the implementation of this strategy.

The new governance model envisions a different way of working together as a system. For example, the system will now be organized into two sectors, streamlined from the previous six-sector model. Within this streamlining, several institutions have expressed interest in shifting from colleges to polytechnics to better meet community needs. This bundle of governance shifts will better meet local needs and improve collaboration within our system, so we can more effectively accelerate implementation of this strategy. In addition, new governance bodies that support cross-system collaboration and depoliticize decision-making will be introduced, in the form of a strategic council and sector coordinating committees. They will more effectively enable strategic planning for the system in response to evidence and engagement. In alignment with evolving priorities, this will also foster the agility that Alberta's post-secondary system needs to drive innovation and competitiveness in a 21st century global economy. A strong, informed and collaborative system and ecosystem can benefit from the creativity and innovation that comes with high trust relationships, creating the conditions to compete with the best across the country and around the world.

Objective

1. Establish a new and world-class governance structure to improve system outcomes, drive collaboration, depoliticize decision-making, and foster continual long-term strategic planning.
2. Simplify the current six-sector governance model.
3. Develop Centres of Excellence around key areas of programming and research.

Flagship Initiatives

- Establish a system-level, independent council to advise the minister on strategic priorities, system-wide collaboration, best practices in other jurisdictions, and positioning Alberta as a leader in the national and international higher education landscape.
- Streamline the institutional sector model and establish a coordinating committee for each sector.
- Establish a new governance framework with clear mandates and accountabilities for system- and institution-level outcomes in teaching, research and innovation, and collaboration.
- Explore amending the current composition of boards of governors so government no longer appoints a majority of the members at certain institutions, and lengthen board tenure to minimize turnover.

“Unleash Chairs and Presidents to collaborate as colleagues and compete internationally.”

Institution Executive, Roundtable

Moving Forward

The challenge is increasingly clear – Alberta businesses, industries and people must prepare for a more diverse economic future. Alberta can no longer rely on traditional energy resources alone to provide high-paying jobs and reliable revenues. We must bridge to the next economy. New work opportunities are opening, while some long-established career paths are winding down. Innovation, adaptability and the shift to lifelong learning are redefining learning institutions, students, and the future of work. In addition, government’s role is shifting in the way we work with others to establish strategic direction and improve outcomes for all.

The purpose of Alberta 2030 is to provide the high-quality education and skills needed to get Albertans working, meet current and future labour market demands, and drive innovation to make our province, workforce and citizens competitive in a 21st century economy.

Based on engagement that attracted the input and advice of thousands of Albertans, the **Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs** strategy sets out six goals for post-secondary education, each with clear objectives and initiatives. This strategy will result in a new governance structure that brings our institutions in sync to achieve greater success, and an outcomes framework that aligns performance-based funding and shifts incentives and accountabilities to ensure we are future-focused and achieving improved results. It is imperative that we continue striking the right balance between responsible spending and a well-funded, entrepreneurial post-secondary system that prepares students for jobs today, and well into the future. While these goals may, at first, seem at odds with one another, we believe we can integrate them and advance to meet the challenge. As such, this shared vision for post-secondary education in our province will lead to better outcomes for students, employers, educators, and communities.

Not all of the changes and initiatives will occur at once; many will be phased in over time. Success will be realized with a shared sense of ownership for the strategy and new partnerships to achieve its implementation. By embracing this opportunity to lead the change, in 2030 Alberta students, employers, and communities will have a strong, dynamic post-secondary system they can be proud of, students will ‘own the 2020’s,’ and the vision and intended outcomes of Alberta 2030 will be achieved.

Vision

Alberta’s world-class post-secondary system will equip Albertans with the skills, knowledge and competencies they need to succeed in their lifelong pursuits. It will be highly responsive to labour market needs and, through innovative programming and excellence in research, contribute to the betterment of an innovative and prosperous Alberta.

