Athabasca University

Comprehensive Institutional Plan 2012–15
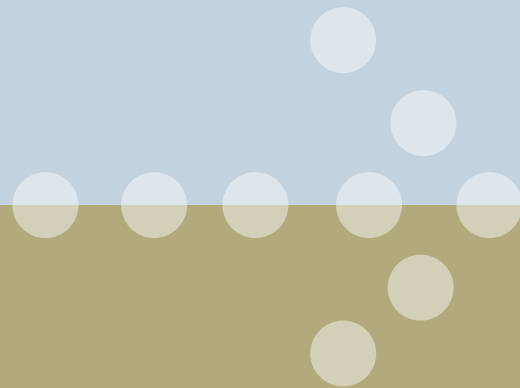
Contents

Accountability Statement

This Comprehensive Institutional Plan was prepared under the direction of the Governors of Athabasca University in accordance with legislation and associated ministerial guidelines and in consideration of all policy decisions and material, economic or fiscal implications of which the Board is aware.

Original signed by Barry Walker

Barry Walker, Chair
The Governors of Athabasca University

March 16, 2012

Executive Summary

Athabasca University, one of Alberta's four public comprehensive research universities, is Canada's largest specialist in university-level online and distance education. As Canada's Open University, AU is committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship and is dedicated to providing pathways to post-secondary education for those who cannot or choose not to engage in campus based education. AU continues to play a strong role in Campus Alberta and to work collaboratively with other institutions to guarantee Albertans flexibility of choice in post-secondary learning opportunities.

This Comprehensive Institutional Plan has been informed by consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders, including input and feedback from student and alumni groups, faculty and staff members, formal committee and governance bodies, community and private sector partners and government representatives.

Key drivers affecting AU include the national concern for fostering innovation, the provincial government's dedication to reducing barriers to post-secondary learning (particularly for students from rural and remote areas and First Nations and Métis communities) and a desire to realize the potential learning opportunities afforded to Albertans by the Digital Age. Institutional strengths include AU's leadership position in educational technology innovation, its mandate for reducing barriers to post-secondary education and its established position in the digital world. Related challenges include costs associated with staying abreast of e-learning technologies, providing supports for persons with disabilities and other non-traditional learners, and meeting the escalating expectations of contemporary online learners.

The goals, priority initiatives, expected outcomes and performance measures identified in this plan are geared to realizing the goals of AU's *Strategic University Plan: 2011–16:* leading in quality open and distance education, ensuring sustainability and fostering adaptability, recruiting and retaining excellent people, promoting excellence in research and building communities.

AU remains committed to expanding research in selected areas through development of research institutes, to increasing the number of research chairs and to encouraging student research. Two new major/concentration BA programs and one new B.Sc. major program have been submitted to Advanced Education and Technology for review. Additional new programs are under consideration; however, the university's ability to proceed with them is subject to funding availability. AU's total enrolment is projected to grow by one to two per cent per year over the course of this plan, to 8,276 full-load equivalents.

AU remains committed to a sustainable budget strategy that aligns available resources with the university's mission and strategic priorities. The goal of the 2012–13 budget is to maintain teaching and research excellence and to ensure student access and program affordability. Student fee increases for the year will be within the limits of the Alberta Tuition Fee Policy. Projects dedicated to maintaining or developing the educational, technological and student service capacities critical to AU's success, particularly information and communication technology infrastructure projects, are central to the capital plan.

Institutional Context

Athabasca University, one of Alberta's four public comprehensive research universities, is Canada's largest specialist in university-level online and distance education. As Canada's Open University, AU is dedicated to removing educational, geographic, financial, social, cultural and other barriers that can limit access to post-secondary education. In doing so, AU provides access to university-level study to a broad range of non-traditional students. In addition to its open admission policy, AU further sustains its philosophy of enhancing student success through comprehensive online learning services, library services and support services (e.g., registration, advising, counselling, transfer credit, and financial aid services, services for students with disabilities and prior learning assessment and recognition processes) designed for students studying at a distance.

Mandate

Founded in 1970 and operating as a comprehensive academic and research institution under the authority of the *Alberta Post-secondary Learning Act*, Athabasca University is a public, board-governed, open and distance education university which serves students throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world. Working as a partner within Campus Alberta, Athabasca University is committed to collaborating with other key stakeholders to ensure a seamless and responsive advanced education system that provides high-quality learning opportunities in support of lifelong learning.

The university offers a range of courses and programs leading to graduate and undergraduate degrees, certificates and diplomas in the humanities, the social sciences, the sciences, technology, business and the health disciplines.

As an open university, Athabasca University seeks to remove barriers to undergraduate and graduate education. It offers flexible enrolment opportunities for learners, regardless of age, gender, culture, income, disability, career and family obligations, geographic location or educational background. As a distance education university, Athabasca University provides flexibility for lifelong learners who cannot or choose not to undertake residential post-secondary education. The university offers learners the opportunity to interact with students across Canada and around the world through programs in established and emerging areas as it seeks to meet the needs of career professionals, develop research expertise and create knowledge that fosters a global outlook among its graduates.

Athabasca University provides high-quality, interactive learning environments that include a variety of online and other media technologies for individualized and cohort learning. The university's library and tutorial services and extensive student support services that facilitate access and increase learner success are integral aspects of a quality open and distance education system. Similarly, its course designs and technology applications are based on current research in open and distance education, pedagogical advances in lifelong learning and contemporary developments in online learning technologies. The university actively pursues technological innovations that can enhance its teaching, research and administrative functions.

The university provides undergraduate degree completion opportunities for university transfer students and college diploma graduates through credit co-ordination, credit transfer, prior learning assessment and associated forms of learning accreditation. It supports collaborations such as its degree completion agreements with colleges and partnership with Alberta-North. These collaborations, together with its participation in initiatives such as the Canadian Virtual University, reflect Athabasca University's longstanding commitment to adult and lifelong learners, to aboriginal communities, to learners in remote, rural and northern areas, to under-served urban populations and to program students at other universities who seek courses to accelerate degree completion.

The university also acquires and maintains accreditation in other Canadian provinces and in appropriate international jurisdictions.

Athabasca University pursues and demonstrates excellence in research and scholarship, viewing research as central to the creation and mobilization of knowledge, the enhancement of its programs, the education of its students, the betterment of its community and the development of its faculty and future scholars. Besides its international reputation for research in all aspects of open and distance education and learning technologies innovation, the university is developing notable strength in interdisciplinary research in several areas such as Canadian studies, globalization and cultural studies, Indigenous education, space and environmental sciences, project management, and nursing and health management. Aspects of technological change are integral to many of these theme areas. By supporting and conducting research activity in all program areas, Athabasca University makes significant contributions to cultural, scientific and professional development in Alberta and beyond.

Athabasca University's academic, professional and support staff engage in professional service within the education system at local, provincial, national and international levels. The university encourages its members to serve a wide range of communities through activities such as volunteerism, community based research, involvement in local community organizations and participation in virtual learning communities.

Approved by the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology on November 17, 2009

Mission Statement

Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide. We are committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship and to being of service to the general public.

Principles

Adherence to four key principles underlies all of AU's operations:

Excellence: We are dedicated achieving the highest standards in teaching, research, scholarship and student service.

Openness: We are committed to our mission of guaranteeing access to post-secondary learning to all who have the ability and desire to learn.

Flexibility: We are committed to providing flexible learning models to meet learners' needs.

Innovation: We continue to adopt and develop learner-centred, technology based learning models.

Values

The members of the AU community hold a set of complementary values that are fundamental to the university's identity and operations:

- We value excellence: The search for excellence is the hallmark of all of our endeavours.
- We value learning: Student learning and satisfaction are measures of our success.
- We value scholarly research: We engage in reflective practice through the scholarship of discovery and the scholarship of teaching.

- We value the free exchange of ideas: A respectful climate for open discourse promotes innovation, discovery and social responsibility.

- We value openness and flexibility: Reducing barriers to education enhances access and social equity.

- We value diversity and inclusiveness: Diversity and inclusiveness enhance the quality of learning and of the workplace.

- We value our employees: Their commitment, innovation, creativity and continuous learning contribute to our success.

- We value accountability: We are accountable to our students, to each other and to the public.

Plan Development

This Comprehensive Institutional Plan is informed by ongoing consultations with a wide variety of stakeholders. Input and feedback from student and alumni groups, faculty and staff members, formal committee and governance bodies, community and private sector partners and government representatives have been integral to short- and long-term planning.

Internal Consultations

Through its formal governance and committee structures, AU consults regularly with its internal stakeholders. In addition, meetings were scheduled to seek input from students and alumni. Staff input on matters ranging from course and program development to budget planning was encouraged through town hall meetings held in Athabasca, St. Albert, Edmonton and Calgary.

In 2010, AU made use of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education self-study process, a year-long, institution-wide consultative process, to review its programs and services, governance and support structures, institutional resources and educational outcomes, all in relation to its mission and goals. That process was completed in the fall of 2010, and the committee's recommendations on ways to further enhance the university's standing were received in 2011. Implementation of those recommendations guide this plan.

External Consultations

AU continues to consult with a wide range of community, business, governmental, aboriginal and Métis organizations in the Athabasca, Edmonton and Calgary areas and in northern, rural and remote regions of Alberta.

Over the past year, as a part of its planning and funding initiatives, AU has worked with a wide variety of stakeholders, including federal, provincial and municipal government departments and agencies, non-governmental organizations, national and international educational and research bodies, board members from K-12 school jurisdictions and school administrators, private companies, professional associations, community groups, government-funded and private funding agencies and foundations, and individual donors.

Campus Alberta post-secondary institutions were consulted on a range of matters including prospective shared facility arrangements, academic collaborations and credit transfer, shared research initiatives and collaborations on special projects.

Strategic Planning

AU's *Strategic University Plan: 2011–16*, based on extensive internal and external stakeholder input, was approved by the Board of Governors in October 2011. The document identifies five major goals: to be the leader in quality open and distance education, to ensure sustainability and foster adaptability, to recruit and retain excellent people, to promote excellence in research and to build communities. Those major goals are reflected in the specific initiatives outlined in this Comprehensive Institutional Plan.

Environmental Scan

Key Drivers

The environmental scan included in AU's *Comprehensive Institutional Plan: 2011–14* focused on three external issues: the ongoing effects of the economic recession, the growing knowledge economy and the emergent information and communication technology/e-learning environment. These, together with other drivers affecting AU (such as increasing expectations for online education, as reviewed in previous Institutional Access Plan scans) continue to exert a significant impact, both internally and in the larger community. However, in the interest of advancing AU's planning and strategic activities, this scan focuses on three themes highlighted in Advanced Education and Technology's 2011 Business Plan and Premier Alison Redford's 2011 "State of Alberta Address": innovation, reducing barriers and moving into the Digital Age

Innovation

> *"There is no better investment of public funds than in learning. Without a skilled and highly educated workforce, we will not attract the cutting-edge companies to carry out research and development, much less the finest minds to lead it."[1]*

Any scan of global government and private sector reports, white papers or analyses published in 2011 reveals a large and growing concern with enabling, fostering, building, harnessing, increasing and releasing innovation. "Business Innovation Policies: Selected Country Comparisons," an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development paper, compares Canada with other OECD countries and paints a clear picture of a country with both great capacity and significant innovation challenges.[2] This assessment is echoed in many federal publications (e.g., "Innovation Canada: A Call to Action,"[3] an expert panel review of federal support to research, and the Science, Technology and Innovation Council report "State of the Nation 2010: Canada's Science, Technology and Innovation System"[4]). Provincial sources include the Alberta Competitiveness Council's "Report on Competitiveness: Alberta 2010"[5] and guiding documents such as Alberta Innovates priorities, the A*dvanced Education and Technology Business Plan: 2011–14* and the *Alberta Research and Innovation Plan: 2011*. Voices from the private sector include that of the Canadian Advanced Technology Alliance ("Gaining Economic Value Beyond R&D"[6]) and those of the Alberta small and medium-sized enterprises AU interacted with over the past year. These observers and analysts are united in portraying Canada as a country that is failing to measure up in terms of metrics critical for success in the knowledge economy.

Aspects of innovation raised include research and development (as referenced by Premier Redford in her address), knowledge management and transfer, relocation of research to industrial settings, skill and highly qualified personnel development, private sector information and communication technology adoption rates, pre-commercialization activities, analytics (big data), information and communication technology management, and productivity. As AU builds on its existing strengths and looks toward the future, these factors affect ongoing activities and the university's prospects of achieving its goals. Planned opportunities in innovation include

[1] Alison Redford, "State of Alberta Address," October 24, 2011, http://alberta.ca/premieraddress.cfm.
[2] http://www.oecd.org/document/51/0,3746,en_2649_33703_48870771_1_1_1_1,00.html.
[3] http://rd-review.ca/eic/site/033.nsf/vwapj/R-D_InnovationCanada_Final-eng.pdf/$FILE/R-D_InnovationCanada_ Final-eng.pdf.
[4] http://www.stic-csti.ca/eic/site/stic-csti.nsf/eng/h_00038.html.
[5] http://www.treasuryboard.alberta.ca/docs/EconomicDevelopment/2010-Report-on-Competitiveness.pdf.
[6] https://skydrive.live.com/view.aspx?cid=BFBC7F4AF32831EF&resid=BFBC7F4AF32831EF%21376.

- exploring ways to support graduate students as they learn and carry out research in situ: developing skills and transferring knowledge through their work in professional contexts

- working with the Campus Alberta Innovation Program Chairs and other provincial programs to build capacity in modelling, data visualization and analytics (mainly in semantics categorization and environmental and health research findings) and other areas

- engaging small and medium-sized enterprises through courses and certificates in entrepreneurship, cloud computing, information and communication technology management, and other aspects of business, computing science and other disciplines

- partnering with TEC Edmonton to foster the commercialization of faculty research in areas such as a productivity management systems for knowledge workers, health promotion and e-learning

- working with small and medium-sized enterprises in educational technology to identify their research and development needs, to build awareness of opportunities to support that information and communication technology subsector and, by doing so, to add value for non-traditional students at AU and across Campus Alberta and the K-12 system as well as government and large and small companies in all sectors

AU's ability to track innovation trends is aided by its distributed workforce and student body, its natural connections (through its students) with industry, its strengths in digital knowledge acquisition and transfer, and its participation in a natural university/industrial partnership with the educational technology sector. Ongoing considerations for the coming year include barriers presented by strategic delays in federal and provincial information and communication technology investment and industrial apprenticeship graduate programs that focus exclusively on full-time students.

Reducing Barriers

"We will expand recruitment of students in rural areas and among Métis and First Nations communities. Once enrolled in post-secondary institutions, we will make sure they can access the mentorship and support programs they need to excel. The most enduring prosperity is spread as widely as possible." [7]

Government of Alberta plans to expand recruitment services and provide mentorship and support to rural and aboriginal students fit perfectly with both AU's mandate and its immediate objectives. The fact that Canada's aboriginal people do not have equal access to university education has been well documented, and the goal of correcting this inequity is becoming increasingly central to governments both here in Alberta and elsewhere. For a number of years, AU has been working to improve post-secondary access and achievement for First Nations and Métis Albertans. Of those who self-identify, 26 per cent of Alberta's aboriginal master's students are enrolled at AU, as are 22 per cent of Campus Alberta aboriginal non-program students. It is particularly important to provide support for the latter group as its members explore options for their future by testing the waters of post-secondary education.

A second important accessibility issue involves providing access to all levels of education for prospective students with disabilities. Both social and legal challenges to programs, facilities and technologies that restrict access for persons with disabilities are evolving quickly in Canada and around the world, and many jurisdictions are reflecting the attitudinal shift through legislation, planned and in force, that guarantees access for all. The need for a pan-provincial solution is growing.

[7] *Redford, "State of Alberta Address."*

A third area of focus is the gap between high school and post-secondary education. As stated in Advanced Education and Technology's Business plan, Campus Alberta needs bridging and supportive links between schools and the post-secondary system. Innovative solutions are particularly important for non-traditional, rural and remote learners who often lack access to International Baccalaureate and other transition programs. AU is working with school systems and community partners to explore options.

Finally, Alberta Human Services projects a shortage of 114,000 workers in the coming decade.[8] High demand professions in areas AU can support will include accounting and financial services, computing and information systems, nursing and teaching. As the market continues to evolve, it will be increasingly important for as many people as possible to stay in the workforce while acquiring the skills and credentials they need to advance in these critical areas. A successful system will provide a variety of pathways to allow them to do so.

AU's overall mandate is focused on reducing barriers to university education. Current initiatives directly related to the points raised above include

- building and supporting aboriginal learning communities through mentorship and study circles
- building and supporting accessible courses and providing academic and non-academic services for students with disabilities
- increasing accessibility, on a part-time basis, for working people through financial assistance such as loans and internships

Should the Government of Alberta decide to take further steps toward increasing accessibility to post-secondary education, AU will be a willing partner. The opportunity to work with Advanced Education and Technology and Campus Alberta partners to seek solutions that will remove barriers for all Albertans would be welcomed.

Moving into the Digital Age

> *"This government will make sure that every Albertan in every corner of our province has the chance to contribute."* [9]

The January 2012 launch of the Final Mile Rural Connectivity Initiative will make it possible for all Albertans to engage the Digital Age—to take advantage of formal and informal online learning opportunities. This development is timely, given the Premier's expressed wish to increase civic engagement in the interest of fostering stronger social and economic systems. Empowering and encouraging Albertans in all geographic, cultural and economic communities to participate in university-level learning and research opportunities in arts, science, health studies, business and other disciplines will raise the bar for civic engagement and other government objectives.

As noted in "Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions Mandate and Roles Document" and other guiding health documents, health promotion and awareness is another emergent area in which digital technology will play a prominent role.[10] Over the next few years, the opportunity and the need to build capacity in post-diagnosis health awareness and distributed health practitioner education will be substantial: strong collaborations will be critical to success.

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[8] *Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook: 2011–2021, http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/ occupational-demand-and-supply-outlook.pdf.*
[9]   *Redford, "State of Alberta Address."*
[10] *http://www.aihealthsolutions.ca/docs/mandate%20and%20roles.pdf.*

While change is accelerating, education has in many respects been affected less by the Digital Age than other economic and social spheres. As a recent Canadian Virtual University paper on online university online university education in Canada illustrates, employers, governments and students alike are calling for more personalized, just-in-time, technology-based learning to enhance learning outcomes, achieve efficiencies, improve productivity and allow people to move in and out of learning throughout their working life.[11] E-learning research, testing and implementation are needed to make the move into the Digital Age possible for all Albertans.

On the other hand, the pressures of an ever-expanding and increasingly competitive online learning market continue to increase. Providing current, high-quality, pedagogically-driven courses and programs designed particularly for the Alberta market remains a challenge in the face of competition from other providers, largely from other jurisdictions, many of which focus on select programs with a ready market.

Major Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges

The three drivers discussed above reveal AU's strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that affect its plans and ongoing operations.

The key innovation elements that warrant particular attention are the university's natural position of strength in educational technology innovation, the weakness posed by underinvestment in new technologies and research and development, opportunities to meet the emergent needs of learners and foster knowledge transfer, and threats posed by a failure to keep up in the quickly evolving world of e-learning.

In terms of barrier reduction, AU's primary strength resides in its mandate: to reduce barriers to post-secondary education. Its weaknesses lie in lagging behind in new academic and student supports for persons with disabilities and other non-traditional learners. Opportunities are to be found in the university's ability to adapt to the needs of aboriginal and other prospective learning communities. Economic and other barriers to growing participation are major threats.

In moving into the Digital Age, AU's major strengths are being well established in the digital space and the university's readiness to assist those who stand to benefit from the Final Mile. Weaknesses lie in the ongoing challenges of meeting the escalating expectations of today's learners. Major opportunities are potential partnerships with public and other providers to build digital bridges. Threats are posed by growing levels of competition.

AU looks forward to continued dialogue with Advanced Education and Technology and other Government of Alberta representatives to seek means of overcoming the challenges faced by the university and to discover emergent opportunities. AU's mandate and ongoing work provide a ready fit with the goals of many Government of Alberta, Advanced Education and Technology and other provincial planning and priority documents. The university's business and strategic planning processes facilitate SWOT analysis and are informed by guiding government documents, processes which help to facilitate short- and long-term decision making. Overall, the years ahead show considerable promise.

[11] "Online University Education in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities," January 2102, http://www.cvu-uvc.ca/ Online%20University%20 Education%20in%20Canada%20jan17%202012.pdf .

Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes and Performance Measures

In the recently approved *Strategic University Plan: 2011–16*, AU identifies five strategic goals, all of which focus on achieving the university's mission of being a vibrant research, teaching and service community with a particular focus on removing barriers to education and enhancing student success in university-level study. The goals set out in this Comprehensive Institutional Plan align with the major themes and outcome indicators of the new strategic plan. Progress towards achieving these goals will be logged in AU's Annual Report to Alberta Advanced Education and Technology and shared with the university's stakeholders.

Access

AU will continue to increase participation rates and ensure that the university is accessible to students from diverse regions and backgrounds. It will strive to maintain its visiting student population and increase the number of program students from both urban and rural areas, particularly in its graduate programs. It will continue to focus on ensuring flexibility of access through improving its information and communication technology infrastructure and open knowledge environment.

Goals

1. Recruit and retain students from diverse regions and backgrounds and provide necessary aid
    a. Increase market awareness of AU's programs and services
    b. Continue to recruit students from northern, rural and indigenous communities and from minority, immigrant and other groups under-represented in post-secondary education
    c. Increase opportunities for students with disabilities to access and succeed in post-secondary study
    d. Explore serving the post-secondary needs of secondary school students
    e. Continue with implementation of the Learning Communities Project, Phase 2: Indigenous Communities
    f. Continue to implement the Enrolment Management Plan
    g. Increase recruitment activities directed to international students

2. Further AU's contributions to Campus Alberta institutions and to eCampusAlberta
    a. Provide collaborative leadership in open and distance education opportunities, research and administrative support
    b. Renew agreements to provide laddering opportunities for students
    c. Expand AU's leadership in prior learning assessment and recognition to open additional pathways to learning for adult learners
    d. Further relationships with professional associations and industry groups
    e. Build strong partnerships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups

3. Strengthen student scholarship and bursary programs

    a. Increase the number and value of awards for undergraduate students

    b. Improve financial support for graduate students

4. Expand student access through the development and adoption of learning technologies that enhance open knowledge environments

    a. Continue to develop and provide self-service applications that support student access

    b. Develop and implement a student relations management system

    c. Continue to enhance the online accessibility of AU services

Enrolment Plan

The key assumption underlying AU's enrolment projections is that neither the range of offerings nor regulatory barriers to operations in the areas in which AU serves students will change substantially. Doctoral programs and some of the university's professional programs (including nursing) are now operating at capacity, and other programs are steadily approaching capacity. Modest growth, in the one to two per cent range, is anticipated over the next four years. The following table shows projected enrolment growth by program band (full-load equivalents).

		2010–11 (Actual)	2011–12 (Estimate)	2012–13 (Target)	2013–14 (Target)	2014–15 (Target)
Business	Undergraduate	618	591	599	611	617
	Graduate	416	413	412	410	407
	Subtotal	1,034	1,004	1,011	1,021	1,024
Education	Undergraduate	7.4	8	8	8	8
	Graduate	151	159	171	175	180
	Subtotal	158	167	179	183	188
Health Sciences	Undergraduate	367	342	349	356	359
	Graduate	505	495	499	493	493
	Subtotal	872	837	848	849	852
Languages, Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities	Open Studies	4,420	4,550	4,640	4,760	4,820
	Undergraduate	627	630	640	645	645
	Graduate	452	455	455	460	460
	Subtotal	5,499	5,635	5,735	5,865	5,925
Legal and Security	Undergraduate	87.2	88	96	98	98
	Graduate	3.6	3.6	4	5	5
	Subtotal	90.8	92	100	103	103
Physical, Natural and Applied Sciences	Undergraduate	152	83.2	88	96	98
	Graduate	86.6	84.9	85	86	86
	Subtotal	238.6	168.1	173	182	184
Total Undergraduate Enrolment		6,279	6,293	6,419	6,573	6,645
Total Graduate Enrolment		1,613	1,610	1,626	1,629	1,631
Total Enrolment		**7,892**	**7,903**	**8,046**	**8,203**	**8,276**
Percentage Growth			0.1%	1.8%	1.9%	0.9%

Performance Measures

- The number and value of undergraduate and graduate student awards have increased.
- Use of digital and other library resources are maintained or improved.
- The number of students accessing online student services has increased.
- Enrolment by aboriginal learners, students from northern, rural and remote communities and members of other designated groups meets Enrolment Plan targets.
- International student enrolment meets Enrolment Plan targets.
- The percentage of Alberta graduate students enrolled in key graduate program areas has increased.
- Access related components of the Open Learning Environment have been implemented.

Quality

AU will continue to focus on offering high-quality online distance education courses and programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. To ensure provision of a quality learning experience, the university will maintain its efforts to enhance course development, design and delivery, to improve student services and to maintain and advance the information and communication technology on which its operations are based.

Goals

1. Strengthen the quality and responsiveness of courses and programs
   a. Engage in curriculum renewal to ensure programs are meeting learner needs
   b. Implement recommendations from completed program reviews
   c. Research, develop and implement new programs, including doctoral programs, as funding becomes available
   d. Develop plans for contributing to global citizenship through inclusion of indigenous ways of knowing and internationalization of the curriculum

2. Strengthen national and international market awareness of the quality of AU programs, particularly among key stakeholder groups
   a. Pursue relevant accreditation opportunities for AU programs
   b. Ensure the academic integrity of collaborative programs
   c. Advance the Quality Standards for E-learning Project to Stage 2

3. Provide a superior, interactive and engaging student experience
   a. Develop integrated, responsive and accessible student services to support student success (services for students with disabilities, tutor/student and mentor/elder support)
   b. Expand sustainable measures of achievement of student learning goals
   c. Continue to develop and implement learning analytics
   d. Continue to develop initiatives that support student success, retention and engagement

4. Lead in the adoption of learning technologies that set the standard for technology-enhanced learning
   a. Develop and implement the next stages of the learning systems infrastructure as specified in the Open Learning Environment Infrastructure Plan (See Capital Plan, p. 31)

b. Collaborate with industry and other post-secondary institutions to research the use of technology to create and manage knowledge

c. Transition courses to the online environment through examination and reassessment of learning outcomes, redesign for the online learning environment, addition of media options and digital integration of instruction and support

New Programs

AU continues to develop new programs in response to the demonstrated educational needs of Albertans. Many of these programs are planned in collaboration with industry sector partners and will lead directly to enhanced skills and improved employment opportunities. They reach out to under-represented groups, and all are designed to support learners by creating learning communities, helping more people access post-secondary education and providing needed program options for high needs professions. AU is focused on providing additional laddering opportunities to increase transfer options for students at Campus Alberta institutions.

Planned new programs are at various stages of development. The following proposed programs have been submitted to Advanced Education and Technology:

BA   major/concentration in philosophy
         major/concentration in education studies

B.Sc. major in architecture

Development of the following programs is underway, but progress is dependent on the availability of funding:

PhD   specializations in health disciplines and information systems

M.Sc. specializations in environmental sciences, applied mathematics and learning technologies

MA   specializations in psychology and environmental studies

BA   majors/concentrations in environmental studies and Kainai Studies (with Red Crow Community College)

B.Sc. majors/concentrations in applied mathematics and finance and mathematics

Post-baccalaureate certificates in information technology management and information technology security

Transition year courses and modules

Language preservation programs: Cree, Blackfoot and Michif (in collaboration with Red Crow Community College, Maskwachees Cultural College and First Nations Tribal Councils)

Performance Measures

- Student satisfaction ratings are maintained or improved.
- Graduate satisfaction with the overall educational experience is maintained or improved.
- The graduate employment rate is maintained or improved.
- The pass rate in undergraduate courses is increased.
- Key undergraduate and graduate programs are operating at capacity.

Research

Research is fundamental to AU's identity and integrity. The university is recognized internationally for its leadership in open and distance education research, and its reputation for research in other academic areas is growing steadily. *The Strategic University Plan: 2011–16* sets out three strategic research objectives:

- to provide appropriate support for faculty, staff and student research and scholarship
- to enhance AU's international reputation in key research disciplines, including technologically enhanced online and distance education
- to promote and expand the transfer of research findings for the benefit of students, society and the economy

The AU Research Institute Model

Besides encouraging a university-wide increase in research activity, AU is committed to

- expanding research in selected areas through the development of research institutes
- increasing the number of research chairs
- expanding the research institute networks

AU's research institutes provide leadership in the university's priority research areas and help to seed interdisciplinary developments reflective of provincial and national priorities. The development of research networks is becoming the norm and is increasingly central to receiving grant allocations. Collaborative research projects involving participants outside the university can enhance in-house expertise.

Over the past five years, three research institutes, the Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute, the Athabasca River Basin Research Institute and the Project Management Research Institute have been established. An institute in health disciplines is in development. Each research institute represents a network of research clusters, with each cluster focused on a specific research topic but connected through strong external links to provincial, national and international researchers who are working on related topics. Synergies can be obtained not only from collaborations among the clusters within an institute but, as importantly, through membership in external research teams. In addition, several Canada Research Chairs have been appointed, and increased research capacity has been developed university-wide as the number of academic researchers receiving national or international funding has grown.

The Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute: TEKRI represents an expansion of AU's original primary research focus on e-learning and open and distance education to include an interest in underlying knowledge systems and digital technologies. The institute includes two main research clusters

- The knowledge systems architecture cluster focuses on the development of knowledge architecture such as taxonomies, open architecture/cloud computing and the use of data analytics and data visualization to provide real-time data, data schema and visualization essential to improving soft digital technology decision making cycles.

- The digital technology innovation cluster includes work on mobile computing, localization and geomatics, personalization and adaptivity, adaptive/responsive designs and soft techniques such as interactive collaborative tools for knowledge building and team work.

Other research clusters are involved in related work in information systems, applications design and use, and analysis and display. One cluster is focused on virtual laboratories, including work on 3D space, Second Life applications, virtual media labs and federally-funded architecture studios (labs). Another is examining possibilities provided by mobile applications in the workplace; for example, to gather patient data at the bedside and as an aid in smoking cessation programs. Other researchers focus on the use of mobile technologies in the development of alternative virtual environments for knowledge acquisition and dissemination. Together, these initiatives not only sustain AU's standing as one of the foremost centres of research in knowledge systems and digital technologies innovation but also directly benefit other Alberta post-secondary institutions by providing platforms for quality virtual learning environments for Alberta students. More broadly, they also provide opportunities for the provincial educational technology sector. In particular, AU is exploring ways of responding to the emerging need for research and development support, product development and validation in small and medium-sized enterprises in Alberta's educational technology sector. The challenge is in finding acceptance of an innovative approach to university-government-private-public partnerships that stands to empower both small and medium-sized enterprises and user groups (K–12 and post-secondary institutions and human resources departments in particular) and to fill a gap in provincial learning and economic diversification systems. Co-operation on the development of such environments is integral to achieving the goals of Campus Alberta. As TEKRI researchers are drawn from all the faculties in the university, the institute has great potential to respond to the increasingly interdisciplinary demands of provincial and national research agendas.

The Athabasca River Basin Research Institute: ARBRI has adopted a whole systems approach to river basin research with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity. Working with local communities, stakeholder post-secondary institutions and regional organizations, the institute aims to create a repository of information, rooted in the natural and social sciences and the humanities, to serve as a resource for researchers and to provide community members with a richer understanding of basin life. Initial projects include

- the Learning Communities Project, Phase 2: Indigenous Communities, funded by the Rural Alberta Development Fund and involving a Canada Research Chair in traditional knowledge, legal orders and laws
- research on the *aurora borealis*, led by a Canada Research Chair in space science, instrumentation and networking
- research on community capacity building in resource based communities, funded by the Alberta Rural Development Network.

These research activities, initiated in partnership with the Comprehensive Community Institutions (including NorQuest College and Grande Prairie Regional College) and eCampusAlberta, are helping to build capacity and increase knowledge dissemination throughout Campus Alberta. ARBRI also draws upon researchers from across the university, including sociology (sustainable rural communities), philosophy (ethical decision-making on environmental issues), workplace and community studies, business (leadership and entrepreneurship), science (aurora studies, remote data gathering, glaciation and water levels, mathematical modelling) and indigenous studies (legal and traditional knowledge). The involvement of indigenous researchers is particularly important as over 50 per cent of Alberta's aboriginal population lives in the northern half of the province. The planned addition of two Campus Alberta Innovates Program Research Chairs, in environmental health and data modelling analysis, will enrich the work of the institute and help link it to that of other researchers, both at AU and at other comprehensive academic and research intensive institutions, as well as to local and international communities.

The Project Management Research Institute: PMRI brings together local, national and international organizations, practitioners and researchers with an interest in project management. Relying on collaborative research, the institute seeks to advance knowledge in the field and to promote knowledge sharing and

community building across the sector, particularly as it relates to change management in projects. The institute's research is focused on

- generating and testing new project management concepts to examine the challenges of managing organization/project boundaries
- infrastructure and mega projects in the oil and gas sector
- information and high technology projects
- social system reform (e.g., health systems)

The dissemination of project management research findings to research projects in other areas is a major contribution to the university's research priorities.

The Health Disciplines Group: Health disciplines is a new research group that focuses on health promotion and behaviour, mental health, aspects of living well with chronic illness and technology applications in promoting health education. The health promotion and behaviour team has links with colleagues at the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge and Dalhousie University as well as international connections.

AU provided initial seed funding for the institutes and supports the work of individual researchers through small internal grants competitions and matching grants funding. The number of researchers successful in obtaining external funding to support much of their research has grown. The university provides assistance in the development of funding proposals through the Research Office.

Links to Academic Programs

Nurturing the growth of research capacity among senior undergraduate and graduate students is also important. By providing students with additional research opportunities, AU will increase their awareness of the role of research in the world and allow them to develop research expertise. This increased capacity building will enhance their ability to contribute to the development of new knowledge and to society generally. In addition, because many of AU's program students are already in the workplace, they are in a position to link their research and professional activities to the benefit of both industry and themselves.

The research institutes support the education of graduate students in related areas while, at the same time, graduate student researchers are crucial to the development of the research institutes. The Doctor of Business Administration program, the doctorate in distance education and the planned PhD in information systems and master's programs in environmental sciences and applied mathematics are essential to TEKRI's sustained development. ARBRI will support and be supported by planned master's degree programs in applied mathematics, environmental sciences and environmental studies. Graduate students in business can take courses from PMRI researchers and work on project management topics as their capstone research. Research and education in health disciplines is a growth area for AU and is related to the planned development of a PhD in health disciplines.

Support from AU

AU's Capital Plan supports all institutional research activities through ongoing and planned expansion of the university's information and communication technology infrastructure. For example, the impact of capital projects on research is evident the following recent or ongoing projects:

- the Virtual Media Laboratory Project, which supports a variety of communication, social software and media initiatives

- the federally and provincially funded science lab expansion, of particular relevance to ARBRI
- the Open Knowledge Environment Project, a university-wide information and communication infrastructure project funded by both levels of government, which has advanced research effectiveness across all disciplines

Funding in these areas has been essential in furthering the research agenda. Other planned research initiatives depend heavily on securing sustainable funding for the university's information and communication technology infrastructure. This need is fundamental to the development of all the digitally based research endeavours.

Alignment with AET Goals and Priorities

Research activity at AU is concentrated in areas of inquiry that align closely with the priorities of the *Advanced Education and Technology Business Plan: 2011–14* and the *Alberta Research and Innovation Plan: 2011.* The alignment between AU's research interests and expertise and the target areas of Alberta's information and communication technology strategy is particularly close: analytics and visualization, geomatics, wireless systems, informatics, collaboration tools, information and communication technology infrastructure, imaging, digital media and process optimization. Discussions continue with industry and government to explore growth in these and related sectors in alignment with Advanced Education and Technology goals and other Government of Alberta plans, such as *Alberta's Action Plan: Bringing Technology to Market and Securing Tomorrow's Prosperity: Sustaining the Alberta Advantage.* These plans highlight the need to advance the knowledge-based economy in order to increase productivity, spur technology adoption, advance research and development and other key objectives. If Alberta is to lead the knowledge economy, it needs a research framework that promotes not only the creation of new technologies and applications in all economic sectors but also increased understanding, knowledge transfer and implementation of those innovations society-wide. AU is already engaged in strategic research in support of these goals and looks forward to partnering with government and the private sector to expand its efforts across the innovation spectrum.

AET's Business Plan highlights the need to foster economic diversification through the provincial research and innovation system. Alberta's full potential can best be realized if that research and innovation includes investigations into the broad spectrum of knowledge creation, adaptation, dissemination and acquisition, including the potential of analytics and visualisation for extracting and displaying useful information and the use of the latest mobile devices (smart phones, iPads, Android tablets, etc.) and collaborative applications. At AU, a Canada Research Chair and an industry chair are conducting internationally recognized research in these areas, and the university is building relationships with tech-based small to medium-sized enterprises to support the further development of a provincial network to fill system gaps and foster product research and development.

AU shares the Government of Alberta's view that the world economy is changing to one based on the production, management and transmission of knowledge rather than of physical products. Knowledge industries already produce the most economic benefits and the most jobs. AU further recognizes that the emergent economy is strongly interdisciplinary, involving not only economists, computer scientists, health professionals and hard scientists but also social scientists and arts professionals. As a society, we must recognize that the rules and practices that once determined success in the industrial economy have to be adapted or changed because knowledge resources, rather than physical goods, are now the economic foundation of the global economy. As a world leader in technology enhanced knowledge research, AU is committed to working with the province and with private sector partners to support this transformation.

AU is innovative in continually seeking new and better approaches to knowledge acquisition and new ways to motivate learning through leading developments in the digital revolution. These innovations will

stimulate development of a knowledge economy in Alberta and provide virtual learning environments that meet the needs of contemporary users, when and where they need them, through alternative technologies. These developments require a sustainable research portfolio that is focused not only on improving knowledge acquisition but on the architecture which will provide options for users and opportunities for interactive industries to create commercial adaptations and seek further innovative solutions. AU is developing a business plan ($15 million over five years) to support TEKRI initiatives.

Research Priorities and Expected Outcomes

Consistent with its mission of promoting excellence in research, AU seeks to achieve the following outcomes during the term of this plan. These goals emphasize both the expansion of research activity and the importance of involving students in research. As enrolment grows, the university must accelerate its capacity to engage students in research and support their research activities.

1. Encourage and deepen involvement in research university-wide
   a. Sustain research capacity across the university
   b. Expand research initiatives within and across faculties
   c. Expand collaborative research activities with partners in Campus Alberta and eCampusAlberta
   d. Increase opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to participate in research
   e. Advance Athabasca University Press as a primary vehicle for open access publishing

2. Build research capacity in four strategic areas: environmental sciences and studies, educational technologies and information communication technology, business change management and health disciplines
   a. Pursue research chairs in the key research areas
   b. Seek funding from governments, research agencies, donors and industry to sustain the research institutes and enable specific research projects
   c. Engage with industry and other post-secondary institutions to contribute to Alberta's capacity for research and innovation in key areas such as health and technology
   d. Foster capacity development and leadership in learning analytics research
   e. Encourage research partnerships with industry and support innovation
   f. Encourage broadly disseminated communication of research findings

Focusing on achieving these research goals will help AU to establish a sustainable research capacity, link learning and research goals more directly and enhance the university's ability to engage in research and development activities.

Performance Measures

- The number of national research grant applications has increased.
- Research funding and the number of funding sources have increased.
- The number of research chairs has increased.
- The number of knowledge transfer and research and development partnerships has increased.
- Sponsored research as a percentage of provincial grants has increased.

Sustainability

AU will continue to strive to secure and steward resources to enable it to meet its mandate. It will focus its efforts on securing sustainable institutional funding in support of the university's core mission: removing barriers to post-secondary study, providing a high-quality learning experience and achieving excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, and student services. The university will continue to retain and recruit excellent faculty and staff members in order to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic University Plan.

Goals

1. Develop a new budget model aligned with the recently adopted decanal structure
   a. Allocate resources through formal, transparent processes
   b. Continue to develop balanced operating budgets through a highly consultative process

2. Develop financial and operating systems and infrastructure to enhance responsiveness, efficiency and adaptability and to encourage flexibility and versatility
   a. Implement an integrated administrative services system (finance, procurement, human resources, payroll)
   b. Streamline business operations and improve processes, systems and controls
   c. Update and implement the enterprise-wide risk management framework
   d. Pursue collaborative service opportunities through Campus Alberta
   e. Continue to enhance records management and archival collection resources and services

3. Develop funding models for sustainable growth
   a. Diversify and expand revenue sources
   b. Encourage entrepreneurial activities consistent with the university's mandate
   c. Work actively for greater recognition of AU's unique mandate
   d. Maximize revenue generated through strategic partnerships
   e. Implement the asset management plan
   f. Launch AU's first public fundraising campaign

4. Enhance the university's policy and procedural framework
   a. Assess policies in terms of best practices and develop or revise policies and procedures where gaps or inadequacies are identified
   b. Continue to review and update existing policies and procedures
   c. Provide training to all employee groups to ensure understanding and compliance with university policies and procedures

5. Ensure that AU's virtual and physical campus infrastructure enable the university to meet its mandate
   a. Broaden financial support and seek sustaining funding for information and communication technology infrastructure

b. Ensure that the university's information and communication technology infrastructure remains stable, supportable, sustainable and scalable to deliver a quality experience to students and staff

c. Ensure that physical facilities support the university's strategic goals

d. Review and implement renovation plans for the main campus building at AU Athabasca

e. Seek opportunities for collaboration with other Campus Alberta institutions to satisfy AU's space needs

f. Identify opportunities, institution-wide, for improving environmental sustainability

6. Foster and maintain an interactive and collaborative workforce within a healthy, effective and efficient environment

a. Implement improvements to human resources management processes

b. Enhance communication and collaboration among faculty and staff members

c. Improve employee performance assessment processes

d. Enhance employee development opportunities and encourage participation

e. Develop and implement a comprehensive human resources development plan

f. Promote healthy workplace and wellness activities

Performance Measures

- A new budget model has been approved and implemented.
- The Administrative Systems Renewal Project is at least 75 per cent complete.
- Revenue increases are at or above those indicated in the annual budget.
- The fundraising campaign has met its target.
- The Information and Communication Technology Capital Plan budget has been implemented (as funded).
- The university's Edmonton and Calgary locations are secured.
- The redevelopment plan for the main campus building at AU Athabasca has been implemented.
- The number of employees who are proud to tell others that they work for AU has increased.
- The number of employees with active development plans has increased.
- The number of employees indicating favourable engagement levels has increased.

Community

AU will continue to promote collaboration and foster leadership in the communities it serves. The university will strive to build mutually beneficial partnerships with a variety of groups and communities, particularly in rural, remote, immigrant and indigenous communities in Alberta and across the country.

Goals

1. Work with communities, including rural, remote, indigenous and immigrant communities, to identify community needs, find solutions to local problems and enhance community development

    a. Continue to build mutually beneficial partnerships with communities

    b. Work in collaboration with remote, northern, rural, indigenous and immigrant communities to identify learning needs and enhance opportunities for flexible and culturally sensitive learning

    c. Expand industry research and business partnerships

    d. Explore opportunities with employers and others to enable employees to continue their education

    e. Form partnerships that meet university and community needs and contribute to economic and social vitality

Performance Measures

- The number of partnerships and collaborative projects has increased.
- The number of collaborations with other Campus Alberta institutions and the K–12 system has increased.

Financial and Budget Information

AU is committed to a sustainable budget strategy that aligns the available resources with the mission and priorities articulated in the *Strategic University Plan: 2011–16.*

Statements of Revenue and Expenses

Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31
(thousands of dollars)

	APPROVED BUDGET 2011–2012	APPROVED BUDGET 2012–2013	Plan* 2013–2014	Plan* 2014–2015	Plan* 2015–2016
Revenues					
Government of Alberta grants	$ 42,538	$ 43,405	$ 44,543	$ 45,364	$ 45,396
Undergraduate student fees	42,633	46,901	48,638	50,742	52,947
Graduate student fees	19,056	16,830	17,263	17,644	18,262
Sales of goods and services	11,983	15,921	16,101	16,504	16,945
Federal and other government grants	464	1,716	1,119	1,200	1,527
Amortization of DCC	2,758	3,439	5,215	6,709	8,084
Investment Income	1,558	1,161	1,030	1,000	980
Donations	2,625	2,438	1,414	1,056	1,100
	123,615	131,811	135,324	140,219	145,240
Expenses**					
Salaries	68,231	70,253	72,975	74,833	77,095
Employee benefits	14,997	16,452	16,602	17,003	17,405
Fees and purchased services	17,036	18,812	19,379	20,962	22,729
Materials and supplies	9,493	10,884	10,080	10,576	10,682
Communications and travel	6,418	6,884	6,953	7,022	7,092
Amortization	4,925	5,287	6,909	8,183	9,835
Facilities costs	2,743	3,068	3,098	3,128	3,160
Scholarships	1,187	1,049	1,080	1,101	1,123
	125,030	132,689	137,078	142,809	149,122
Excess of expense over revenue before pension liability adjustment	$ (1,415)	$ (878)	$ (1,755)	$ (2,591)	$ (3,882)
Increase in Pension Liability					
Universities Academic Pension Plan	$ (2,022)	$ (152)	$ 67	$ 778	$ 808
Excess of expense over revenue	$ (3,437)	$ (1,030)	$ (1,688)	$ (1,813)	$ (3,074)

*   Revenue and expenditures in these years are preliminary and will be refined in future year budgets.
** Includes expenditures related to planned investments from restricted reserves.

Statement of Cash Flows

Year Ended March 31
(thousands of dollars)

	APPROVED BUDGET 2011–2012	APPROVED BUDGET 2012–2013
Cash provided from (used in) operating activities:		
Excess of expense over revenue	$ (3,437)	$ (1,030)
Amortization of capital assets and deferred course development costs	4,925	5,287
Amortization of deferred capital and deferred course development contributions	(2,758)	(3,439)
Other items not affecting cash	2,022	152
	752	970
Change in non-cash working capital		
Change in accounts receivable, inventory of course materials and prepaid expenses	(506)	(863)
Change in current liabilities, except current portion of obligation under capital lease	(8,332)	655
	(8,086)	762
Cash provided from (used in) investing and financing activities:		
Decrease (increase) in non-current investments, net	5,773	(475)
Capital asset and collection acquisitions, net	(6,948)	315
Endowment awards and contributions, net	2,029	2,029
Deferred capital contributions	6,077	1,533
	6,931	3,401
Increase (decrease) in cash and short-term investments	(1,155)	4,164
Cash and short-term investments, beginning of year *	3,288	3,021
Cash and short-term investments, end of year	$ 2,133	$ 7,185

Note: The beginning of year cash and short-term investments amount is projected based on forecasted operating results for the previous year. The 2012–13 amount varies from the approved budget amount for 2011–2012 by the variancesfor 2010–11 and 2011–12.

Budget Assumptions

Undergraduate course registration is expected to grow between one and three per cent in each of the next three years, while graduate course registration is expected to decrease in 2012–13 and increase in both 2013–14 and 2014–15.

Key budget drivers were considered in developing the 2012-13 budget models. These drivers are forecasted with reference to existing plans, market conditions and other sources.

Drivers (annual % increase unless otherwise noted)	2011–12 Budget	2011–12 Forecast	2012–13 Budget	2013–14 Plan	2014–15 Plan
Course registration					
Undergraduate registration	1%	2.8%	**1.6%**	2.5%	3%
Graduate registration	0.5%	3%	**-5.8%**	1.4%	1.7%
Financial assumptions					
Alberta Government base grant increase	0%	0%	**2%**	2%	2%
Tutor allocation per undergrad registration	$270	$272	**$272**	$272	$272
Employee benefits (as a percentage of salaries)					
AUFA	22%	22%	**22%**	22%	22%
AUPE	27%	28%	**28%**	28%	28%
CUPE	9.7%	10%	**10%**	10%	10%
Macroeconomic drivers					
Investment returns	4%	4%	**4%**	4%	4%

Deficits

AU will be reporting a deficit in 2012–13, derived from two components: strategic investments from reserves (Restricted Net Assets) and Universities Academic Pension Plan liability adjustments (Unrestricted Net Assets).

Strategic Investment from Reserves (Restricted Net Assets)

In all cases these investments are for one-time projects. To date, key new initiatives have included information and communication technology systems, new programs and infrastructure. The 2012–13 budget anticipates an $878,000 draw on reserves, comprising the following:

- Strategic opportunities and institutional renewal ($595,000)
- Fundraising campaign ($283,000)

UAPP Pension Liability Adjustments (Unrestricted Net Assets)

In 2008–09, the Alberta universities and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology agreed that the appropriate share of the unfunded liability for the Universities Academic Pension Plan would be recorded on university financial statements. This liability is adjusted each year based on actuarial valuations or extrapolations. The 2012–13 budget reflects a $152,000 provision. As this is not a cash transaction, it is not considered a draw on university cash reserves (restricted net assets); however, it does represent an expense to be reported on the Statement of Operations.

Tuition

Undergraduate student fee increases of 1.3 percent are planned for 2012-13. Graduate tuition fee increases vary by program. Representatives of the Athabasca University Students' Union and the Athabasca University Graduate Students' Association have been consulted with regard to these fee modifications, which will come into effect on September 1, 2012.

AU's tuition fee projections for 2011–12 to 2014–15 are as follows:

	2011–2012 Actual	2012–2013 Proposed	2013–2014 Plan*	2014–2015 Plan*	2014–2015 Plan*
Course-Based Fees					
Undergraduate Student Fees					
Course fee (3-credit)	$ 466	$ 472	$ 481	$ 490	$ 499
Percentage change	0.2%	1.3%	1.9%	1.9%	1.8%
Graduate Student Fees **					
Course fee	$ 1,350	$ 1,350	$ 1,370	$ 1,390	$ 1,410
Learning Resource Fee	$ 150	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Master of Health Studies and Master of Nursing					
Course fee	$ 1,250	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 50	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Master of Arts—Integrated Studies					
Course fee	$ 1,300	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Architecture					
Course fee	$ 1,300	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Master of Science—Information Systems					
Course fee	$ 1,300	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Graduate Diploma Heritage Resources Management					
Course fee	$ 1,300	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting					
Course fee	$ 1,300	$ 1,320	$ 1,340	$ 1,360	$ 1,380
Learning Resource Fee	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160	$ 160
Program-Based Fees					
Graduate Student Fees **					
Master of Business Administration					
Program tuition	$ 35,140	$ 35,140	$ 35,140	$ 35,140	$ 35,140
Learning Resource Fee	$ 9,360	$ 9,360	$ 9,360	$ 9,360	$ 9,360
Doctor of Business Administration					
Program tuition	$ 47,355	$ 47,355	$ 47,355	$ 47,355	$ 47,355
Learning Resource Fee	$ 5,145	$ 5,145	$ 5,145	$ 5,145	$ 5,145
Doctorate of Education in Distance Education					
Program tuition	$ 42,850	$ 43,210	$ 43,690	$ 44,170	$ 44,650
Learning Resource Fee	$ 1,650	$ 1,650	$ 1,650	$ 1,650	$1,650
Master of Counselling					
Program tuition	$ 22,290	$ 22,530	$ 22,770	$ 23,010	$ 23,250
Learning Resource Fee	$ 600	$ 600	$ 600	$ 600	$ 600

The fee changes are preliminary and will be refined in future year budgets.

** AU Graduate Students' Association fee of $12 per credit is over and above the graduate program tuition fees stated above.

Resource Implications

Access and Quality

AU is committed to supporting access and quality initiatives within the limits of available resources. The university will continue to seek special grant funding, private donations and other types of external funding in support of such initiatives.

Key goals for 2012–13 are to maintain teaching and research excellence and to continue to remove barriers to learning for students. As a partner in Campus Alberta and eCampusAlberta, AU is committed to collaborating with other key stakeholders to provide high-quality learning opportunities. In order to provide a quality student learning experience, the university will continue its efforts to enhance the course development processes, the student services and the information and communication technology on which its operations are based. In a context of accelerating developments and increasing security challenges, the long-term sustainability of AU's information and communication technology infrastructure remains a concern.

Research

Resource implications relate to the activities of AU's research teams and include the need for matching allocations to funding from the major granting agencies. The university continues to seek sustaining funding for its research institutes.

Information and Communication Technology

Continuous renewal of AU's information and communication technology infrastructure is critical to the university's ability to meet its mandate. Inability to renew the information and communication technology infrastructure would substantially impair AU's capacity to perform its day-to-day operations. Administrative systems renewal, including the concurrent required upgrades to the learning system, has begun, but the progress has been slowed to reflect current fiscal concerns. AU's distributed faculty and staff and its student body require consistently performing systems to carry out their respective activities. The flexibility and functionality of existing systems must be enhanced to assure staff productivity and a high-quality student learning experience.

The Open Learning Environment

AU's information and communication technology planning process has culminated in the vision of the Open Learning Environment, an innovative online post-secondary system in which cutting-edge technologies integrate with advanced pedagogical practice to form a supportive, student-centred, world-class learning environment. The Open Learning Environment will encompass all aspects of the student's relationship with the university, from initial advising to lifelong learning and knowledge creation, establishing a new standard in post-secondary education. AU plans to share these new developments with other members of eCampusAlberta, allowing other institutions and their students to benefit from world-class research into online pedagogy and individualized access to world-class programs and courses.

Through constant development of the Open Learning Environment, AU will create a virtual campus that will provide its distributed student body with an outstanding learning experience. The ability to tailor course delivery to an individual student's learning style will allow many Albertans who would not have entered or completed a university program to succeed and to avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by post-secondary education.

The articulated 2020 vision for AU's Open Learning Environment is no small undertaking, and its realization will require the resources of all AU stakeholders. To achieve this vision, the university has created pathways to the adoption and use of information and communication technologies over the next 10 years. Combining excellence in learning and research with state-of-the-art student services and computing infrastructure through the adoption and adaption of these technologies will have a transformative effect on the institution.

The component parts of the plan have been grouped into individualized and self-contained projects. This grouping is not to imply that the parts are separate from one another but simply that their realization requires them to be divided into projects of manageable scope and size. In addition, a natural sequence of steps emerges in all projects, and the appropriate sequence for realization of the Open Learning Environment is reflected in the development stages identified below.

Priority Information Technology Projects	Date	Total Cost
Learning management system (Phase 1)	2013–16	$ 3,881,846
Content management system (Phase 1)	2013–16	4,027,852
Smart identification and encryption systems	2013–15, 2019–21	3,090,664
Assessment and exam system	2013–16	1,940,415
Academetrics system	2013–16	2,339,347
Administrative systems renewal	2013–16, 2018, 2021–22	14,121,271
Student information system upgrade (Phase 1)	2013–14	500,000
Articulations and advising system	2013–16	2,421,451
Identity management, disaster recovery and security	2016–22	20,500,000
Learning systems innovations	2015	500,000
Learning management system (Phase 2) – e-portfolios	2017–21	11,297,232
Student information system upgrade (Phase 2)	2018–19	1,200,000
Content management system (Phase 2) – learning objects	2017–20	4,250,000
Equipment – hardware upgrade	2013–22	9,387,566
Equipment – operating system upgrade	2013–22	10,072,508
Total		**$ 89,530,152**

Capital Plan

In 2012–13, $8.8 million in strategic capital investment is planned. Of that amount, $2.3 million will be funded from reserves unless alternate funding can be secured. The remainder will be externally funded.

Technology Infrastructure

Information and communication technology projects are critical to the future of the university. The funding of the Open Learning Environment continues to be the university's top capital priority.

Development of the Open Learning Environment has been planned at a total estimated cost of $90 million, of which $80 million has been requested from the Government of Alberta. The university has been able to advance this initiative in recent years with funds received from the federal government's Knowledge Infrastructure Program, new funding from the provincial government's Infrastructure Maintenance Program and AU cash reserves. Information and communication technology projects amounting to a total cost of $28 million are pending over the next three years. The proposed budget for 2012-13 reflects an $8.8 million investment, pending funding availability and Board approval.

Facilities Projects

Facilities projects amounting to a total cost of $32 million are anticipated over the next three years.

Projected Capital and Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Expenditures and Revenue Sources

Year Ended March 31
(thousands of dollars)

	BUDGET 2012–2013	PLAN 2013–2014	PLAN 2014–2015	TOTAL
Capital and IT Infrastructure Expenditures				
Buildings, leaseholds and site improvements	$ -	$ 4,825	$ 27,525	$ 32,350
Information technology	8,820	10,477	8,636	27,933
Equipment	0	50	50	100
Library and art collections	0	125	125	250
	$ 8,820	$ 15,477	$ 36,336	$ 60,633
External Capital contributions (Provincial and other)				
Building	$ -	$ 4,825	$ 27,525	$ 32,350
Information technology	4,667	6,958	5,337	16,962
Expenditures, Externally Funded	$ 4,667	$ 11,783	$ 32,862	$ 49,312
Internal Capital contributions				
Reserves (amortization)	$ 2,328	$ 1,694	$ 1,475	$ 5,497
Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP)	1,825	2,000	2,000	$ 5,825
Expenditures, Internally Funded	$ 4,153	$ 3,694	$ 3,475	$ 11,322
	$ 8,820	$ 15,477	$ 36,336	$ 60,633

Projected Capital and Information and Communication Technology Infrastructure Expenditures

Year Ended March 31
(thousands of dollars)

	BUDGET 2012–13	PLAN 2013–14	PLAN 2014–15	TOTAL
Buildings, leaseholds and site improvements				
EXTERNALLY FUNDED				
AU Central Main Campus Building Renovation		$ 1,500	$ 500	$ 2,000
Intergrated Learning Centre - Greater Edmonton		2,000	10,000	12,000
Athabasca River Basin Research, Conference, Archival and Interpretive Centre		500	16,200	16,700
Road surfaces, geotechnical surveys, landscaping and trail enhancements		825	825	1,650
Total buildings, leaseholds and site improvements	$ -	$ 4,825	$ 27,525	$ 32,350
Information technology: major projects				
EXTERNALLY FUNDED				
Hardware and Software	$ 775	$ 2,390	$ 1,958	$ 5,123
Computing systems	500	250	250	1,000
Administrative systems	520	1,000	-	1,520
Learning and research systems	2,872	3,318	3,129	9,319
	4,667	6,958	5,337	16,962
INTERNALLY FUNDED				
Hardware and software	$ 1,313	$ 1,210	$ 2,015	$ 4,538
Computing systems	127	103	210	440
Administrative systems	1,801	976	524	3,301
Learning and research systems	912	1,230	550	2,692
	$ 4,153	$ 3,519	$ 3,299	$ 10,971
Total hardware and software	**$ 8,820**	**$ 10,477**	**$ 8,636**	**$ 27,933**
Equipment				
Research equipment		$ 50	$ 50	$ 100
Total equipment		**$ 50**	**$ 50**	**$ 100**
Library and art collections				
Library		$ 125	$ 125	$ 250
Total library and art collections	$ -	$ 125	$ 125	$ 250
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	**$ 8,820**	**$ 15,477**	**$ 36,336**	**$ 60,633**

Athabasca
University

CANADA'S OPEN UNIVERSITY

1 University Drive
Athabasca, AB T9S 3A3
Canada

Phone 780-675-6100
1-800-788-9041 (toll-free in Canada and the U.S.)
www.athabascau.ca