



Athabasca
University

2020-2070

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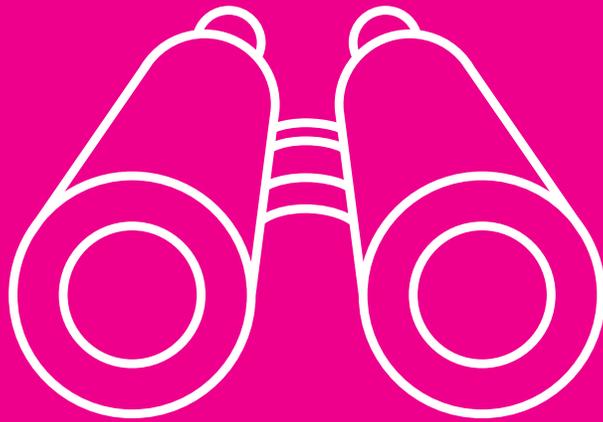


LOOKING FORWARD

ANNUAL REPORT

TO ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

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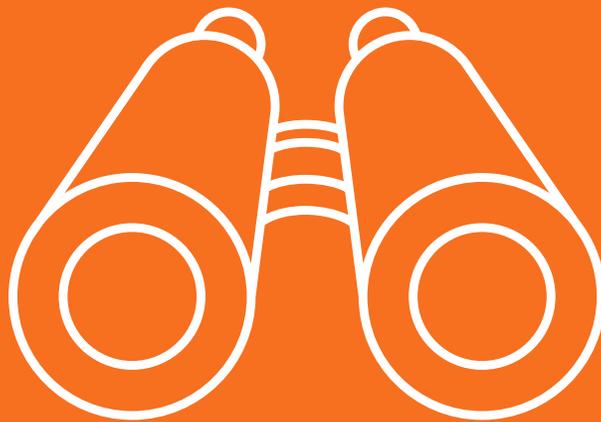


2020



Athabasca
University

LOOKING



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ANNUAL REPORT

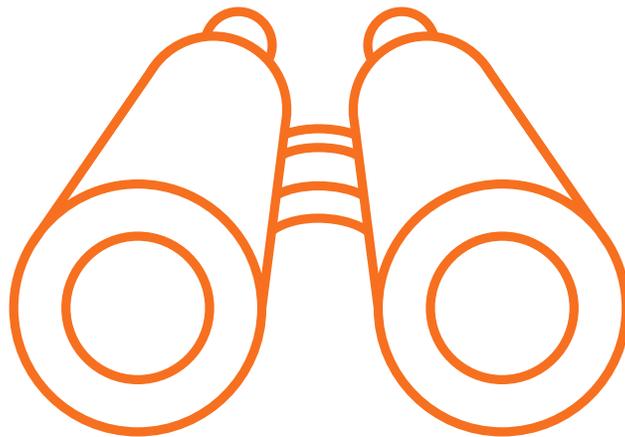
TO ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION
FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

OUR VISION

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities.

OUR MISSION

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.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The members of the Athabasca University community respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional lands of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada (First Nations, Inuit, Métis). We honour the ancestry, heritage, and gifts of the Indigenous Peoples and give thanks to them.

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ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Athabasca University's Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2020, was prepared under the direction of the Governors of Athabasca University in accordance with the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act and ministerial guidelines established pursuant to the Post-Secondary Learning Act. All material economic, environmental, or fiscal implications of which we are aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Original signed by Nancy Laird

Nancy Laird, BA (Hons.), MBA, ICD.D
Chair, The Governors of Athabasca University

September 13, 2020

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPORTING

Athabasca University's management is responsible for the preparation, accuracy, objectivity, and integrity of the information contained in the Annual Report, including the financial statements, performance results, and supporting management information. Systems of internal control are designed and maintained by management to produce reliable information to meet reporting requirements. The system is designed to provide management with reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, are executed in accordance with all relevant legislation, regulations, and policies, reliable financial records are maintained, and assets are properly accounted for and safeguarded.

The Annual Report has been developed under the oversight of the Audit Committee of the Board of Governors as well as approved by the Board of Governors and is prepared in accordance with the *Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act* and the *Post-Secondary Learning Act*.

The Auditor General of the Province of Alberta, Athabasca University's external auditor appointed under the *Auditor General Act*, performs an annual independent audit of the consolidated financial statements, which are prepared in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Original signed by Dr. Neil Fassina

Neil Fassina, PhD, CPHR, ICD.D
President

Original signed by Deborah Meyers

Deborah Meyers, B.Comm., CPA, CA
Vice-President Finance and Administration
and Chief Financial Officer

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



This year has brought its share of challenges for all post-secondary institutions, including Athabasca University, from an international health crisis to financial constraints. But it has also marked an auspicious year for AU as we celebrate our 50th anniversary and our proud history of making high-quality distance education accessible to learners in every corner of Alberta, across the country, and around the globe.

We now look forward to our next 50 years at a time of immense opportunity for online education to reach even more learners, and to be even more innovative in our approach. Over the past year, AU team members have come together to plan and carry out many of the initiatives we had only dreamed of a few years ago, growing our community of learners and working to create the most engaging, immersive, and technology-enabled learning environment possible.

AU offers what learners are increasingly seeking in today's world. A recent Angus-Reid poll found more than three-quarters of Canadians think universities should have fewer barriers to admission, and more than 70 per cent think universities need to reinvent themselves to keep up with today's pace of innovation. Another 88 per cent describe themselves as lifelong learners.

The demand for education continues to grow; by 2030, there will be an estimated 139 million new learners worldwide. To accommodate them, more than 700 physical institutions would need to be built each year. Online learning provides a practical, affordable, and sustainable solution to meet this growing global demand. AU continues to become a stronger and more focused institution, guided by the goals set out in our strategic plan, *Imagine: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities*. During the past year, we have planned and prepared to launch a new, leading-edge Integrated Learning Environment and have committed to increase and promote research excellence through our *Strategic Research Plan*. Our community is being enriched by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion initiative now underway at the university, and by the completion of our Nukskahtowin plan, which aims to increase the number of Indigenous people working and learning at AU, and amplify Indigenous voices within the university.

This year also saw the launch of our new entrepreneurial unit, PowerED™, in September 2019. This unit extends AU's reach with a portfolio of micro-courses and certificates aimed at professionals seeking to boost their skills, and provides customized training solutions.

Also of note, the university hired a new mental-health coordinator and began offering 24/7 counselling and mental-health support for all AU students in 2019–20. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in March, AU provided expertise and support to other educators and learners in moving resources online.

These are but a sampling of the many initiatives detailed in this annual report to keep Athabasca University on the path to continued growth and success in the immediate future, and well into our next 50 years.

Sincerely,

Original signed by Dr. Neil Fassina

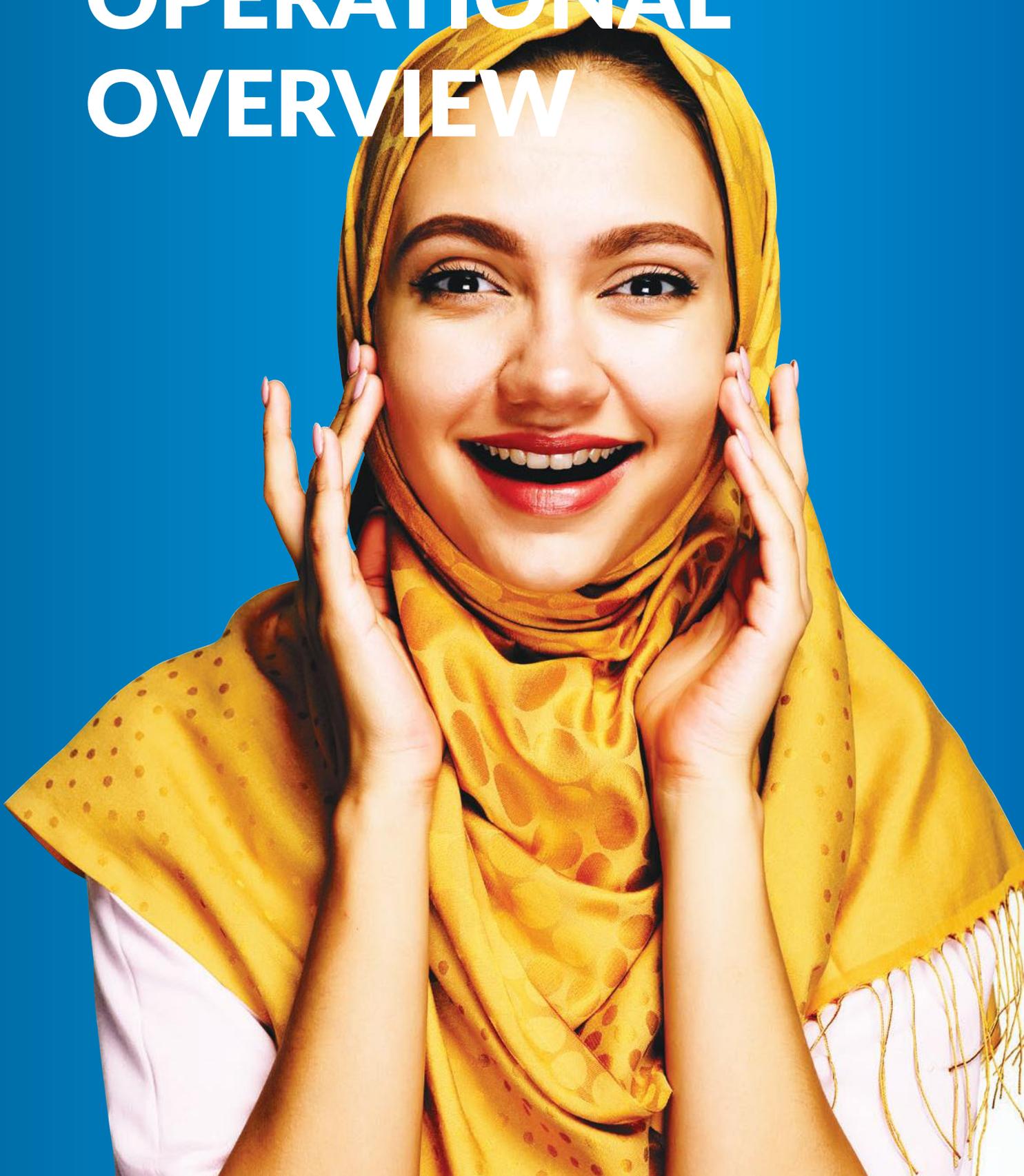
Neil Fassina, PhD, CPHR, ICD.D

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE (WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION) ACT

AU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct in all its activities and to acting promptly on any reported wrongdoing. As required by the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act*, the university provides various mechanisms for employees to disclose their concerns.

In compliance with legislated reporting requirements, a disclosure was received and acted on in the 2019–20 fiscal year. An assessment was conducted by the Designated Officer and it was concluded, as there was insufficient evidence to support a finding of wrongdoing. The outcome was communicated to the individual who raised the concern.

OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW



Throughout its 50-year history, Athabasca University has been guided by an incredible mission to remove barriers that restrict access to, and success in, university-level study, and to increase the quality of educational opportunities for all learners.

AU seeks to position itself as a world-class leader and innovator in online education in Alberta, in Canada, and around the world. As a respected and recognized post-secondary institution with a proven track record, it offers learners a rigorous, high-quality university education while systematically dismantling obstacles between learners and their educational ambitions.

AU's program offerings, flexibility, and format are continually developing and growing to enhance learners' experiences, knowledge, and skills. This allows them to be relevant within the changing landscape of the global economy, society, and our evolving digital world.

Athabasca University's priorities include:

1. Reinvigorating AU's Integrated Learning Environment

As North America's first online university, AU has always used technology to create an open and flexible learning environment. Today, AU is reimagining its founding spirit with investment in an Integrated Learning Environment that will include a modern learning management system, student information system, and student relationship management system. These efforts will enable the full implementation of the *Imagine Learning Framework*.

This framework reimagines how AU designs, delivers, supports, assesses, and continuously improves all aspects of the university's learning experience to best enable lifelong, self-paced distributed learning, grow both credit- and non-credit enrolment and optimize accessibility for all learners.

2. Research Impact

Through its *Strategic Research Plan*, AU has committed to increasing its research capacity and creating a dynamic environment to promote research excellence. It is dedicated to helping achieve provincial outcomes that include a strong economy, effective resource management, environmental stewardship, and supporting healthy Albertans in all communities. AU is developing a scalable and sustainable open scholarship framework and seeks to build a strong reputation in this area.

Through its new learning framework, the university is committed to integrating research and learning, encouraging learners to improve their communities by participating in research and scholarship.

3. Digital Experience

Within AU's strategic plan, *Imagine*, lies the digital enablement strategy for the delivery of a world-class learner experience through modern frameworks, processes, and technologies. The university will ensure learners have a seamless, well-supported, and highly integrated digital experience as they transition from prospective learner to current learner, alumni, and ambassador, becoming a true partner and promoter of lifelong learning.

Work in this area is well underway. AU's multi-level collaboration with Amazon Web Services, first established in 2018, continued in 2019 as the university builds its modern cloud infrastructure, including the tools and training required to enable a learning model that is flexible, scalable and affordable.

The university is also mid-way through a three-year partnership agreement with ProctorU, an online invigilation service. During restrictions on place-based activities because of the pandemic early in 2020, all AU learners were able to take their exams anywhere and at any time that was convenient for them.

4. Digital Security Program

AU is building a transformative digital security program that will enable the university and its partners to operate securely in one university architecture accessed by multi-factor authentication from all endpoint devices that access university business and operations systems. Cybersecurity implementation across operations and research infrastructures, their applications, data exchanges, and devices will ensure safe, secure data stewardship of students' data as well as professors' critical research work. The program removes cybersecurity barriers to the university's strategic objectives while assuring resilience, privacy, and safety through alignment with, and adoption of, industry-leading cybersecurity frameworks to protect the AU environment for both team members and learners.

5. Business Transformation

AU's workforce is unique, diverse, and dispersed. The university is creating an environment that assures individual enrichment as well as individual and organizational success. We are focused on talent management, human resources service delivery and governance, communication, and human resources transformation.

Academic Programs

As one of four Alberta Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities, AU is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and scholarship. AU offers undergraduate and graduate programs that are unique in Canada, delivering a learning experience tailored to the needs of individual learners, allowing them to learn at their own pace and in their own community. As the largest provider of digital post-secondary education in Canada, serving approximately 43,000 learners annually throughout Alberta, across Canada and around the world, AU is committed to quality, responsiveness and flexibility in the design and delivery of programs and courses.

AU offers the following degree programs:

- Doctor of Education (Distance Education)
- Doctor of Business Administration
- Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Counselling
- Master of Education (Distance Education)
- Master of Health Studies
- Master of Nursing
- Master of Science (Information Systems)

“

I would definitely recommend a graduate program at AU. The flexibility of the programs is especially appealing for those, like myself, who wish to continue their academic journeys and advance their careers and at the same time effectively balance their work obligations and family life.

Major Kim Jones, training development officer in the Canadian Armed Forces and doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education in Distance Education program



28

The average AU undergraduate is 28 years old.

“

AU is home to me; faculty, staff, administrators, and fellow students have made this so. I have never felt held back, boxed in, unheard, unknown, or lost at AU. I am proud of our university and of our distance education, for I know that both are of highest quality.

Norine Wark, Doctor of Education in Distance Education, 2019



89%

89% of learners are from urban areas.

“

The flexibility AU offers is remarkable—I was able to remain working. I managed to help my sons with homework and attend their school practices and games. Most of all, I was able to do what I love most—travel—all while pursuing a degree.

Zainab Mahmood, Master of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, 2020



34

The average AU graduate student is 34 years old.

- Bachelor of Arts, four-year (with a major in anthropology, English, French, history, humanities, labour studies, political economy, political science, psychology, sociology, women's and gender studies, or a combined major)
- Bachelor of Arts, three-year (general or with a concentration in English, French, history, psychology, or sociology)
- Bachelor of Commerce (general or with a major in accounting, business technology management, or finance)
- Bachelor of General Studies (in applied studies or arts and science)
- Bachelor of Health Administration
- Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations
- Bachelor of Management, four-year (general or with a major in human resources management, Indigenous nations and organizations, or marketing)
- Bachelor of Management, three-year
- Bachelor of Nursing (post LPN or post RN)
- Bachelor of Professional Arts (with a major in communication studies, criminal justice, human services, or governance, law, and management)
- Bachelor of Science (general or with a major in applied mathematics, architecture, computing and information systems, or human science)

In addition to these degree programs, the university offers 15 graduate-level certificate and diploma programs and 15 undergraduate certificate and diploma programs.

Enrolment and Course Registration

A total of 42,853 learners worldwide took advantage of AU's flexible online learning programs and services in 2019–20 (Table 1). The number of individual Albertans to do so rose by 1.12 per cent to 17,963, increasing 1.08 per cent to 16,678 at the undergraduate level and increasing by 1.58 per cent to 1,285 at the graduate level, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Learners Enrolled at AU: 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Undergraduate | 35,611 | 38,495 | 38,297 |
| Graduate | 4,421 | 4,527 | 4,556 |
| Total | 40,032 | 43,022 | 42,853 |

Table 2: Alberta Learners Enrolled at AU: 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Undergraduate | 15,067 | 16,499 | 16,678 |
| Graduate | 1,278 | 1,265 | 1,285 |
| Total | 16,345 | 17,764 | 17,963 |



49%

49% of AU graduates supported dependents during their period of study.



3.6%

3.6% of learners identify themselves as Indigenous.



65%

65% of AU undergraduates are women.

“

I am tremendously proud to call AU my home university. I carry AU in my heart! It was AU that brought me the critical mind that I need to perform my job.

Barbara Reis, Master of Education in Distance Education, 2018

“

During my time at Athabasca I have learned so much about psychology, sociology, criminal justice, literature and even education. But most of all I learned about myself, my dreams, and my potential.

Athabasca University gave me the gift of working towards a better life for myself and my little boy without having to sacrifice the experience of raising my son.

Celeste Brown, Bachelor of Arts, 2019

AU's enrolment as full-load equivalents increased 3.65 per cent overall to 9,717, as shown in Table 3 (See enrolment report for breakdown by program). Enrolment as full-load equivalents from Albertan learners increased by 5.16 per cent to 4,257 (Table 4).

Table 3: Learner Enrolment (Full-load Equivalents): 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Undergraduate | 6,922 | 7,548 | 7,817 |
| Graduate | 1,817 | 1,827 | 1,900 |
| Total | 8,739 | 9,375 | 9,717 |

Table 4: Alberta Learner Enrolment (Full-load Equivalents): 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Undergraduate | 3,167 | 3,498 | 3,677 |
| Graduate | 567 | 550 | 580 |
| Total | 3,734 | 4,048 | 4,257 |

AU had a total of 88,033 course registrations in 2019-20, a 1.62 per cent increase over the previous year (Table 5). Course registration by Alberta learners rose 3.28 per cent to 39,322, increasing at the undergraduate level by 3.79 per cent to 35,937 and decreasing by 1.86 per cent to 3,385 at the graduate level, as shown in Table 6.

Table 5: AU Course Registration: 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Undergraduate | 67,371 | 75,229 | 76,612 |
| Graduate | 11,076 | 11,403 | 11,421 |
| Total | 78,447 | 86,632 | 88,033 |

Table 6: Course Registration by Alberta Learners: 2017–18 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Undergraduate | 30,792 | 34,625 | 35,937 |
| Graduate | 3,330 | 3,449 | 3,385 |
| Total | 34,122 | 38,074 | 39,322 |

As indicated in Table 7, a significant number of students take courses at AU for transfer credit to another post-secondary institution or for general interest. These non-degree students are not enrolled in an AU credential program but are currently registered in AU courses.

Table 7: Course Registration by Faculty and Degree/Non-Degree: 2017-18 to 2019-20

| Faculty | Degree or non-Degree | 2017-18 | | | 2018-19 | | | 2019-20 | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Grad | Undergrad | Total | Grad | Undergrad | Total | Grad | Undergrad | Total |
| Business | Program | 2,823 | 6,277 | 9,100 | 2,892 | 6,603 | 9,495 | 2,594 | 6,978 | 9,572 |
| | Non-degree | 295 | 11,662 | 11,957 | 289 | 12,730 | 13,019 | 239 | 11,921 | 12,160 |
| | Total | 3,118 | 17,939 | 21,057 | 3,181 | 19,333 | 22,514 | 2,833 | 18,899 | 21,732 |
| Health Disciplines | Program | 5,421 | 2,401 | 7,822 | 5,634 | 2,150 | 7,784 | 5,940 | 2,300 | 8,240 |
| | Non-degree | 272 | 904 | 1,176 | 277 | 916 | 1,193 | 318 | 1,248 | 1,566 |
| | Total | 5,693 | 3,305 | 8,998 | 5,911 | 3,066 | 8,977 | 6,258 | 3,548 | 9,806 |
| Humanities & Social Studies | Program | 1,518 | 10,225 | 11,743 | 1,536 | 11,120 | 12,656 | 1,656 | 12,163 | 13,819 |
| | Non-degree | 222 | 20,947 | 21,169 | 252 | 24,665 | 24,917 | 232 | 24,624 | 24,856 |
| | Total | 1,740 | 31,172 | 32,912 | 1,788 | 35,785 | 37,573 | 1,888 | 36,787 | 38,675 |
| Science & Technology | Program | 423 | 3,092 | 3,515 | 367 | 3,328 | 3,695 | 351 | 3,572 | 3,923 |
| | Non-degree | 90 | 11,875 | 11,965 | 84 | 13,789 | 13,873 | 117 | 13,780 | 13,897 |
| | Total | 513 | 14,967 | 15,480 | 451 | 17,117 | 17,568 | 468 | 17,352 | 17,820 |
| Grand Total | | 11,064 | 67,383 | 78,447 | 11,331 | 75,301 | 86,632 | 11,447 | 76,586 | 88,033 |

Program-by-program enrolment data and major changes to programming are provided in the enrolment section.

Program Completion

AU awarded 1,893 academic credentials in 2019–20; 940 at the graduate level and 953 at the undergraduate level, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Academic Credentials Awarded: 2017–19 to 2019–20

| | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Doctor of Business Administration | 4 | 9 | 4 |
| Doctor of Education (Distance Education) | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies) | 65 | 59 | 53 |
| Master of Business Administration | 165 | 175 | 181 |
| Master of Counselling | 90 | 86 | 74 |
| Master of Education (Distance Education) | 69 | 58 | 48 |
| Master of Health Studies | 58 | 47 | 46 |
| Master of Nursing | 273 | 274 | 311 |
| Master of Science (Information Systems) | 15 | 27 | 24 |
| Total Graduate Degrees | 747 | 740 | 748 |
| Graduate Certificates and Diplomas | 202 | 164 | 192 |
| Total Graduate Credentials | 949 | 904 | 940 |
| Bachelor of Administration ¹ | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Bachelor of Arts | 97 | 90 | 105 |
| Bachelor of Commerce | 79 | 87 | 73 |
| Bachelor of General Studies | 128 | 163 | 143 |
| Bachelor of Health Administration | 14 | 19 | 13 |
| Bachelor of Human Resources Labour Relations | 68 | 75 | 64 |
| Bachelor of Management | 89 | 107 | 108 |
| Bachelor of Nursing | 227 | 218 | 184 |
| Bachelor of Professional Arts | 93 | 85 | 90 |
| Bachelor of Science | 28 | 35 | 38 |
| Total Bachelor's Degrees | 826 | 884 | 826 |
| Undergraduate Certificates and Diplomas | 169 | 145 | 127 |
| Total Undergraduate Credentials | 995 | 1,029 | 953 |
| Total Credentials Awarded | 1,944 | 1,933 | 1,893 |

¹ Program closed to new registrations December 31, 2004.

“

Earning my baccalaureate through Athabasca University gave me the impetus I needed to continue my educational journey... I have traversed a vast distance as a person since – and because of – my experiences learning with Athabasca.

Aingeal Stone, Bachelor of Arts, 2014



1,932

**1,932 credentials
awarded in 2018–19.**

13%



**13% of learners
have self-identified
disabilities.**

“

My academic experience has provided me with a sense of strength, power, knowledge, self-trust, and confidence in what I have to offer and a drive and determination to not let fear stand in my way of taking a stand, raising my voice, and advocating for causes that mean something to me.

*Camille MacRae, Bachelor of Professional Arts,
student in Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies*

“

“In many ways I am not at all the same person I was when this journey began. I am smarter, I am more confident, I am more aware, and I am more a citizen of the world. My personal journey landed me here, at AU, but it certainly doesn’t stop now.

Lorri Lyster, Bachelor of Arts, 2020

Student Health and Wellness

Significant progress was made this year in student mental health and wellness. Key activities included increased promotion and participation in the AU student wellness program, the go-to resource for health and well-being supports for students.

AU piloted and updated case-management protocols for identifying, referring, and responding to at-risk learners. AU also piloted crisis management protocols and mental-health core competency training for front-line staff. Results from participation in the 2019 *National College Health Assessment Survey* are now being used to drive plans and strategies at AU. In mid-March, when the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions began, learners were supported by AU's flexibility in deferring exams, providing alternative assessment, extending course completion dates, and waiving some fees.

While work on student health and wellness activities in 2019–20 was impacted by the resignation and re-recruitment of our Mental Health Coordinator, our *Mental Health Strategy* is targeted for approval in 2020–21.

AU will continue to build on its successes in this area in the coming year by evaluating the growth and use of the student wellness program and creating additional digital resources to raise awareness of mental-health issues and support online learners in seeking help.

Governance

AU operates through a bicameral governance structure, as set out in the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* and the *Athabasca University Regulation*. The Board of Governors is the senior governing body but shares academic governance with the General Faculties Council, the academic governing body. As of March 31, 2020, membership of the Board was as follows:

- Chair: Nancy Laird
- President: Dr. Neil Fassina
- Public members: Sharon Anderson, Robert Balay, Bryan Berg (Vice-Chair), Lynn Hamilton, McDonald Madamombe, Tracey Maguire, Shannon Neighbour, Larry Spagnolo
- Academic staff members: Dr. Derek Briton, Dr. Shawn Fraser
- Tutor member: Liam Connelly
- Graduate student member: Meaghan Sullivan
- Undergraduate student members: Brandon Simmons, Natasha Donahue

Policy Framework

As reported last year, the project to review and revise the *Policy and Procedures Manual* is progressing to ensure policy is strategic, streamlined, and supports the current and emerging needs at AU. High-priority policies continue to move forward in coordination with the development and implementation of foundational plans and initiatives. Policy is developed and approved to ensure alignment with the principles in the *Policy Framework – Governing Policy*, and consistency with policies across AU.

Over the past year, several key, strategic policies have been developed and approved. Notable is a new suite of information technology policies tailored to support AU's digital and information technology initiatives. In developing this suite, AU was the first to build comprehensively upon the *Information Technology Management Control Framework* sponsored by the Government of Alberta and the Alberta Association of Higher Education in Information Technology to provide guidance to Alberta's post-secondary institutions. Through continued implementation of the new *Policy Framework – Governing Policy*, AU will have high-level, strategic policy that is agile and supports the implementation of strategic goals, initiatives, and operations across the institution.

Human Resources

The overarching deliverable of *EMPOWER: Athabasca University's Human Resources Five-Year Strategic Plan (2018–2022)*, is to identify and adopt the most efficient, effective, innovative and cost-effective human resources function, facilitating the movement from a transactional model to a strategic but lean role to meet the university's current and future needs. The promise of *Imagine: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities*, requires a shift in the cultural components (i.e., values, beliefs, norms) aligned with the university's vision, mission, and strategy. Year two under the *EMPOWER* plan focused on the creation of the necessary foundational culture frameworks to support AU's continued shift from a transactional and governance human resources model to a more strategic human resources service delivery model.

To assess the current state of employee engagement and uncover areas of opportunities for cultural and workplace changes, AU partnered with TalentMap to develop and implement AU's first employee engagement survey. Overall results were shared broadly with the AU community and served as a foundational document for the creation of AU's *Values and Culture Framework*.

With a focus on change, growth and transformation, the human resources Business Transformation Unit (BTU) was created to support the various strategic and operational change initiatives. The BTU provides core change management support and expertise in support of AU's mission by working with key stakeholders to identify optimization and efficiency opportunities throughout the institution. Change management is still a relatively new discipline; the development of AU's *Change Framework* created a common language for what change management is at AU and how the people side of change is engaged and managed.

AU recognizes its unique role in creating a society enriched and strengthened through equity, diversity, and inclusion for all. Human Resources, in collaboration with the Provost and Vice President Academic, sponsored the creation of the university's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative which included the creation of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee comprised of volunteers from under-represented groups. A key deliverable of the EDI Committee is the completion of AU's EDI Framework in 2020–21 fiscal year.

In addition to the development and implementation of foundational culture and talent frameworks, continued optimization of the Human Resources unit included process improvements to support a more streamlined, efficient, and, where possible, paperless HR function as well as continued work on the review and updating of numerous HR policies and procedures. Policy review, edits, and consultations are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

**GOALS,
PRIORITY
INITIATIVES,
EXPECTED
OUTCOMES,
PERFORMANCE
MEASURES AND
RESULTS**



AU's *Comprehensive Institutional Plan: 2019–22* identified 10 goals in five categories (accessibility, quality, affordability, co-ordination, and accountability) for the planning period, along with associated priority initiatives, expected outcomes, and performance measures. Progress made with respect to these metrics is presented in Tables 9 to 13 below:

Table 9: Accessibility Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes, Performance Measures, and Results

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Goals | | | | | |
| G1 | Systematically remove barriers to create a culture of inclusion in which all learners are welcome | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of the student service culture consultation project, with an aim to creating a more welcoming and inclusive culture of student service provision Completion of separate graduate and undergraduate student journey mapping projects designed to identify barriers to student success and opportunities to remove those barriers | No change |
| G2 | Leadership in digital accessibility | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a draft <i>Integrated Learning Environment Accessibility Policy and Procedure</i>, including faculty consultations. Approval by General Faculties Council in 2020–21 session Held the 2019 AU Learning Conference with the theme of “Disruptive Transformation” to share cutting-edge perspectives in digital accessibility, among other topics | No change |
| Priority Initiatives | | | | | |
| PI1 | Develop a suite of diverse, comprehensive, and adaptable student services that provide the tools and supports that learners require to curate their journeys and achieve their personal learning goals | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched an online <i>Undergraduate Welcome and Orientation</i> site that welcomes students and provides an overview of services and resources available Increased collaboration with faculty and academic experts in developing alternate forms of assessment in response to increased demand for these supports. This will feed forward into a 2020–21 strategic change initiative to centralize program and course design Selection of preferred consortium to deliver our new Integrated Learning Environment. This will replace the Student Information System, Learning Management Systems, and introduce a single consolidated Customer Relationship Management system. This will give students enhanced degree-planning tools and provide advisors with data-driven insights on student needs | 2021–22 |
| PI2 | Implement standards of service that use data to meet our learners’ changing needs across a lifetime of learning | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing service standards identified deficiencies in data-gathering capability. This information will inform the implementation of a new single CRM system in 2020–21 | 2021–22 |
| PI3 | Implement the <i>Mental Health Strategy</i> | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mental Health Draft Strategy</i> completed in 2018–19 but approval was delayed by departure of Mental Health Coordinator New Mental Health Coordinator was in post January 13, 2020 and approval and implementation of <i>Mental Health Strategy</i> is a priority for 2020–21 | 2020–21 |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|--|----------------------------------|
| PI4 | Adopt shared accessibility standards as part of the implementation of AU's <i>Imagine Learning Framework</i> | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of a draft <i>Integrated Learning Environment Accessibility Policy and Procedure</i>, including faculty consultations. Approval by General Faculties Council in 2020–21 session | No change |

Expected Outcomes

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|------|-------------|---|-----------|
| E01 | A learner experience that is welcoming, flexible, seamless, consistent, and well-supported at every stage of the learning journey | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection of preferred consortium to deliver our new Integrated Learning Environment. This will replace the student Information System, Learning Management Systems, and introduce a single consolidated Customer Relationship Management System. Implementing these technologies as an integrated suite is key to ensuring that learners have a seamless experience | 2021–22 |
| E02 | Enhanced mental health and well-being programming available to learners | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant increase in use of our 24/7 AU Health and Wellness program in year two, confirming that the service is embedding well, communications are effective, and the service is valuable to students Launched new peer e-mentoring pilot for students wishing peer support during their learning journey Draft crisis management and case management protocols developed Identified opportunity to embed mental health and well-being resource into Integrated Learning Environment implementation | No change |
| E03 | Accessibility by design for all AU learners | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional change project launched to create centralized learning design team. This will support embedding accessibility by design as part of our learning design framework Planning for implementation of Integrated Learning Environment over 2020–21 identifies significant opportunity to refresh courses as part of transition | No change |

Performance Measures

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|---|--|-----------|
| PM1 | Learner perception of access | Ongoing | New metric, not tracked in previous years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 89 per cent (undergraduate). This represents prospective learners' unaided awareness and perception of access/flexibility, from the <i>UCAS Applicant Survey</i> | N/A |
| PM2 | Learner perception of welcome | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93 per cent satisfaction with undergraduate welcome and orientation | N/A |
| PM3 | Prospective learners' unaided awareness and perception of access/flexibility | Ongoing | Pending | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under development | N/A |
| PM4 | Mental health metric(s) under development. Evaluation of Mental Health programs and strategy recommendations needed as a first step | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departure of Mental Health Coordinator combined with delayed recruitment of replacement led to unexpected delays in the evaluation of the mental health programs and services 65.6 per cent increase in student usage of the AU Student Health and Wellness program for the period September 2019 – March 2020 over the period September 2018 – August 2019 | No change |
| PM5 | AU demonstrates excellence and leadership in advancing digital accessibility | 2022 | Not started | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Accessibility Maturity Model Composite Score under development | No change |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|---|----------------------------------|
| PM6 | Digital Accessibility Maturity Model Composite Score | 2022 | Not started | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration to new Student Information System (SIS) and Learning Management System (LMS) coupled with comprehensive policy review and introduction of new course design process, all in 2020–21, will lay the foundations for self-assessment | No change |
| PM7 | Percentage of learner-facing screens and learning materials that adhere to accessibility standards | 2022 | Not started | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration to new SIS and LMS in 2020–21 has been identified as an opportunity to audit all courses and to ensure new systems are compliant | No change |

Table 10: Quality Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes, Performance Measures, and Results

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|--------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|
| Goals | | | | | |
| G3 | Leadership in quality, innovative, and research-informed open, digital, and distributed learning | N/A | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AU is coming to the end of the discovery period with our lead partner, D2L (Desire2Learn), along with Ellucian, who offer the Banner Student Information System. Implementation will result in an integrated learning environment | A new integrated technology platform is expected in 2021 |
| G4 | Reputation for scholarly activity, dissemination, and impact reflecting our comprehensive research university status | N/A | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AU is one of the research universities at monthly meetings and planning for strategic research priorities for Alberta with Advanced Education and Economic Development, Trade and Tourism AB Environment and Parks has recognized our expertise in examining the effects of climate change and oils sands technology and our positive relationship with the northern Indigenous communities. We have been awarded the lead for a large oil sands monitoring project in northern Alberta Our researchers have national and international reputations in climate change, digital technology, and energy | TBD |
| G5 | New pedagogies, ideas, technologies, and processes that support learning and research are identified, tested, deployed, assessed, and retired in real time | N/A | On hold. Requires investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of Phase I of the IDEA Lab, which includes providing cloud storage and assigning IT talent to R&D ideas is on hold Model for providing high-performance computing capabilities and services based on the needs of research-related stakeholders and partners on hold | TBD |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|--|--|
| Priority Initiatives | | | | | |
| PI1 | Implement AU's <i>Imagine Learning Framework</i> , leading to transformation of teaching and learning at AU that will allow learners to seamlessly stack their varied learning experiences into personalized pathways | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See G1. In addition, a credentials framework is under development • Initiated upgrade of DegreeWorks, a key student program planning tool • Selection of preferred consortium to deliver our new Integrated Learning Environment. This will give students enhanced degree-planning tools and provide advisors with data-driven insights on individual student needs, as well as greater insight into student pathways through learning • Increased collaboration with faculty and academic experts in developing alternate forms of assessment in response to increased demand for these supports (110 delivered in 2019–20). This work will feed into the development of assessment principles in 2020–21 to remove accessibility barriers to study across our courses | No change |
| PI2 | Modernize the technological environment required to support the <i>Imagine Learning Framework</i> and emergent pedagogical needs in support of the <i>Imagine Plan</i> | N/A | Complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rapid Cloud Migration project is currently in progress. This will move AU's computing environment from on-premise technology closets into the AU Cloud. Leveraging Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Microsoft Azure cloud technologies, this modernization will improve stability and increase speed for AU students and reduce risk for learners due to improved availability in the AU cloud | July 31, 2020 |
| PI3 | Improve delivery of services by implementing technologies that improve the accuracy and timeliness of responses to user queries and establish standard data sets (people records) to inform service benchmarks and continuous improvement activities | N/A | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Integrated Learning Environment (ILE) project will provide a state-of-the-art integration between the learning environment and the Student Information System and will be part of the extended AU cloud of AWS and Microsoft Azure. The ILE project will deliver faster response times to students and staff and will establish standard data sets (people-records) to enable continuous improvement and inform service benchmarks. AU has selected its consortium partners for the Integrated Learning Environment and design and implementation will happen throughout FY21 and FY22 | A new integrated technology platform is expected in 2021 |
| PI4 | Development by the academy of a scalable and sustainable model for open scholarship in alignment with AU's <i>Strategic Research Plan</i> | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began webinar discussions with researchers on open science • Formulate a working group on open scholarship to explore application to AU and its <i>Strategic Research Plan</i> and examine strategies other Canadian universities have undertaken | 2021 |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| P15 | Development of a Research Data Management (RDM) plan based on the Tri-Agency RDM policy | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Research Data Management Librarian was hired A plan will be developed this fall with the RDM Librarian, the Research Centre and Faculty of Graduate Studies to raise awareness of RDM, the Tri-Agency policy, and issues related to RDM for our researchers. Workshops/webinars will be held to increase awareness, raise concerns, answer questions, and create a policy and procedures guide | No change |
| P16 | Test and evaluate promising innovations in digital pedagogy (Innovation, Design, Engineering, and Architecture [IDEA] Lab) | N/A | On hold. Requires investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of Phase I of the IDEA Lab, which includes provisioning cloud storage and assigning IT talent to R&D ideas is on hold Model for providing high-performance computing capabilities and services based on the needs of research-related stakeholders and partners on hold | TBD |

Expected Outcomes

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|-------------|---|--|
| E01 | Learning environment that supports and connects learners with diverse learning goals | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the <i>Imagine Learning Framework</i> providing strategic direction for faculty- and unit-level decisions about how to design, deliver, support, assess and continuously improve all aspects of the learning experience, is underway Virtual, home, and concentrated labs were offered in physics, chemistry, biology and microbiology | No change |
| E02 | Learners curate their own journey to achieve their personal learning goals | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above | No change |
| E03 | Diversified credit/non-credit opportunities, credentials, and complementary offerings | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A credentials framework is under development. PowerED™ launched 15 new non-credit courses across five certificate streams on topics including leadership, soft-skill development, digital transformation, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and accessibility 94 per cent of learners in a PowerED™ certificate said they would recommend this program to their peers | 2021 |
| E04 | Technology optimization through configuration and interoperability of relevant core systems | 2021–22 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AU is leveraging the AU Cloud and industry standard tools including Microsoft, AWS, Ellucian, and D2L. AU is optimizing by decommissioning stand-alone software and hardware, choosing enterprise class partners, and leveraging industry standard tools to improve interoperability | Rapid Cloud Migration to complete July 31, 2020, and the new integrated technology platform is expected in FY21 and FY22 |
| E05 | A scalable and sustainable open scholarship framework | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions have begun to increase the awareness of open scholarship among AU researchers A working group will be created to determine how to introduce open scholarship, define it, align it with the <i>Strategic Research Plan</i>, and formulate a policy and procedures guide | No change |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019-20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|---|--|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| E06 | Outcomes of the <i>Strategic Research Plan</i> achieved | 2022 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers have been active in the four strategic research theme areas • New partnerships have been formed with external groups/organizations • Research working groups have been formed under two of the research groups • Forums have been held to increase multidisciplinary research teams • A CRC nomination is under review for one of the research themes, "Disruptive Pedagogies". Currently there is no CRC at AU in this strategic research area | No change |
| E07 | Completion of Phase I of the IDEA Lab, which includes provisioning cloud storage and assigning IT talent to R&D ideas | N/A (dates were not provided in the CIP) | On hold. Requires investment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred | TBD |

Performance Measures

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| PM1 | Number of registered learners | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42,853 | Ongoing |
| PM2 | Prospective learners' unaided perception of quality | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94.5 per cent (UG), 95.6 per cent (GR) | Target: 91 per cent |
| PM3 | Percentage of applicants and/or market selecting AU as university of choice | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86 per cent | Target: 90 per cent |
| PM4 | Percentage of learners who would recommend AU | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Promotor Score: 43.2 per cent (UG) | Target: 50 per cent |
| PM5 | Percentage of learners who would recommend program | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95.7 per cent | TBD |
| PM6 | Percentage of learners who would recommend course | N/A | Increasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Promoter Score: 8.1 per cent (UG) | Target: 50 per cent |
| PM7 | Reputation Index for open scholarship, data, and scholarly achievements | N/A | Pending | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A (future metric) | No change |
| PM8 | Learner satisfaction with learning environment | N/A | Decreasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79.3 per cent (UG) | Target: 90 per cent |
| PM9 | Percentage of project spent on learner-facing technology solutions compared to percentage of project spent on staff-facing technology solutions | N/A | New metric, not previously tracked | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 per cent spent on learner-enabling solutions and 56 per cent spent on staff-enabling solutions | TBD |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| PM10 | a. Number of IDEA ideas generated b. IDEA stage-gate pass rates | N/A | On hold. Requires investment | • Deferred | N/A |

Table 11: Affordability Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes, Performance Measures and Results

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

Goals

| | | | | | |
|----|---|---------|-------------|---|-----------|
| G6 | All learners are welcome | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In FY 2019–20, AU welcomed 21,517 learners Net course registrations: 88,033 Created the 50th anniversary I-Care Bursaries to help students complete their programs Additional staffing resources in ASD to increase ability to respond to students' request Scholarship and awards distributed \$1.3 million in bursaries and scholarship to students | No change |
| G7 | Integrated, affordable, accessible, relevant, and up-to-date learning resources | 2020–21 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The completion of a learning resources inventory project provided an initial assessment of the extent to which learning resources are integrated, affordable, accessible, relevant, and up to date. This information will be used to guide operational enhancements and to inform the development of a <i>Learning Resources Strategy</i> | No change |

Priority Initiatives

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|-------------|--|-------------|
| PI1 | Develop new tuition model (including payment options, pricing model, and market intelligence input) | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A steering committee and a working group were created. Principles were developed and research was done on potential new tuition models | Q3 of 20–21 |
| PI2 | Develop a <i>Learning Resource Strategy</i> to ensure integrated, affordable, accessible, up-to-date, and high-quality learning resources across all courses and programs | 2020–21 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The <i>Learning Resource Strategy</i> creation is in progress for completion in 2020–21 | No change |

Expected Outcomes

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|------|-------------|--|--|
| E01 | Optimized student affordability in new tuition, fee, and financial support model | 2021 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A steering committee and a working group were created. Principles were developed and research was done on potential new tuition models | No change |
| E02 | Learners will find all the digital resources they need embedded within the flow of the learning experience | N/A | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of an Integrated Learning Environment is underway | A new integrated technology platform is expected in 2021 |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

Performance Measures

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|-------------|---|---------------------|
| PM1 | Affordability Index | N/A | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athabasca University is undertaking a comprehensive review of the entire tuition and fee structure at AU for submission to the Government of Alberta. This review will be done in conjunction with our learners and was initiated in 2019 for likely implementation in 2021 | 2021 |
| PM2 | Learner satisfaction with learning environment | N/A | Decreasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79.3 per cent (UG) | Target: 90 per cent |
| PM3 | Learner satisfaction with learning materials | N/A | Decreasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 74.3 per cent (UG) | |

Table 12: Co-ordination Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes, Performance Measures and Results

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

Goals

| | | | | | |
|----|--|---------|-------------|---|-----------|
| G8 | Partnerships that enable the creation of value | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019–20 was the first formalized year of activities for AU's newly established Partnerships and Collaborations unit within University Relations. Accomplishments include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Updated and finalized partnerships and collaborations policies and procedures > Finalized articulation agreement with Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute Associates in IT to AU's Bachelor of Science in Information Systems > Finalized new industry partnership with the Canadian Football League Alumni Association (CFLAA), representing 2,000 members > Finalized new industry partnership with Global Affairs Canada, representing 7,000 members > Finalized new partnership with the Canadian Gap Year Association, supporting learners who wish to take a purposeful break between high school and post-secondary > Finalized new dual-credit agreement with the Province of Saskatchewan to offer five AU courses to 27 school divisions > Renewed several strategic industry partnerships, including the Professional Hockey Players' Association (PHPA) and Canadian Olympic Committee | No change |
|----|--|---------|-------------|---|-----------|

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

Priority Initiatives

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|---------|-------------|--|-----------|
| PI1 | Pursue Campus Alberta partnerships that strengthen the system for learners and funders | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded Alberta Dual-Credit agreements with six new school divisions, including Black Gold Regional School Division, Edmonton Public Schools, Wolf Creek School Division, Prairieland School Division, Sturgeon School Division, and Northern Gateway Regional School Division AU signed an agreement with Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC) to improve access to education opportunities for northern Alberta students. GPRC will join AU's online learning platform, moving current courses online and developing new online courses. GPRC students will benefit from AU's expertise in online education and its cloud-hosted learning management system to access online courses and class content | No change |
| PI2 | Establish Community Relations Framework | 2020 | Complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement framework developed and implemented focusing on AU alumni, including AU program alumni and course alumni | Complete |

Expected Outcomes

| | | | | | |
|-----|--|---------|-------------|---|-----------|
| E01 | Expanded pathways to degree completion | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We updated or added 193 programs from 20 institutions (both national and international) through articulation agreements over the past year to help provide our learners with more pathways to degree completion | No change |
| E02 | Development and implementation of a comprehensive AU Community Relations Framework to actively engage internal and external community stakeholders | 2020 | Complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement framework developed and implemented focused on broadened definition of AU alumni. Key highlights include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fourteen in-person alumni and learner events were held across Canada, offering networking opportunity to 780 attendees > Over 400 graduates and 2,000 guests from across Canada attended AU's Convocation in June 2019 > Alumni Connect, Athabasca University's first learner and alumni networking and mentor program, was launched in fall of 2019, attracting over 600 participants > Annual Athabasca University Alumni Awards events recognizing the professional, personal and community achievements of AU alumni | Complete |

Performance Measures

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|---------|-------------|---|-----------|
| PM1 | Return on partnership agreements savings accrued from shared services | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the partnerships and collaborations unit with the addition of an administrator to help with operational challenges has resulted in the revision of policies, procedures, and workflows | No change |
| PM2 | Partnership success ratio | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts are ongoing to establish a partnership success ratio; metrics have been successfully identified, defined, and included within the broader metrics dashboard with intention of benchmarking a partnership success ratio by the end of the year Created a partnership incentive model encouraging partners to grow their involvement and enrolment in AU | No change |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|---|----------------------------------|
| PM3 | Community Relations Framework complete and implemented | 2020 | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AU focused on enriching the alumni community as a key stakeholder group through a new alumni strategic plan Community sponsorships are aligned to AU's <i>Imagine</i> strategy and integrated, lifelong learning experiences AU sponsored community initiatives supported by the broader AU learner community, for example, the United Way campaign, and the Alberta-wide "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" domestic violence awareness campaign, where AU Master of Counselling alumni actively provide service | No change |
| PM4 | Number of research projects with external partners | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2019–20, AU researchers were engaged in 36 externally funded research projects. Funding was secured from various sponsors, including industry, not-for-profit, community, government, and Tri-Agency (CIHR, SSHRC, NSERC) sources | Ongoing |

Table 13: Accountability Goals, Priority Initiatives, Expected Outcomes, Performance Measures, and Results

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|--------------|---|--|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Goals | | | | | |
| G9 | AU leaders, teams and individuals respond to opportunities and challenges with a lens focused on continuous improvement in all that we do | N/A (dates were not provided in the CIP) | Cycle in place, monitoring ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated planning, execution, assessment, and accountability cycle in place resulting in transparency and accountability; efficient and fiscally responsible allocation of resources in support of attainment of the university's strategic priorities | Complete and ongoing |
| G10 | Our university reflects a culture of inclusion | N/A | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched AU's Annual Employee Engagement Survey. Achieved a 2019 participation rate of 55 per cent (one per cent above benchmark) with an overall engagement score of 65 per cent Developed and implemented a new <i>Harassment, Violence and Sexualized Violence Policy</i>, harassment and violence procedure, and sexual violence procedure Created AU's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative, with an Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee comprising volunteers from under-represented groups. A key deliverable of the EDI Committee is the completion of AU's EDI Framework (2020) | Ongoing |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
|------|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|

Priority Initiatives

| | | | | | |
|------------|---|---------|----------------|---|----------------|
| PI1 | Develop strategically aligned Talent Management Framework of the employee lifecycle that guides both how employees enter the oneAU community and progress through their careers with AU (e.g., talent acquisition, performance management, learning and development, and succession planning) | N/A | In development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework deferred to 2020–21 | In development |
| PI2 | Implement an Integrated Resource Planning model (financial modelling and analysis framework for enhanced reporting, monitoring, and forecasting) | Ongoing | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AU entered its second full cycle of integrated planning in April 2019, which introduced a strong element of openness to the 2019–20 Integrated Resource Planning process: transparent, consultative, inclusive, and empowering. This approach built upon the foundational and operational plans that have been developed by the academic and operation units and are aligned to AU's priority portfolio in support of <i>Imagine</i> Finance and administration are in the process of implementing an enhanced quarterly monitoring process to provide superior information regarding why variances are occurring and/or are forecast to occur. This should enable redeployment of surplus funds in a more agile manner, to fund additional priorities or initiatives, if management is aware of projected surpluses sooner. Alternatively, it provides the opportunity to take corrective action in the face of existing or forecasted overspending of approved budgets | Ongoing |
| PI3 | Establish a <i>Data Governance Framework</i> | | In development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In responding to external developments, the university has shifted toward the creation of a <i>Data and Analytics Framework</i>. An early-stage draft has been created and is undergoing feedback with the steering committee prior to engaging the university community | |

Expected Outcomes

| | | | | | |
|------------|---|--|----------|--|----------|
| E01 | A defined, strategic human resource system | | Complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategic restructuring of the HR function was completed, including the creating of a Business Transformation Unit to facilitate and support university-wide change | Complete |
| E02 | Enabled <i>Talent Management Framework</i> for employees and leadership | | Complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a <i>Performance Planning and Accountability Framework</i> for excluded staff Developed a <i>Leadership Framework</i> with competencies aligned to AU's principles and values | Complete |

| Type | Description | Expected Completion Date (from CIP) | Status | Progress made in 2019–20 | Revised Expected Completion Date |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| E03 | Integrated planning, execution, assessment, and accountability cycle | April 2018 | Complete and ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athabasca University entered its first full cycle of integrated planning in April 2018. Integrated planning has introduced a strong element of openness to the AU's resource planning process and is central to the successful implementation of the <i>Imagine</i> plan | Ongoing |
| E04 | Transparency and accountability: efficient and fiscally responsible allocation of resources in support of attainment of the university's strategic priorities | N/A | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above | |
| E05 | Improved data accessibility, security, reliability, and availability | N/A | In development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Data Governance Framework</i> is under development | 2020–2021 |

Performance Measures

| | | | | | |
|-----|---|--|-------------|--|---------|
| PM1 | Trust and confidence in leaders | | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior leaders have painted a compelling vision for our organization – 49 per cent agree (+6 to benchmark) Overall senior leadership – 45 per cent favourable (-11 to benchmark) Senior management – 49 per cent favourable (benchmark N/A) Immediate management – 73 per cent favourable (+2 to benchmark) | Ongoing |
| PM2 | Financial modelling and analysis framework complete and implemented | | In progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2019–20 and 2020–21 Integrated Resource Plans were both developed through an integrated planning process An enhanced quarterly monitoring process was implemented in 2019–20 which will provide superior information regarding why variances are occurring and/or are forecast to occur AU is engaged in the development and implementation of a predictive financial revenue and cost modeling option that uses activity-based costing (ABC) methodology. ABC is an analytical model on relevant data sets that allocates direct and indirect costs to activities that are then assigned to programs (courses) and or services. To that end it analyzes costs based on activity instead of the faculty/department costs which have performed the activity. It will also provide information on spending per cost drivers, such as per student or course credit, for each activity | |
| PM3 | <i>Data Governance Framework</i> complete and implemented | | | | |

FINANCIAL AND BUDGET INFORMATION



Financial Highlights and Key Variances

The following discussion and analysis is supplemental to the information contained in Athabasca University's *Financial Statements, March 31, 2020* (Appendix A) and, as such, should be read in conjunction with the audited financial statements and their accompanying notes. AU's financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards.

This narrative provides management's analysis of AU's financial performance and other relevant information for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2020, with comparative results for the prior year, ended March 31, 2019, and identifies the key variances by comparing 2019–20 budget to 2019–20 actual.

Statement of Operations

Comparison of 2019–20 and 2018–19 Actual

As reported in the Statement of Operations, AU's revenue for the year ended March 31, 2020, exceeded expenses by \$3.1 million. Table 14 provides a comparison of the current year's results with those of the prior year.

Table 14: Operating Results: 2019–20 Actual Compared to 2018–19 Actual (Millions of Dollars)

| | 2019–20 Actual | 2018–19 Actual | Change Amount | Change Per Cent |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Revenue | \$ 150.7 | \$ 148.5 | \$ 2.2 | 1.5% |
| Expense | \$ 147.7 | \$ 134.3 | \$ (13.4) | 10.0% |
| Annual operating surplus | \$ 3.0 | \$ 14.2 | \$ (11.2) | |
| Endowment contributions and capitalized income | \$ 0.1 | \$ 0.1 | - | |
| Annual surplus | \$ 3.1 | \$ 14.3 | \$ (11.2) | |

Comparison of 2019–20 Budget to 2019–20 Actual

The \$3.1 million annual surplus arose mainly from savings of \$3.3 million in salaries and employee benefits. Other significant but offsetting variances were a favourable variance of \$10.5 million in fees and purchased services driven by a lower-than-budgeted spend related to externally restricted grants and internal strategic initiatives fund requirements, income from investments \$1.1 million higher than budget, offset by an \$11.8 million reduction in provincial grant revenue comprised of a \$2.3 million reduction in funding and \$9.5 million in externally restricted and special purpose grants not recognized as revenue, and \$1.0 million lower tuition and fees than budget. Table 15 shows the variance amounts from the current year's budget to actual results.

⁷ See Appendix A: *Athabasca University Financial Statements, March 31, 2019*, Note 7A, p. A21.

Table 15: 2019–20 Budget Compared to Actual Results (Millions of Dollars)

| | 2019–20 Budget | 2019–20 Actual | Variance Amount | Variance Per Cent of Total Budget |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Revenue | \$ 161.9 | \$ 150.7 | \$ (11.2) | (6.9)% |
| Expense | \$ 161.9 | \$ 147.7 | \$ 14.2 | 8.8% |
| Annual operating surplus | - | \$ 3.0 | \$ 3.0 | |
| Endowment contributions and capitalized income | - | \$ 0.1 | \$ 0.1 | |
| Annual surplus | \$ - | \$ 3.1 | \$ 3.1 | |

Revenue by Source

Revenue for the year ended March 31, 2020, was \$150.7 million, an increase of \$2.2 million (1.5 percent) over the prior year, and \$11.2 million (6.9 percent) less than the budget. Revenue sources are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 below.

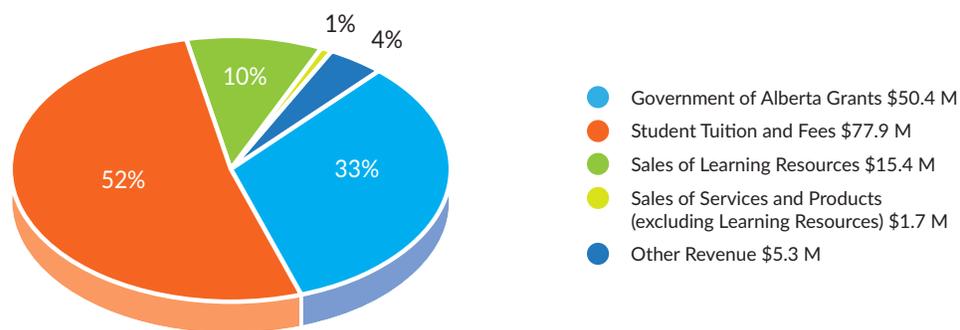
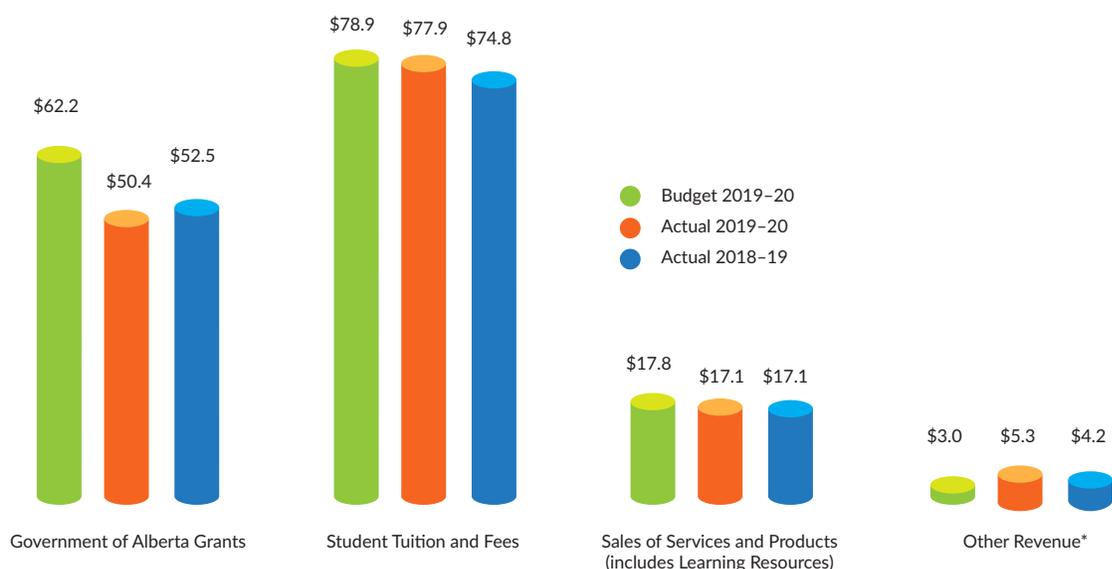


Figure 1: Major Revenue Sources as a Percentage of Revenue: 2019–20



* Other revenue includes: investment income, federal and other government grants, and donations and other grants.

Figure 2: Revenue by Source: 2019–20 (Millions of Dollars)

Government of Alberta grants include the Campus Alberta Operating Grant and several conditional and one-time grants. The \$2.1 million decrease over the prior year was due to a \$1.6 million reduction to the operating grant and a \$0.7 million reduction in Infrastructure Maintenance Program grant funding as a result of decreased funding from the Government of Alberta, partially offset by a \$0.2 million increase in the recognition of one-time externally restricted and special-purpose project grants. The unfavourable variance of \$11.8 million in 2019–20 compared to the budget was mainly due to the \$2.3 million funding reduction as mentioned above and \$9.5 million in externally restricted and special purpose grants not recognized as revenue, partially due to lower-than-budgeted receipt of government support, and the timing of the spending of grants in support of *Imagine*.

In-province tuition and mandatory non-instructional fees remained at the 2014–15 rates because of the provincial government's continued freeze on tuition and fees. The \$3.1 million increase over the prior year in student tuition and fees primarily resulted from growth in undergraduate and graduate registrations compared to the prior year. The unfavourable variance of \$1.0 million in 2019–20 compared to the budget was mainly due to lower-than-expected growth in undergraduate registrations.

Sales of services and products in 2019–20 is in line with the prior year. The \$0.7 million unfavourable variance in 2019–20 compared to the budget was mainly attributed to lower sales of learning resources due to lower-than-budgeted growth in undergraduate registrations.

Other revenue increased \$1.1 million compared to the previous year primarily due to higher investment income as a result of transitioning to a new portfolio investment mix. The \$2.3 million favourable variance in other revenue compared to 2019–20 budget was mainly attributed to higher-than-budgeted investment income due to one-time realized gains that resulted during the transition to the new investment portfolio mix as well as higher-than-budgeted interest income.

Expense by Object

Expenses for the year ended March 31, 2020, were \$147.7 million, an increase of \$13.4 million (10.0 percent) over the prior year, and \$14.3 million (8.8 per cent) less than budgeted. Expense amounts are presented by object in the notes to the financial statements. Expense by object is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 below.

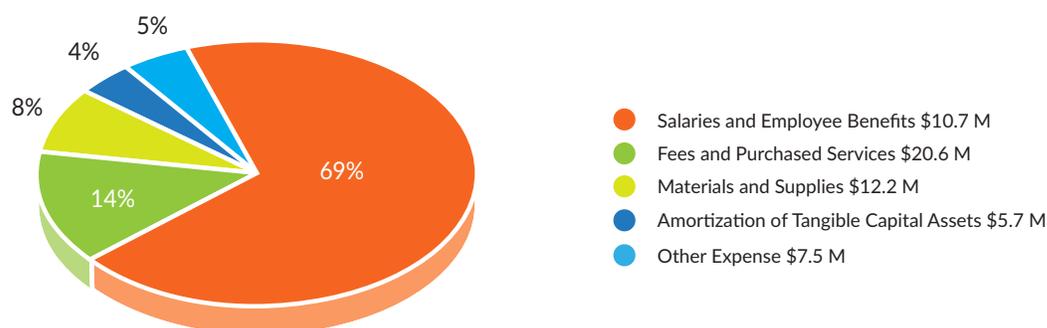
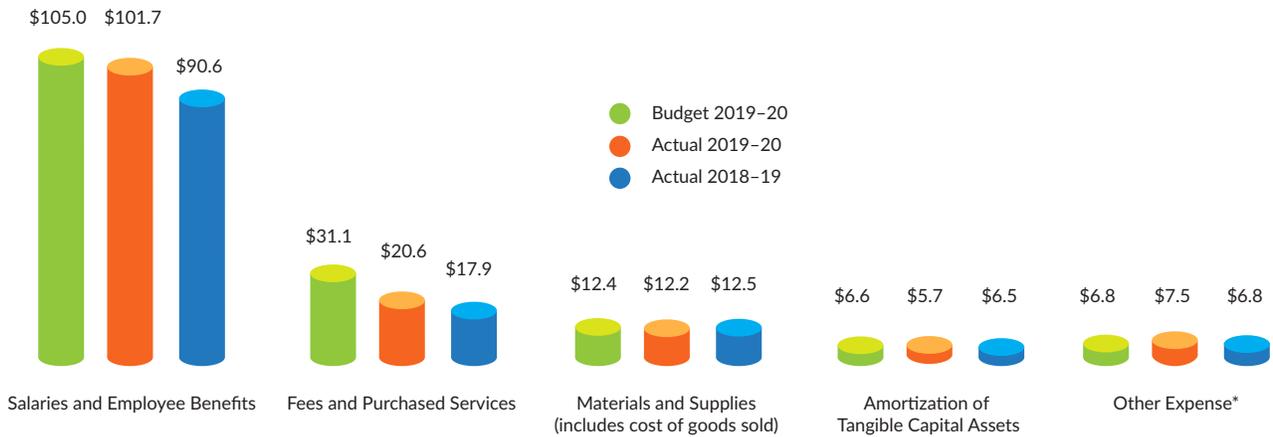


Figure 3: Expense by Object as a Percentage of Expense: 2019–20



* Other expense includes scholarships, bursaries, communication, travel, rental, insurance and utilities.

Figure 4: Expense by Object (Millions of Dollars)

At 69 per cent of total expenses, salaries and employee benefits represent AU’s largest expense. The \$11.1 million increase over the prior year is partly attributed to \$5.6 million higher expense in salaries due to the year-over-year impact of positions that were hired part way through the prior year, additional positions and reclassifications that occurred in 2019–20 in support of *Imagine* and in response to growth in student registrations and the Voluntary Workforce Transition Program offered to eligible employees in March 2020. The remaining increase of \$5.5 million is attributed to benefits expense primarily associated with the increased salaries noted above and year-end adjustments with respect to the University Academic Pension Plan (UAPP) liability (an increase of \$0.3 million in 2019–20 and a decrease of \$3.9 million 2018–19). The favourable variance of \$3.3 million in 2019–20 compared to the budget was primarily from higher-than-budgeted savings on vacant positions and lower-than-budgeted tutor salary rate.

Fees and purchased-services expenses are \$2.7 million higher than the prior year as a result of higher spending on contracted services for one-time externally funded special projects, plus increases in professional service costs, library subscriptions for internet access, and student recruitment advertising. The favourable variance of \$10.5 million in 2019–20 compared to the budget was largely driven by a lower-than-budgeted spend of \$8.1 million related to externally restricted grants and internal strategic initiatives fund requirements.

Materials and supplies expenses are \$0.3 million lower than the prior year mainly due to a one-time expense for the write-down of an internally funded capital project in the prior year. The favourable variance of \$0.2 million in 2019–20 compared to the budget was mainly attributed to a lower-than-expected level of purchases for learning resource materials associated with lower-than-budgeted growth in undergraduate registrations.

Expense by Function

AU reports expense amounts by function (Figure 5 and Table 16) in the Statement of Operations and uses the definitions in the Ministry of Advanced Education's *Financial Reporting Information System* as the basis for the categorization. The proportionate share of expense for each function remains relatively similar from year to year.

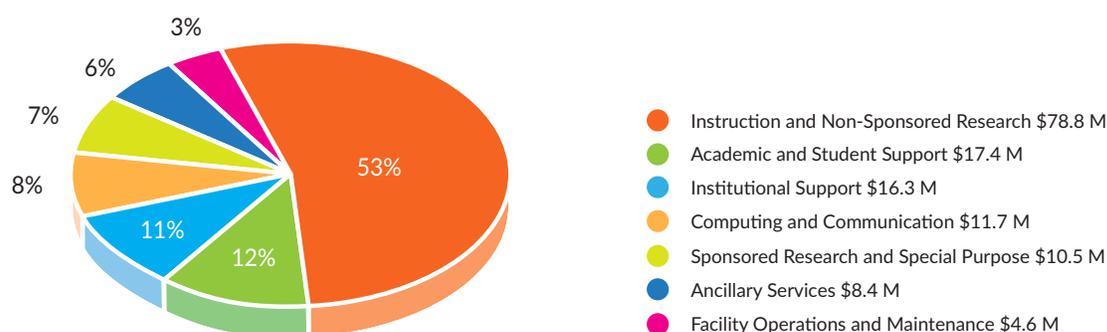


Figure 5: Expense by Function as a Percentage of Expense: 2019-20

Table 16: Expense by Function: 2019-20 Compared to 2018-19 (Millions of Dollars)

| | 2019-20 Actual | 2018-19 Actual | Change Amount | Change Per Cent |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Instruction and Non-Sponsored Research | \$ 78.8 | \$ 72.4 | \$ 6.4 | 8.8 % |
| Academic and Student Support | \$ 17.4 | \$ 15.7 | \$ 1.7 | 10.8 % |
| Institutional Support | \$ 16.3 | \$ 13.0 | \$ 3.3 | 25.4 % |
| Computing and Communication | \$ 11.7 | \$ 10.5 | \$ 1.2 | 11.4 % |
| Sponsored Research and Special Purpose | \$ 10.5 | \$ 9.5 | \$ 1.0 | 10.5 % |
| Ancillary Services | \$ 8.4 | \$ 8.2 | \$ 0.2 | 2.4 % |
| Facility Operations and Maintenance | \$ 4.6 | \$ 5.0 | \$ (0.4) | (8.0) % |
| Total Expense by Function | \$ 147.7 | \$ 134.3 | \$ 13.4 | |

The commentaries for the actual year-to-year and budget-to-actual comparisons in “Expense by Object” highlights are relevant throughout each of the “Expense by Function” highlights to some degree. That is, some factors such as the change in employee-benefits expense due to UAPP liability change are distributed across the functions. On the other hand, some expenses are specific to a function like student or community relations where the costs reside in institutional support.

“Instruction and Non-Sponsored Research” together with “Academic and Student Support” functions represent two-thirds of total expenses. These functions comprise the university’s academic activities: teaching and learning, scholarly activities, internally funded research and student support services.

“Institutional Support” includes activities that are considered overhead (i.e., not direct learning costs) such as student marketing, program advertising, community relations, employee recruitment, and general administration of university-wide services.

“Computing and Communication” support the infrastructure essential for digital delivery to students and the technical operation of a semi-virtual institution. It also includes amortization expenses on information technology capital assets such as computer hardware and software.

“Sponsored Research and Special Purpose” report activities that are externally funded by restricted grants and donations. These costs are offset in the Statement of Operations by a corresponding amount of revenue recognized.

“Ancillary Services” reports activities related to operations that provide products to students, namely learning resources such as textbooks and other educational materials.

“Facility Operations and Maintenance” supports the facilities (owned or leased) that house learning, research, administrative, and common areas. It includes building maintenance, rental, custodial services, utilities, and amortization of building and facility equipment.

Statement of Financial Position

The Statement of Financial Position reports a \$0.2 million decrease in net financial assets over the prior year and a \$0.7 million decrease in net assets.

Net Financial Assets

Net financial assets decreased by \$0.2 million to \$19.4 million at March 31, 2020, compared to a balance of \$19.6 million at March 31, 2019. This decrease is a result of a \$2.2 million decrease in financial assets and a \$2.0 million decrease in liabilities. Financial assets decreased primarily due to a decrease in the market value of the university's portfolio investments that occurred in March 2020. Liabilities decreased mainly due to a decrease in deferred revenue that is partially offset by an increase in accounts payable and employee future benefit liabilities.

The net financial assets amount is a measure of the university's ability to use its financial assets to cover existing liabilities and fund future operations. AU presents the net financial asset indicator in the manner directed by the Province of Alberta.

Net Assets

AU's net asset balance is an important indicator of the financial health of the university. As the difference between the total value of all assets less the total of all liabilities, the net asset indicator measure reports the economic position of the university from all years in operation.

The net asset balance (Table 17) is comprised of accumulated surplus and accumulated remeasurement gains (losses). Accumulated surplus includes the accumulated surplus from operations, investment in tangible capital assets and endowments.

Net assets decreased by \$0.7 million to \$31.2 million at March 31, 2020, compared to a balance of \$31.9 million at March 31, 2019 due to the year-end surplus of \$3.1 million which was offset by \$3.8 million remeasurement losses. Accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains decreased by \$3.8 million mainly because of the change in market value of unrestricted portfolio investments. The majority of the unrealized losses occurred in March 2020 as a result of the sudden decline in public equity markets as a reaction to the unprecedented COVID-19 health pandemic.

Table 17: Net Assets: 2019–20 Compared to 2018–19 (Millions of Dollars)

| Components of Net Assets | 2020 | 2019 | Change Amount | Per Cent Change |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Accumulated surplus from operations | \$ 21.7 | \$ 17.8 | \$ 3.9 | |
| Investment in tangible capital assets | \$ 9.4 | \$ 10.3 | \$ (0.9) | |
| Endowments | \$ 3.7 | \$ 3.6 | \$ 0.1 | |
| Accumulated surplus | \$ 34.8 | \$ 31.7 | \$ 3.1 | |
| Accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains | \$ (3.6) | \$ 0.2 | \$ (3.8) | |
| Total Net Assets | \$ 31.2 | \$ 31.9 | \$ (0.7) | (2.2)% |

Another indicator of financial health is accumulated surplus from operations, an amount that has not been spent on capital or committed to future expenditures. This indicator improved over the year, increasing by \$3.9 million, mainly due to the year-end surplus.

Investment in tangible capital assets decreased by \$0.9 million as a result of amortization greater than net capital asset acquisitions during the year. This component reports the net book value of tangible capital assets funded by the university.

Endowments increased by \$0.1 million from externally restricted donation contributions and the capitalization of investment income. They must be held in perpetuity and are not available for spending.

SELF-GENERATED REVENUE



Athabasca University has the following self-generated revenue enterprises:

Ancillary Services

Activity of this nature is supplementary to the university's primary operating activities of instruction and research. It exists to provide goods and services to students, faculty and staff. The general public may be served incidentally.

The university's department of Materials Management operates as a bookstore-style service. Based on the university's delivery model, when a student registers in a course the course resources, such as textbook or access to e-text, are made available to the student regardless of their location for a flat course material fee per course.

For the year ended March 31, 2020, this ancillary service generated \$9.4 million in revenue and reports \$0.04 million in net profit that takes into account direct and indirect costs of this enterprise.

Academic Services

This activity is an integral part of the university's educational functions; however, it is entrepreneurial in nature. The university's department of PowerED™, formerly Professional and Corporate Relations, is a revenue-generating unit that develops and delivers non-credit professional training, customized corporate services, and provides consulting and digital services to organizations and institutions that need support to move online.

PowerED™ courses are short, enriched learning experiences with immediate applicability to today's work environment. Learners achieve digital badges and certificates upon completion of program requirements. During the initial startup in 2019–20, investments for quality course development and other costs were made and the PowerED™ website launched in September 2019 with very positive response to the inaugural courses:

- Essential Skills for Leaders
- Leader Development Program
- Digital Transformation Leadership Certificate in Cloud
- Digital Transformation Leadership Certificate in Machine Learning
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification

The unit also began talks in early 2020 with Algoma University and Grande Prairie Regional College. These developed into partnerships that will see PowerED™ work with Algoma to move 185 courses online over the next five years and work with Grande Prairie to move 700 courses online and develop an additional 26 courses.

For the year ended March 31, 2020 this academic service generated \$0.22 million in revenue and reports \$1.12 million in net loss that takes into account direct and indirect costs of this enterprise for the initial startup.

ENROLMENT PLAN AND PROGRAM CHANGES



The enrolment plan presented below compares the estimated enrolments with the actual enrolment by program for the past three years. Enrolment is presented using Full-Load Equivalent (FLE).

Enrolment Report

Enrolment results by program and specialization for the past three years and a comparison of actual 2019–20 results with *Comprehensive Institutional Plan*: 2019–22 estimates are shown in Table 15.

Table 18: Enrolment Results 2017–18 to 2019–20 (Full-load Equivalents)¹

| Credential | Specialization | 2017–18 Actual | 2018–19 Actual | 2019–20 Estimate | 2019–20 Actual | 2019–20 Variance Estimate to Actual |
|---|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| University Certificate | Accounting | 40.3 | 36.8 | 39.5 | 30.3 | -9.2 |
| | Advanced Accounting | 3.4 | 5.3 | 5.2 | 6.9 | 1.7 |
| | Career Development ² | 2.4 | 3 | 1.4 | 0.6 | -0.8 |
| | Computers and Management Information Systems | 6.4 | 5.9 | 6.8 | 5.3 | -1.5 |
| | Computing and Information Systems | 11.8 | 12 | 12.8 | 12.1 | -0.7 |
| | Counselling Women | 4.4 | 5.4 | 4.8 | 6.1 | 1.3 |
| | E-Commerce ² | 2.7 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.4 | -0.1 |
| | English Language Studies ² | | | | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| | Finance | 5.2 | 7.1 | 7.9 | 7.4 | -0.5 |
| | French Language Proficiency | 2.7 | 3.9 | 5 | 3.9 | -1.1 |
| | Game Development and Programming ² | 4.2 | 4.5 | 2.9 | 2.5 | -0.4 |
| | Heritage Resources Management | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.2 | -0.3 |
| | Human Resources and Labour Relations | 30.7 | 25.7 | 29.6 | 22.3 | -7.3 |
| | Labour Studies ² | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0.5 | 0.2 | -0.3 |
| | Management Applications | 4.9 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 6.5 | 0.9 |
| | Management Foundations | 8.4 | 9.9 | 11.6 | 9.6 | -2.0 |
| | Marketing | 3.6 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.5 | 0.3 |
| | Public Administration | 6.2 | 8.1 | 9 | 8.1 | -0.9 |
| | Subtotal | | 139.5 | 142.2 | 149.5 | 129.1 |
| University Diploma | Arts | 4.1 | 5.6 | 6 | 5.4 | -0.6 |
| | Health Administration ² | 6 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| | Inclusive Education | 10.5 | 8.9 | 9.1 | 9.5 | 0.4 |
| | Subtotal | 20.6 | 19.3 | 18.7 | 19.2 | 0.5 |
| Bachelor of Administration² | Health Administration | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Industrial Relations and Human Resources | 0.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Management | 1.5 | 1 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| | Organization | 0.8 | 0.6 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| | Subtotal | 2.9 | 1.8 | 0 | 0.8 | 0.8 |

| Credential | Specialization | 2017-18 Actual | 2018-19 Actual | 2019-20 Estimate | 2019-20 Actual | 2019-20 Variance Estimate to Actual |
|---|---|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bachelor of Arts | Anthropology | 12.1 | 14 | 15.7 | 12.3 | -3.4 |
| | Canadian Studies ² | 3.2 | 3.3 | 2.1 | 0.9 | -1.2 |
| | English | 28 | 29 | 30.3 | 32 | 1.7 |
| | French | 7 | 7.1 | 6.6 | 7.2 | 0.6 |
| | History | 14.4 | 19 | 20.3 | 19.6 | -0.7 |
| | Humanities | 3.3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1.0 |
| | Information Systems ² | 4.8 | 4.3 | 3.1 | 2.5 | -0.6 |
| | Labour Studies | 2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 0.8 |
| | Political Economy | 7.3 | 7.5 | 7.3 | 11.2 | 3.9 |
| | Political Science | 13.8 | 14.2 | 14.4 | 16.5 | 2.1 |
| | Psychology | 169.1 | 188.9 | 199.1 | 223.1 | 24.0 |
| | Sociology | 14.6 | 21 | 21.8 | 27.2 | 5.4 |
| | Women's and Gender Studies | 6.8 | 9.2 | 9 | 8.6 | -0.4 |
| | Subtotal | | 286.4 | 321.8 | 333.9 | 367.3 |
| Bachelor of Arts (3-Year) | Anthropology ² | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 0.2 |
| | English | 16.9 | 16.9 | 16.8 | 22 | 5.2 |
| | French | 7.8 | 8.2 | 8.8 | 5.2 | -3.6 |
| | General | 17.5 | 22.7 | 24.3 | 20.8 | -3.5 |
| | History | 7.1 | 8.6 | 9.6 | 8.2 | -1.4 |
| | Humanities ² | 2.4 | 4.4 | 1.4 | 2.9 | 1.5 |
| | Information Systems ² | 4.6 | 4.8 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 0.3 |
| | Labour Studies ² | 1.7 | 1.8 | 1 | 0.3 | -0.7 |
| | Political Economy ² | 1.8 | 2.8 | 1 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| | Political Science ² | 7 | 6.8 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 0.2 |
| | Psychology | 54.4 | 57.4 | 60.5 | 75.1 | 14.6 |
| | Sociology | 16.1 | 17.6 | 17.6 | 19.4 | 1.8 |
| | Women's and Gender Studies ² | 3.9 | 4.3 | 2.3 | 4.1 | 1.8 |
| | Subtotal | | 143.6 | 158.9 | 152.2 | 170.3 |
| Bachelor of Commerce | Accounting | 242.6 | 243.6 | 249.6 | 248.5 | -1.1 |
| | Business Technology Management ³ | 7 | 7.5 | 7.6 | 17 | 9.4 |
| | Finance | 47.5 | 45.6 | 50.4 | 61.9 | 11.5 |
| | General | 72 | 72.4 | 86.3 | 77.9 | -8.4 |
| | Subtotal | 369.1 | 369.1 | 393.9 | 405.3 | 11.4 |
| Bachelor of General Studies | Applied Studies | 35.4 | 47 | 43.2 | 52.6 | 9.4 |
| | Arts and Science | 47.6 | 49.9 | 59.5 | 65.7 | 6.2 |
| | Subtotal | 83 | 96.9 | 102.7 | 118.3 | 15.6 |
| Bachelor of Health Administration | | 47.4 | 53.6 | 55.2 | 64.9 | 9.7 |
| Bachelor of Human Resources and Labour Relations | | 122.5 | 114.5 | 122.1 | 109.8 | -12.3 |
| Bachelor of Management | General | 31.9 | 35.8 | 34.8 | 39.6 | 4.8 |
| | Human Resources Management | 39.7 | 50.2 | 51.7 | 60.7 | 9.0 |
| | Indigenous Nations and Organizations | 1.5 | 3.1 | 3.1 | 4.5 | 1.4 |
| | Marketing | 30 | 34.5 | 30.2 | 36.8 | 6.6 |
| | Subtotal | 103.1 | 123.6 | 119.8 | 141.6 | 21.8 |

| Credential | Specialization | 2017-18 Actual | 2018-19 Actual | 2019-20 Estimate | 2019-20 Actual | 2019-20 Variance Estimate to Actual |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Bachelor of Management (3-Year) | | 157.5 | 169.3 | 180.3 | 172.7 | -7.6 |
| Bachelor of Nursing | Post-LPN | 365.2 | 322.8 | 311.3 | 311.5 | 0.2 |
| | Post-RN | 95.9 | 93.8 | 91.2 | 91.8 | 0.6 |
| | Subtotal | 461.1 | 416.6 | 402.5 | 403.4 | 0.9 |
| Bachelor of Professional Arts | Communication Studies | 47.3 | 42.2 | 44.1 | 43.9 | -0.2 |
| | Criminal Justice | 62.5 | 54.2 | 58.3 | 49.1 | -9.2 |
| | Governance, Law and Management | 11.5 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 16.6 | 0.6 |
| | Human Services | 57 | 63.9 | 65.2 | 73.2 | 8.0 |
| | Subtotal | 178.3 | 176.3 | 183.7 | 182.8 | -0.9 |
| Bachelor of Science | Applied Mathematics | 13.1 | 18.4 | 21.2 | 18.3 | -2.9 |
| | Architecture | 17 | 20.5 | 25.0 | 25.3 | 0.3 |
| | Computing and Information Systems | 84.8 | 93 | 100.5 | 94.8 | -5.7 |
| | General | 39.2 | 40 | 39.9 | 37.6 | -2.3 |
| | Human Science | 40.4 | 48.5 | 56.5 | 52.7 | -3.8 |
| | Subtotal | 194.5 | 220.4 | 243.2 | 228.7 | -14.5 |
| Post-Baccalaureate Certificate | Data Analytics | 6 | 4.5 | 5.1 | 6.75 | 1.7 |
| | Information Security | 3 | 1.8 | 2.5 | 1.25 | -1.3 |
| | Information Technology Management | 3.8 | 4.8 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 0.5 |
| | Instructional Design | 2.3 | 4 | 2.8 | 6.7 | 3.9 |
| | Technology-Based Learning | 4.6 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 0.2 |
| | Subtotal | 19.6 | 19.1 | 19.5 | 24.6 | 5.1 |
| Post-Baccalaureate Diploma | Architecture | 7.5 | 7.9 | 9.4 | 8.3 | -1.1 |
| | Counselling | 17.2 | 14.5 | 14.1 | 7.0 | -7.1 |
| | Distance Education Technology | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 0.8 | -1.0 |
| | Heritage Resources Management | 8.8 | 8.5 | 9.2 | 5.8 | -3.4 |
| | Instructional Design | 3.8 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 3.7 | -0.8 |
| | Leadership and Management | 0.8 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 0.9 | -0.9 |
| | Legislative Drafting | 7.9 | 8.0 | 8.2 | 7.3 | -0.9 |
| | Management | 37.6 | 34.1 | 36.4 | 30.0 | -6.4 |
| | Subtotal | 85.2 | 80.3 | 85.2 | 63.9 | -21.3 |
| Master of Arts (Interdisciplinary Studies) | | 140.0 | 139.2 | 154.2 | 162.2 | 8.0 |
| Master of Business Administration | Hockey Management | 8.8 | 7.3 | 9.6 | 5.3 | -4.4 |
| | Business Administration | 292.7 | 289.8 | 278.6 | 277.7 | -0.9 |
| | Subtotal | 301.5 | 297 | 288.2 | 282.9 | -5.3 |
| Master of Counselling | Art Therapy | 17.8 | 19.5 | 14.9 | 18 | 3.1 |
| | Career Counselling | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | Counselling Psychology | 227.3 | 228.3 | 194.7 | 250.5 | 55.8 |
| | School Counselling | 4.3 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 0.5 | -3.1 |
| | Subtotal | 251 | 251.3 | 213.2 | 269 | 55.8 |
| Master of Education (Distance Education) | | 101.9 | 97.0 | 99.8 | 87.4 | -12.4 |

| Credential | Specialization | 2017-18 Actual | 2018-19 Actual | 2019-20 Estimate | 2019-20 Actual | 2019-20 Variance Estimate to Actual |
|--|------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Master of Health Studies | | 137.3 | 139.5 | 137.3 | 156.7 | 19.4 |
| Master of Nursing | Generalist | 369.8 | 384.6 | 383.1 | 428.4 | 45.3 |
| | Nurse Practitioner | 262.9 | 278.3 | 276.2 | 272.6 | -3.6 |
| | Subtotal | 632.7 | 662.9 | 659.3 | 701.1 | 41.8 |
| Master of Science (Information Systems) | | 59.5 | 48.2 | 48.4 | 52.9 | 4.5 |
| Post-Master's Certificate | Counselling Psychology | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.7 | 0.8 | -1.0 |
| Post-Master's Diploma | Nurse Practitioner | 9.9 | 13.1 | 12.8 | 14.64 | 1.8 |
| Doctor of Business Administration | | 31.5 | 30.5 | 32.4 | 31 | -1.4 |
| Doctor of Education (Distance Education) | | 44.5 | 47.5 | 55.5 | 52.5 | -3.0 |
| Open Studies ⁴ | | 4,612.7 | 5,163.5 | 5,249.2 | 5,303.0 | 53.8 |
| | Total | 8,738.8 | 9,375.0 | 9,514.2 | 9,716.9 | 202.7 |
| | Per cent Change | 1.10% | 7.30% | | 3.65% | |

¹ All figures presented are rounded to tenths. Because of this rounding, subtotals and totals may vary slightly from the sum of the program enrolment figures and estimates listed, and variances (Column 7) may vary slightly from the difference between the 2019-20 estimate (Column 5) and 2019-20 actual (Column 6).

² Enrolment to this program is closed.

³ Formerly e-Commerce.

⁴ Open studies includes qualifying, non-declared and visiting students.

Programming

AU continues to consider new proposals in the context of a new program development framework. Proposals that align with AU's *Imagine* plan and the Ministry of Advanced Education's priorities will be submitted to the ministry within the year.

Curriculum renewal initiatives include the following:

- The Faculty of Business is closing its four-year Bachelor of Management program and moving two of its majors, Marketing and Human Resources Management, to its Bachelor of Commerce program as of July 1, 2020.
- An additional major, Indigenous Business, opened within the Bachelor of Commerce in July 2020.

RESEARCH, APPLIED RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY



As one of four Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities in Alberta, AU has an extensive research program guided by the university's *Imagine* plan and *Strategic Research Plan*, complementing our online programs and learning experiences.

AU is home to four Canada Research Chairs (in digital disruption and organizational transformation; hydrological sustainability; community, identity and digital media; and health promotion and chronic disease management), two Campus Alberta Innovation Program Chairs (in hydroecology and environmental health; and computational sustainability and environmental analytics), a UNESCO/ICDE Chair in open educational resources; and a Commonwealth of Learning Chair in emerging technology in open and distance learning.

Increasing the research capacity and success of AU faculty members has been the priority for the Research Centre over the past two years. Adaptive and innovative research to support our research-intensive mandate and support our *Imagine* plan was facilitated using various methods. AU implemented strategies at a variety of organizational levels, internally and externally, to create maximum impact, and established new memberships with external organizations. These included research funders and groups that partnered with AU researchers because of the importance of the research topic for their organization. AU researchers took advantage of these new opportunities, which resulted in successful research funding. Meetings with key external stakeholders to inform them of the university's research capabilities and the benefits of partnering for both parties led to new partnerships. Meetings with provincial and federal government officials occurred to emphasize AU's research expertise and resulted in the signing of memorandums of understanding. The AU researchers and the Research Centre were focused on building the university's reputation for scholarly activity, dissemination, and impact by strengthening research areas of excellence.

Internally, AU held 31 grant-writing workshops, research webinars, and virtual interactive sessions with researchers across the institution. The Research Centre also organized individual and small multidisciplinary meetings between the associate vice-president research, industry liaison officer, AU researchers, and external potential collaborators. The Research Centre purchased a software platform called PIVOT to enable researchers to retrieve and automatically receive information on current external research funding opportunities individualized to their research area. Leveraging this technology will enable researchers to more actively investigate funding opportunities and to be aware of the multiple grant deadlines.

Researchers submitted 62 research applications for external funding opportunities. More than \$4.9 million of research funding from external sources was successfully awarded with AU researchers as the principal investigators. A number of grant outcomes are still outstanding due to review delays related to COVID-19. AU experienced a higher success rate for external funding than in the previous year. Unfortunately, the total research revenue declined due to the retirement of the platform lead of AU's Alberta Innovates Strategy for Patient Oriented Research (SPOR) grant and the resultant transfer of the remaining funds to another university.

Eight new external partnerships with funders were created. These partnerships enable the creation of value and align with *Imagine's* strategic direction. AU also initiated new collaborations with government ministries.

In terms of internal funding, researchers were made more aware of the various internal funding opportunities and given more opportunity to apply for the funding. The Academic Research Fund deadlines for submission were increased from two per year to four per year, resulting in 39 applications in 2019–2020 compared to 25 in the previous year. These funds are extremely helpful for mid-career researchers who have had gaps in their research program, and for seed funding for early career researchers from which to build their research program. The AVPR Special Opportunities Fund is designed to help build long-term research capacity and support research not normally funded by the Academic Research Fund. There were five applications in 2019–2020 compared to zero in the previous year.

AU is committed to a culture of inclusion in which every individual is valued. AU President Dr. Neil Fassina signed *The Dimensions Charter* in July 2019. This gave rise to the implementation of an institution-wide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiative and the creation of a draft *EDI AU Action Framework*. AU hired an external EDI consulting company to help AU begin the process of embedding EDI in all institutional practices. There were 48 staff who volunteered to become involved in developing and implementing an EDI action plan. The associate vice-president research was awarded a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant to implement the EDI Action Plan.

Four Strategic Research Themes

The *Strategic Research Plan* identifies four research theme areas: environmental and societal dynamics of sustainability; disruptive pedagogies; digital futures; and culture, health, and well-being. It closely aligns with the *Imagine* plan strategic themes.

1. ***Environmental and societal dynamics of sustainability*** (aligns with Alberta Research and Innovation Framework [ARIF] emerging technologies, environment and climate adaptation, and energy, and greenhouse gas mitigation targets)

Two of AU's Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and two Campus Alberta Innovation Program Chairs have research programs that involve assessing and monitoring the environment in northern Alberta. They hold national and provincial research grants. Their work includes assessing water, soil, and air sampling for the effects of both climate change and oil sands exploration. AU's northern observatory collects extensive data on the effects of auroras on the electrical grid in partnership with the University of Calgary and with researchers in the United States and Japan. This research contributes to the knowledge of social, economic, and environmental impact on Alberta's northern communities and holds implications for communities in other parts of Canada.

A memorandum of understanding was signed by Athabasca University and Alberta Environment and Parks recognizing the mutual benefits of co-operation in applied scientific research and training. Alberta Environment and Parks, the Indigenous Community-based Monitoring Advisory Committee, and AU began preliminary discussions on the establishment of effective mechanisms for Indigenous participation in the design, implementation, and governance of the Oil Sands Monitoring Program. This MOU will create a learning and research space respectful of the knowledge and values of Indigenous peoples through cultural affirmation and academic excellence.

AU researchers submitted proposals to take advantage of the full Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) – John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF) and CFI Innovation Fund allocations. Two out of three JELF proposals received funding at the first deadline. Receipt of this funding will strengthen the research infrastructure and illustrates AU's ability to remain adaptable and innovative when studying current research questions.

2. ***Disruptive pedagogies***, and
3. ***Digital futures*** (both align with ARIF emerging technologies, and health)

AU received a new CRC allocation in 2018, completed the recruitment process in 2019, and submitted the nomination in October 2019. The nomination is currently under review with a decision pending in October 2020. The strategic focus for the CRC is disruptive pedagogies. This research focus calls into question traditional views of education and training, including commonly held assumptions about how people learn and how learning can be nurtured and measured. The research focus of the position aligns perfectly with

the university's Strategic Research Plan and the *Imagine* strategic plan. The position will be based out of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences with an expectation that collaboration take place across all faculties. The opportunity for this new research emphasis reflects the goal of teaching and learning success, in which new pedagogies, ideas, technologies and processes that support learning and research are identified, tested, deployed, assessed and retired.

AU's reputation for balanced disciplinary and interdisciplinary research is illustrated by the research groups that have been formed to address digital futures and emerging technologies. A multidisciplinary team, funded by Callysto is using an integrated STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) approach to introduce high-school students to the notion of design through three perspectives via a series of process-based learning lessons and activities. The goal is to use the concept of design to teach students to learn and apply computational thinking. This team consists of faculty members from mathematics, biology, physics, architecture, computing science, and education. This research has implications not only for Canada but worldwide. It addresses a number of the United Nations sustainable development goals, and exemplifies AU's goal to optimize social, economic, and environmental impact on communities.

An immersive technology research group has been formed as well as a massive open online course (MOOC) research group and a learning analytics research group involving researchers from multiple disciplines and external collaborators. Extended reality, artificial intelligence, visualization technologies, and use of knowledge graphs comprise components of the research projects arising from the joint efforts. Membership on the board of directors of ELIXIR Simulations, the Pacific Institute for Mathematical Sciences (PIMS), the New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (NDRIO), and collaboration with Amazon Web Services (AWS) expand the opportunities for AU researchers for complex research data analysis and high-speed computing.

Open access to research data, findings, and publications is important to AU and aligns with the university's strategy to be known for open scholarship, data, and scholarly achievement. The Research Centre, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, IT Services, and Library and Scholarly Resources are working together on providing an open-access repository for all AU research data, student research, and faculty scholarly work. Creating a closer link between the Research Centre and the IT unit will enable better understanding of the IT needs of researchers and facilitate access to specialized computing resources.

4. ***Culture, health, and well-being*** (aligns with ARIF targets of environment and climate adaptation, and health)

Partnerships that enable the creation of value are critical to a research-intensive university and to the development of scholarly activity. AU received a Certificate of Good Animal Care in 2019 from the Canadian Council for Animal Care. A Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Alberta (U of A) has enabled AU researchers to use U of A's aquatic facilities under the creation of a joint AU/U of A Animal Care Ethics Committee.

Several of AU's researchers have initiated international collaborations related to culture and heritage, with international student and faculty exchanges and a symposium. These researchers are building collaborative and coordinated environments and networks to achieve excellence and greater understanding throughout the world. AU is building and fostering relationships regardless of location.

A number of AU's early-career researchers are examining the effectiveness of health services on vulnerable populations, such as transgender youth, homeless individuals, illicit drug users and their use of safe injection sites, and high-risk pregnancy.

As the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions hit Canada in March 2020, AU needed to be adaptable to this devastating event and examine its effects on individuals and communities and look for ways to prevent, delay, or treat the negative consequences. The Research Centre created a special call for research proposals that would examine the effects of social isolation and social distancing on students and their families, AU staff, on pedagogy, and other areas of critical influence. Nine proposals were submitted as of June 1, 2020.

Athabasca University is proud of its research-intensive mandate. AU researchers strive to excel in their research and other scholarly work, actively seek out external collaborations to build their research programs and create relevant research programs that will change the lives of individuals and communities connected to the university. The researchers, through their diligent work in analysing ways to address the problems of our society, strive to adapt and create new knowledge that will have a social, economic, and environmental impact on communities.



**REGIONAL
STEWARDSHIP,
FOUNDATIONAL
LEARNING AND
UNDER-REPRESENTED
LEARNERS**

Indigenous Communities

AU continues its outreach to Indigenous communities, providing opportunities for college students to ladder their diplomas to degrees. The university has articulation agreements with four Alberta First Nations post-secondary institutions:

- University nuhelot'jine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills
- Maskwacis Cultural College
- Red Crow Community College
- Yellowhead Tribal College

In total, 289 courses from these institutions are eligible for transfer credit in AU certificate, diploma, and degree programs.

Each year, AU participates in events directed to Indigenous students through the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Council, the Alberta Aboriginal Recruitment Network and First Nations career fairs and trade shows. These events provide a platform to showcase the university's open admissions policy and the opportunities it provides for Indigenous learners to earn a degree without leaving their home communities. The University Relations division has increased its focus on collaborating with these First Nations institutions and organizations to better serve the educational needs of Indigenous learners in the years ahead. University Relations strategically advertises in Indigenous magazines, print and digital, to highlight the partnerships with Alberta-based First Nations post-secondary institutions and regularly participates in community-based recruitment fairs to better serve the needs of Indigenous learners.

AU's Faculty of Business has also taken steps to bring new learning opportunities to Indigenous learners. Through a partnership struck with the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Alberta, they jointly provide Bachelor of Commerce degree programming to Indigenous learners who access courses online via digital course delivery overlaid with additional face-to-face class time provided by AU professors and AFOA mentorship support. This hybrid delivery method was built to address systemic barriers faced by Indigenous learners prior to university study. The new approach enables learners to access supports from professors, mentors, and the camaraderie of fellow classmates to meet the rigorous academic requirements of a degree program.

Nukskahtowin – Meeting Place

The *Imagine* plan commits AU to engaging in a journey of reimagining the relationship between the university and Indigenous learners, scholars, nations, communities, institutions, and organizations. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, AU is creating new ways of engaging with Indigenous communities.

In recognition of the self-determined process initiated in early 2018, September 2018 marked a special time for AU, when a naming ceremony occurred, changing the name of the Centre for World Indigenous Knowledge and Research to Nukskahtowin, which means "meeting place." Elder Dr. Maria Campbell chose the name.

In the months that followed, Nukskahtowin undertook the early development of a plan that would guide the centre's activities over the coming years. Working from a draft of this plan, the members of Nukskahtowin turned to engage the AU community in February 2020. In the spirit of Indigenous ways of knowing, the engagement process was called Kiyokatowin which means "visiting." Invitations were sent to all AU staff, academic and administrative, via email and four consultations were held in person at all four locations of Athabasca University. The 2020 *Nukskahtowin Plan* represents the integration of perspectives from both Nukskahtowin and all interested AU community members who participated in Kiyokatowin. It is part of the ongoing relationship-building of *kwayskahsatsowin* (conciliation) and incorporates all viewpoints presented at the Kiyokatowin sessions. The *Nukskahtowin Plan* encompasses the following four goals:

- Developing a cultural framework
- Creation of an ethical space
- Naturalization of Indigenous knowledge, and
- Indigenous research opportunities

As part of AU's ongoing efforts to incorporate Indigeneity within the university, Elder Campbell embarked on a pilot project of presenting Indigenous cultural teachings to a group of AU staff and faculty. The first group completed the first set of teachings and Elder Campbell will be embarking on another project with them.

Partnerships and Collaborations

AU successfully structured the creation of a separate Partnership and Collaboration unit within Prospective Student Relations (University Relations), with the addition of Manager, Partnership and Collaborations and Partnership and Recruitment Administrator positions to help lead strategic partnership development efforts.

The new unit has successfully operationalized AU's formal approach to partnership and collaboration development, including revising and updating legacy policies, procedures, and related workflows. The unit's portfolio focuses on expanding AU's partnership network, as outlined in AU's *Imagine* plan, within these learner audiences: private, public, and corporate industries, and high school dual credit.

The unit seeks to create strategic partnerships with reputable organizations that leverage AU's unique position and ability to offer integrated, lifelong learning opportunities to their respective members.

Private, Public, and Corporate Industries

Highlights for 2019–20 include two new strategic partners: the Canadian Football League Alumni Association and Global Affairs Canada. Together, these partners represent 9,000 members who are able to use additional benefits to overcome typical barriers to enrolment.

In addition to these agreements, AU partnered with: the Canadian Gap Year Association, a national organization that seeks to provide educational flexibility to their members who want to take a purposeful break between high school and post-secondary education; the Professional Hockey Players' Association; and the Canadian Olympic Committee.

Collectively, these partnerships represent a unique opportunity for AU to expand innovative recruitment and marketing activities to drive enrolment growth among thousands of members within the partnership network.

High School Dual Credit

AU continued to build dual-credit partnerships with Alberta school divisions, onboarding six new school divisions in 2019–20. AU is now partnered with nine public school divisions within Alberta, which represents approximately 21 per cent of Alberta public school divisions.

AU continued its unique partnership initiative with Edmonton Public Schools, offering architectural course experiences adapted from AU's Architectural Design Studies course to interested high school learners in a blended, hands-on learning experience. The experience was a celebrated success, with learners earning both high-school and university credits in the process.

AU reaches beyond Alberta to build meaningful partnerships. This past year, AU partnered with the province of Saskatchewan to offer dual-credit programming to 27 Saskatchewan school divisions.

AU is committed to growing the high-school dual-credit portfolio and providing young, interested learners the opportunity to earn university credit while still in high school.

INTERNATIONAL -IZATION



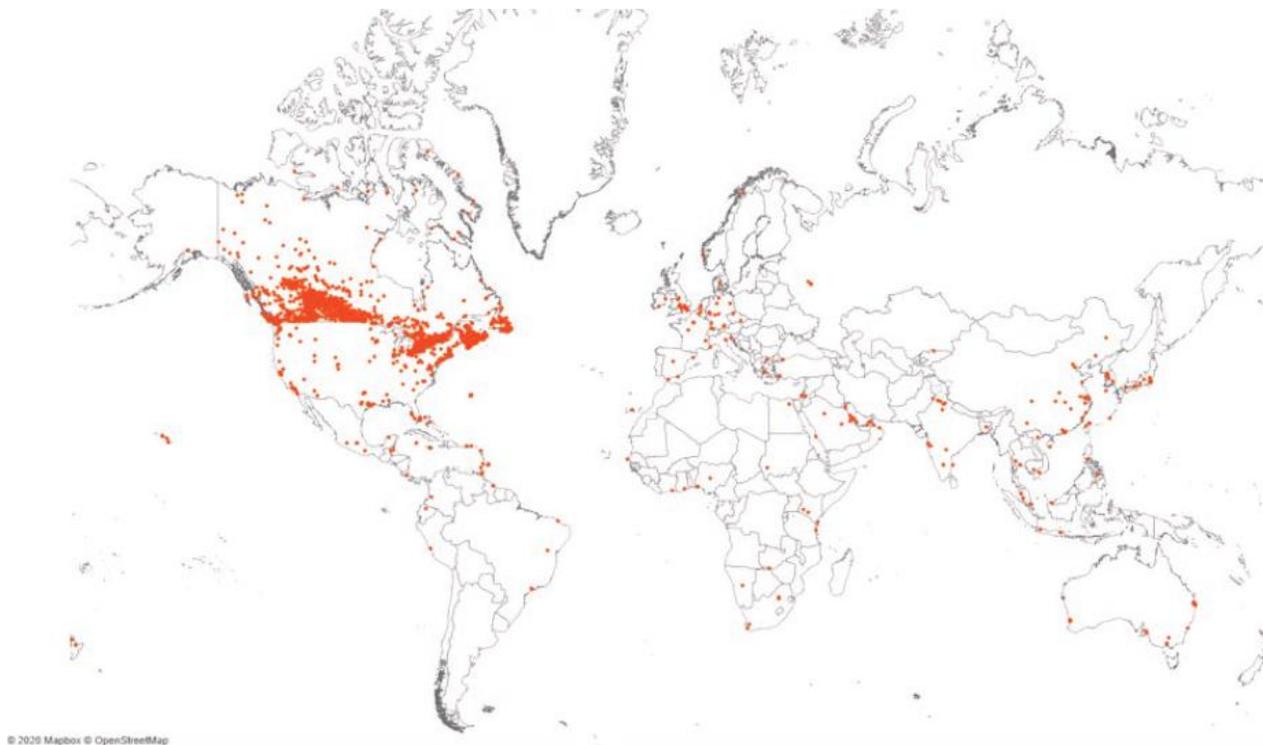
International learners, drawn from over 90 countries in 2019–20, make up about two per cent of AU's undergraduate population and three per cent of its graduate students. AU's vision is to break down barriers and expand the concept of internationalization.

A new framework for internationalization at AU is complete, aligning the institution's internationalization efforts with the *Imagine* plan to facilitate an integrated approach to global learning. As Canada's online university, there are opportunities to deepen and enhance global engagement. Over the years, AU has partnered with other universities and research institutions in many parts of the world. AU's *International Framework* ties these efforts together and aims to extend AU's global footprint in innovative ways.

Given the increasingly competitive nature of international education and externally supported research partnerships, AU will be focusing on activities that can deliver value in ways that competitors cannot.

Moreover, AU's efforts need to be focused on a limited set of priorities, focusing on areas where we can make the biggest difference and have the biggest impact. Work is underway to operationalize the framework.

The map below showcases the distribution of AU learners around the world.



CAPITAL PLAN UPDATE



Capital preservation, expansion, and new or upgrade projects at AU primarily involve information technology but also include traditional facilities and other physical infrastructure. AU's *Summary Capital Plan* addresses both the short- and long-term capital priorities.

Information Technology Infrastructure

The Information Technology team continued to focus on providing consistent support of existing production systems and technology tools in 2019–20, including software and hardware upgrades to stabilize older systems planned for decommissioning as new systems and solutions are selected to support AU's new *Imagine Learning Framework*. IT also focused on key RISE (IT strategic plan) deliverables that will enable AU to support learners on their future learning journeys. Training of all IT team members on Amazon Web Services (AWS) and other AU cloud initiatives provided the critical knowledge and skills to create the new learning framework's Integrated Learning Environment in the AU cloud.

At year end, IT was on schedule to complete the initiatives funded for Year 1 by the Coates Grant provided by Advanced Education in July 2018. The following projects were completed as of July 31, 2020:

- Hiring of critical IT resources, such as AU's Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), experienced in digital user-experience transformation, continued
- Ongoing training for IT and other AU employees in secure cloud architecture, cloud development, and cloud infrastructure completed by all AU IT personnel
- Implemented and evolved lean change management and lean digital governance processes
- Implemented digital solutions to support the student experience:
 - > new AU cloud architecture on the AWS secure cloud
 - > full turnkey partner solution for professional development courses' online delivery via PowerED™
 - > cybersecurity reviews, penetration tests, tools, and enhancements to the AU firewall architecture and disaster recovery process
 - > completed a pilot program and launched a second-phase program to prevent AU employees from falling for phishing attempts using social media reminders and just-in-time cybersecurity training
 - > created full backup for students and staff in O365 and Teams environment for better availability and risk management
- All AU on-premise data across Alberta campus and office locations has been migrated into the AU Cloud powered by AWS, marking a historical first. AU is the first Canadian university to move all of its previous decentralized on-premise infrastructures, architectures, file shares, and servers supporting university operations to one secure, governed, and well-architected cloud infrastructure with near-instant, coast-to-coast disaster recovery implemented for all university business systems.

In 2020, all training and process improvements will continue so all IT and other AU employees have access to continuous skills upgrading to support the university's cloud and code campus.

IT also completed critical software updates in 2019–20, using operating funds to keep the environment up to date to preserve and enhance AU's ability to deliver the experiences needed by team members and learners.

IT leveraged existing computing resources to support all students and staff during the COVID-19 lockdown including providing 200 laptops for traditional on-premise workers in four days. By leveraging Amazon Workspaces powered by the AU cloud, IT was able to deliver secure end-user devices and a computing environment where students and staff were able to continue their work uninterrupted despite the COVID-19 quarantine restrictions.

IT anticipates system implementation of our Integrated Learning Environment in 2020 and 2021 with decommissioning of legacy technologies and unnecessary systems and back office processes. A number of *Imagine* and *RISE* projects were developed, prioritized, and evaluated, with implementation and integration into the AU cloud also anticipated over the next two years.

Facilities and Other Physical Infrastructure

In 2019–20, in the absence of Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP) funding, AU focused on minor upgrades to existing infrastructure to ensure that the university meets the health and safety needs of employees and the operational requirements of academic, research and administrative units. Projects carried out included the following:

- enhanced security systems for the Athabasca campus
- equipment and vehicle replacements
- fitness equipment upgrades
- library collections additions, and
- library shelving for the AU Records Centre.

As AU continues to transform, careful consideration is being given to determining the future physical space and real-estate requirements to support AU as a digital-first, global leader in open, flexible, and distributed education.

AU continues to move towards the development of a purposeful and supported virtual organizational structure through technology, infrastructure, and social processes as stated as a 2020 priority outcome.

In moving in this direction, AU has been planning to develop a workplace and space plan to meet AU's needs. A key phase of this has been incorporating employee input and reflecting best practice in the development of principles, criteria, and concepts that are focused on a goal of high-quality service to our learners. The directions coming out of the development of a workplace strategy will enable AU to identify its short-, mid- and long-term real-estate requirements and strategy for Athabasca as well as its leased properties in Edmonton and Calgary. As work on this initiative is continuing, it was decided to renew existing leases in Edmonton for a two-year period, rather than move forward with greater Edmonton area space consolidation at this stage. The IDEA Lab project, which was dependent on external capital funding, was also deferred due to not receiving funding and its linkage to the need to first complete the *Long-range Development and Land Use Plan*.

Tables 19 and 20 below show progress on and changes to AU capital projects identified in the *Comprehensive Institutional Plan: 2019–22*.

Table 19: Type of Capital Project and Funding

| Type | Project Description | Total Project Cost (thousands of dollars) | Funding Sources ¹ | Funding Received to Date and Sources | Revised Funding Sources |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Priority Projects (Top Three Capital Priorities) | | | | | |
| New | Independent Third-Party Recommendation (Hyper Personalized Learning Experience) | \$ 9,218 | 86 per cent GOA | Requested capital grant not received | Reallocated other GOA grants to fully fund project |
| Expansion | Greater Edmonton Area Space Consolidation Solution | \$ 750 | AU | N/A | N/A |
| New | Independent Third-Party Recommendation IDEA Lab | \$ 1,427 | 100 per cent GOA | None | Project deferred pending development of a Long-range Development and Land Use Plan |
| Other Projects | | | | | |
| Expansion | Student Information System Replacement incorporating Student Relationship Management | \$ 2,000 | 100 per cent GOA | Requested capital grant not received | Reallocated other GOA grants to fully fund project |
| Preservation | AU Main Campus Building Major Systems Upgrade | \$ 2,760 | 100 per cent GOA | None | Completed deliverables were less than planned due to IMP funding delay. Critical building and security upgrades were funded internally by AU |
| Preservation | Managed Security Implementation | \$ 8,580 | 17 per cent GOA | Requested capital grant not received | Deferred to fiscal 2021, to be funded internally |
| Preservation | Divisional Hardware and Software Replacement and Enhancements including SIS patching going forward | \$ 5,667 | 48 per cent GOA | None | Current Year internally sourced |
| Preservation | Travel and Expense System and Invoicing Upgrade in Banner (Chrome River) | \$ 100 | 100 per cent GOA | \$100 thousand from GOA IMP | No Change |
| Preservation | Decision Support (Finance and Administration) | \$ 250 | AU | N/A | Project proceeding within operating budget |
| Preservation | Banner Patches | \$ 360 | AU | N/A | No Change |
| Preservation | AU Technology Evergreening | \$ 1,500 | AU | N/A | No Change |
| Preservation | Audit Recommendations Responses | \$ 100 | AU | N/A | No Change |
| Preservation | Equipment Renewal | \$ 725 | AU | N/A | No Change |
| Preservation | Library Collections | \$ 375 | AU | N/A | No Change |
| Expansion | Center | \$ 45 | AU | N/A | No Change |

Table 20: Capital Project Timelines and Status

| Project Description | Project Timelines | Expected Project Start | Expected Project Completion | Project Status | Progress Made in Last 12 Months |
|---|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Independent Third-Party Recommendation (Hyper Personalized Learning Experience) | July 2019 – March 2022 | July 2019 | March 2022 | In progress | Cloud migration and DXP underway. ILE is nearing completion of scope definition |
| Greater Edmonton Area Space Consolidation Solution | September 2019 – March 2020 | Sept. 2019 | March 2020 | Project deferred to fiscal 2021 through fiscal 2023 | Project deferred pending completion of a Workplace and Space Strategy |
| Independent Third-Party Recommendation IDEA Lab | July 2019 – March 2020 | July 2019 | March 2020 | Project deferred. Funding not received | Project deferred pending development of a Long-range Development and Land Use Plan |
| Student Information System Replacement incorporating Student Relationship Management | July 2019 – March 2020 | July 2019 | March 2020 | In progress | Scope definition and procurement phase nearing completion |
| AU Main Campus Building Major Systems Upgrade | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Building and security upgrades were addressed through AU internal funding |
| Managed Security Implementation | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Planning phase near completion |
| Divisional Hardware and Software Replacement and Enhancements including SIS patching going forward | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Component of annual capital program. Current year deliverables were completed |
| Travel and Expense System and Invoicing Upgrade in Banner (Chrome River) | April 2019 – March 2020 | April 2019 | March 2020 | In progress | Completion date extended to March 2021 |
| Decision Support (Finance and Administration) | April 2019 – March 2020 | April 2019 | March 2020 | In progress | Completion date extended to July 2020 |
| Banner Patches | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Component of annual capital program. Current year deliverables in progress |
| AU Technology Evergreening | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Component of annual capital program. Current year deliverables were completed |
| Audit Recommendations Responses | April 2019 – March 2020 | April 2019 | March 2020 | Completed | Projected completed |

| Project Description | Project Timelines | Expected Project Start | Expected Project Completion | Project Status | Progress Made in Last 12 Months |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|--|
| Equipment Renewal | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Component of annual capital program. Current year deliverables were completed |
| Library Collections | April 2019 – March 2024 | April 2019 | March 2024 | In progress | Component of annual capital program. Current year deliverables were completed |
| Library Shelving for AU Records Center | April 2019 – March 2020 | April 2019 | March 2020 | Completed | Project completed |

APPENDIX A



Athabasca
University

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
MARCH 31, 2020

Athabasca University

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Year ended March 31, 2020

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Athabasca University
Statement of Management Responsibility
Year ended March 31, 2020

The financial statements of Athabasca University have been prepared by management in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards. The financial statements present fairly the financial position of the University as at March 31, 2020 and the results of its operations, remeasurement gains and losses, changes in net financial assets, and cash flows for the year then ended.

In fulfilling its responsibilities and recognizing the limits inherent in all systems, management has developed and maintains a system of internal control designed to provide reasonable assurance that University assets are safeguarded from loss and that the accounting records are a reliable basis for the preparation of the financial statements.

The Board of Governors is responsible for reviewing and approving the financial statements, and overseeing management's performance of its financial reporting responsibilities.

The Board of Governors carries out its responsibility for review of the financial statements principally through its Audit Committee. All members of the Audit Committee are not employees of the University. The Audit Committee meets with management and the external auditors and internal auditors to discuss the results of audit examinations and financial reporting matters. The external and internal auditors have full access to the Audit Committee, with and without the presence of management.

These financial statements have been reported on by the Auditor General of Alberta, the auditor appointed under the *Post-secondary Learning Act*. The Independent Auditor's Report outlines the scope of the audit and provides the audit opinion on the fairness of presentation of the information in the financial statements.

original signed by Dr. Neil Fassina

Dr. Neil Fassina
President

original signed by Deborah L. Meyers

Deborah L. Meyers
Vice-President, Finance and Administration
Chief Financial Officer



Independent Auditor's Report

To the Board of Governors of Athabasca University

Report on the Financial Statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of Athabasca University (the University) which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2020, and the statements of operations, change in net financial assets, remeasurement gains and losses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the University as at March 31, 2020, and the results of its operations, its remeasurement gains and losses, its changes in net financial assets, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the University in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in Canada, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Other information

Management is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the *Annual Report*, but does not include the financial statements and my auditor's report thereon. The *Annual Report* is expected to be made available to me after the date of this auditor's report.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, my responsibility is to read the other information identified above and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work I will perform on this other information, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to communicate the matter to those charged with governance.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the University's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless an intention exists to liquidate or to cease operations, or there is no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the University's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the University's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the University's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the University to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

[Original signed by W. Doug Wylie, FCPA, FCMA, ICD.D]
Auditor General

May 22, 2020
Edmonton, Alberta

Athabasca University

Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Financial assets excluding portfolio investments restricted for endowments | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents (Note 3) | \$ 21,260 | \$ 21,405 |
| Portfolio investments - non-endowment (Note 4) | 42,541 | 43,831 |
| Accounts receivable | 2,707 | 2,578 |
| Inventory held for sale | 1,229 | 1,144 |
| | <u>67,737</u> | <u>68,958</u> |
| Liabilities | | |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 13,884 | 10,633 |
| Employee future benefit liabilities (Note 6) | 13,971 | 13,537 |
| Deferred revenue (Note 7) | 23,615 | 29,316 |
| | <u>51,470</u> | <u>53,486</u> |
| Net financial assets excluding portfolio investments restricted for endowments | 16,267 | 15,472 |
| Portfolio investments - restricted for endowments (Note 4) | 3,092 | 4,073 |
| Net financial assets | <u>19,359</u> | <u>19,545</u> |
| Non-financial assets | | |
| Tangible capital assets (Note 8) | 43,337 | 45,958 |
| Prepaid expenses | 2,377 | 1,976 |
| | <u>45,714</u> | <u>47,934</u> |
| Net assets before spent deferred capital contributions | 65,073 | 67,479 |
| Spent deferred capital contributions (Note 9) | 33,895 | 35,628 |
| Net assets (Note 10) | <u>\$ 31,178</u> | <u>\$ 31,851</u> |
| Net assets is comprised of: | | |
| Accumulated surplus | \$ 34,826 | \$ 31,697 |
| Accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains | <u>(3,648)</u> | <u>154</u> |
| | <u>\$ 31,178</u> | <u>\$ 31,851</u> |
| Contingent assets and contractual rights (Note 11 and Note 13) | | |
| Contingent liabilities and contractual obligations (Note 12 and Note 14) | | |

Approved by the Board of Governors (Note 22)

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Athabasca University

Statement of Operations

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

| | Budget 2020 | Actual 2020 | Actual 2019 |
|---|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| | (Note 20) | | |
| Revenue | | | |
| Government of Alberta grants (Note 15) | \$ 62,238 | \$ 50,443 | \$ 52,496 |
| Student tuition and fees | 78,872 | 77,867 | 74,761 |
| Sales of services and products | 17,762 | 17,121 | 17,142 |
| Investment income | 1,306 | 2,436 | 1,788 |
| Federal and other government grants (Note 15) | 1,451 | 1,687 | 1,549 |
| Donations and other grants | 239 | 1,120 | 716 |
| | <u>161,868</u> | <u>150,674</u> | <u>148,452</u> |
| Expense | | | |
| Instruction and non-sponsored research | 83,090 | 78,834 | 72,341 |
| Academic and student support | 19,219 | 17,371 | 15,728 |
| Institutional support | 23,818 | 16,340 | 13,020 |
| Computing and communication | 10,320 | 11,667 | 10,491 |
| Sponsored research and special purpose | 10,967 | 10,457 | 9,524 |
| Ancillary services | 8,831 | 8,382 | 8,160 |
| Facility operations and maintenance | 5,623 | 4,567 | 4,989 |
| | <u>161,868</u> | <u>147,618</u> | <u>134,253</u> |
| Annual operating surplus | - | 3,056 | 14,199 |
| Endowment contributions (Note 10) | - | 8 | 19 |
| Endowment capitalized interest income (Note 10) | - | 65 | 84 |
| | <u>-</u> | <u>3,129</u> | <u>14,302</u> |
| Annual surplus | - | 3,129 | 14,302 |
| Accumulated surplus, beginning of year | - | 31,697 | 17,395 |
| | <u>-</u> | <u>31,697</u> | <u>17,395</u> |
| Accumulated surplus, end of year | <u>\$ -</u> | <u>\$ 34,826</u> | <u>\$ 31,697</u> |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Athabasca University

Statement of Change in Net Financial Assets

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

| | Budget 2020 | Actual 2020 | Actual 2019 |
|--|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Net assets, beginning of year | <u>\$ 19,545</u> | <u>\$ 19,545</u> | <u>\$ 4,294</u> |
| Annual surplus | - | 3,129 | 14,302 |
| Acquisition of tangible capital assets | (11,497) | (3,110) | (3,275) |
| Proceeds from sale of tangible capital assets | | 14 | - |
| Amortization of tangible capital assets | 6,571 | 5,731 | 6,471 |
| (Gain) loss on disposal of tangible capital assets | | (14) | 610 |
| Change in prepaid expenses | | (401) | (510) |
| Change in spent deferred capital contributions | 4,576 | (1,733) | (2,800) |
| Change in accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains | | <u>(3,802)</u> | <u>453</u> |
| (Decrease) increase in net financial assets | | <u>(186)</u> | <u>15,251</u> |
| Net financial assets, end of year | <u><u>\$</u></u> | <u><u>\$ 19,359</u></u> | <u><u>\$ 19,545</u></u> |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Athabasca University**Statement of Remeasurement Gains and Losses**

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Accumulated remeasurement gains (losses), beginning of year | <u>\$ 154</u> | <u>\$ (299)</u> |
| Unrealized (losses) gains attributable to: | | |
| Quoted in active market financial instruments | | |
| Portfolio investments - non-endowment | (3,183) | 573 |
| Amounts reclassified to the statement of operations: | | |
| Quoted in active market financial instruments | | |
| Portfolio investments - non-endowment | <u>(619)</u> | <u>(120)</u> |
| Net change for the year | <u>(3,802)</u> | <u>453</u> |
| Accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains, end of year | <u><u>\$ (3,648)</u></u> | <u><u>\$ 154</u></u> |
| Accumulated remeasurement (losses) gains is comprised of: | | |
| Portfolio investments - non-endowment | <u><u>\$ (3,648)</u></u> | <u><u>\$ 154</u></u> |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Athabasca University

Statement of Cash Flows

March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| | <u> </u> | <u> </u> |
| Operating transactions | | |
| Annual surplus | \$ 3,129 | \$ 14,302 |
| Add (deduct) non-cash items: | | |
| Amortization of tangible capital assets | 5,731 | 6,471 |
| Expended capital recognized as revenue | (3,157) | (3,335) |
| Gain on sale of portfolio investments | (619) | (120) |
| (Gain) loss on disposal of tangible capital assets | (14) | 610 |
| Increase (decrease) in employee future benefit liabilities | 434 | (3,965) |
| Change in non-cash items | 2,375 | (339) |
| (Increase) decrease in accounts receivable | (129) | 5,556 |
| (Increase) decrease in inventory held for sale | (85) | 203 |
| Increase in accounts payable and accrued liabilities | 3,251 | 100 |
| (Decrease) increase in deferred revenue | (4,647) | 1,882 |
| Increase in prepaid expenses | (401) | (510) |
| Cash provided by operating transactions | <u>3,493</u> | <u>21,194</u> |
| Capital transactions | | |
| Acquisition of tangible capital assets | (3,110) | (3,275) |
| Proceeds on sale of tangible capital assets | 14 | - |
| Cash applied to capital transactions | <u>(3,096)</u> | <u>(3,275)</u> |
| Investing transactions | | |
| Purchases of portfolio investments | (42,849) | (8,748) |
| Proceeds on sale of portfolio investments | 40,883 | 7,274 |
| Cash applied to investing transactions | <u>(1,966)</u> | <u>(1,474)</u> |
| Financing transactions | | |
| Increase in spent deferred capital contributions, less expended capital recognized as revenue | 1,424 | 535 |
| Cash provided by financing transactions | <u>1,424</u> | <u>535</u> |
| (Decrease) increase in cash and cash equivalents | (145) | 16,980 |
| Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year | 21,405 | 4,425 |
| Cash and cash equivalents, end of year | <u>\$ 21,260</u> | <u>\$ 21,405</u> |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

1 Authority and purpose

The Governors of Athabasca University is a corporation which manages and operates Athabasca University (“the University”) under the *Post-secondary Learning Act* (Alberta), and the Athabasca University Regulation (Alberta Regulation 50/2004). All members of the Board of Governors are appointed by either the Lieutenant Governor in Council or the Minister of Advanced Education, with the exception of the President, who is an *ex officio* member. Under the *Post-secondary Learning Act*, the University is a comprehensive academic and research university offering fully-accredited distributed learning from its online virtual campus. Athabasca University offers credit and non-credit learning experiences that lead to professional, undergraduate, masters, and doctoral credentials across ever evolving and comprehensive disciplines. The University is a registered charity, and under section 149 of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada), is exempt from the payment of income tax.

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices

(a) General - Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards and use of estimates

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards (PSAS).

The measurement of certain assets and liabilities is contingent upon future events; therefore, the preparation of these financial statements requires the use of estimates, which may vary from actual results. University management uses judgment to determine such estimates. Employee future benefit liabilities, amortization of tangible capital assets, and the revenue recognition for expended capital are the most significant items based on estimates. In management’s opinion, the resulting estimates are within reasonable limits of materiality and are in accordance with the significant accounting policies summarized below. These significant accounting policies are presented to assist the reader in evaluating these financial statements and, together with the following notes, should be considered an integral part of the financial statements.

(b) Valuation of financial assets and liabilities

The University’s financial assets and liabilities are generally measured as follows:

| <u>Financial statement component</u> | <u>Measurement</u> |
|--|--|
| Cash and cash equivalents | Cost |
| Portfolio investments | Fair value |
| Account receivable | Lower of cost or net recoverable value |
| Inventory held for sale | Lower of cost or net realizable value |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | Cost |

Unrealized gains and losses from changes in the fair value of unrestricted financial assets and liabilities are recognized in the statement of remeasurement gains and losses. When the restricted nature of a financial instrument and any related changes in fair value create a liability, unrealized gains and losses are recognized as deferred revenue.

All financial assets are tested annually for impairment. When financial assets are impaired, impairment losses are recorded in the statement of operations. A write-down of a portfolio investment to reflect a loss in value is not reversed for a subsequent increase in value.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices (continued)

(b) Valuation of financial assets and liabilities (continued)

For financial assets and liabilities measured at amortized cost, the effective interest rate method is used to determine interest revenue or expense. Transaction costs are a component of cost for financial instruments measured using cost or amortized cost. Transaction costs are expensed for financial instruments measured at fair value. Investment management fees are expensed as incurred. The purchase and sale of cash and cash equivalents and portfolio investments are accounted for using trade-date accounting.

The University does not use foreign currency contracts or any other type of derivative financial instruments for trading or speculative purposes.

University management evaluates contractual obligations for the existence of embedded derivatives and elects to either measure the entire contract at fair value or separately measure the value of the derivative component when characteristics of the derivative are not closely related to the economic characteristics and risks of the contract itself. Contracts to buy or sell non-financial items for the University's normal purchase, sale or usage requirements are not recognized as financial assets or financial liabilities. The University does not have any embedded derivatives.

(c) Revenue recognition

All revenue is reported on the accrual basis of accounting. Cash received for which goods or services have not been provided is recorded as deferred revenue.

Government grants, non-government grants and donations

Government transfers are referred to as government grants.

Restricted grants and donations are recognized as deferred revenue if the terms for the use, or the terms along with the University's actions and communications as to the use, create a liability. These grants and donations are recognized as revenue as the terms are met. If the grants and donations are used to acquire or construct tangible capital assets, revenue will be recognized over the useful life of the tangible capital assets.

Government grants without terms for the use of the grant are recorded as revenue when the University is eligible to receive the funds. Unrestricted non-government grants and donations are recognized as revenue in the year received or in the year the funds are committed to the University if the amount can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

In kind donations of services, materials or tangible capital assets are recorded at fair value when a fair value can reasonably be determined. Transfers of tangible capital assets from related parties are recorded at the carrying value.

Grants and donations related to land

Grants and donations for the purchase of land are recognized as deferred revenue when received, and recognized as revenue when the land is purchased. An in-kind contribution of land is recognized as revenue at the fair value of the land when a fair value can be reasonably determined. When the fair value cannot be reasonably determined, the in-kind contribution is recorded at nominal value.

Endowment donations

Endowment donations are recognized as revenue in the statement of operations in the year they are received, and are required by donors to be maintained intact in perpetuity.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices (continued)

(c) Revenue recognition (continued)

Investment income

Investment income includes dividends, interest income, and realized gains or losses on the sale of portfolio investments.

Realized investment income on portfolio investments from restricted grants and donations is recognized as deferred revenue when the terms for use create a liability, and is recognized as revenue in the statement of operations when the terms of the grant or donation are met. Realized investment income allocated to endowment balances for the preservation of endowment capital purchasing power is recognized in the statement of operations.

Unrealized gains and losses on portfolio investments from unrestricted grants and donations are recognized in the accumulated remeasurement gains and losses until settlement. Once realized, these gains or losses are recognized as revenue or expense in the statement of operations. Unrealized gains and losses on portfolio investments from restricted grants and donations are recognized in deferred revenue until the related investments are sold.

Endowments

Endowments consist of:

- externally restricted donations received by the University, the principal of which is required to be maintained intact in perpetuity.
- capitalized investment income that has been allocated for annual inflation.

Investment income earned on endowments must be used in accordance with the various purposes established by the donors. Benefactors as well as University policy stipulate that the economic value of the endowments must be protected by limiting the amount of income that may be expended.

Under the *Post-secondary Learning Act*, the University has the authority to alter the terms and conditions of endowments to enable:

- income earned by the endowment to be withheld from distribution to avoid fluctuations in the amounts distributed and generally to regulate the distribution of income earned by the endowment.
- encroachment on the capital of the endowment to avoid fluctuations in the amounts distributed and generally to regulate the distribution of income earned by the endowment if, in the opinion of the Board of Governors, the encroachment benefits the University and does not impair the long-term value of the fund.

In any year, if the investment income earned on endowments is insufficient to fund the spending allocation, the spending allocation is adjusted and the donors are notified, where appropriate.

Endowment contributions, and associated capitalized investment income allocated for the preservation of endowment capital purchasing power, are recognized in the statement of operations in the period they are received.

(d) Inventory held for sale

Inventory held for sale is valued at the lower of cost and expected net realizable value and is determined using the weighted average method.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices (continued)

(e) Tangible capital assets

Tangible capital assets are recorded at cost, which includes amounts that are directly related to the acquisition, design, construction, development, improvement or betterment of the assets, and costs associated with asset retirement obligations. Cost includes overhead directly attributable to construction and development, as well as interest costs that are directly attributable to the acquisition or construction of the asset.

Work in progress, which includes facilities and improvement projects and development of information systems, is not amortized until after the project is complete and the asset is in service.

The cost, less residual value, of the tangible capital assets, excluding land, is amortized on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives as follows:

| <u>Asset category</u> | <u>Estimated useful life</u> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Buildings | 40 years |
| Site improvements | 10 - 25 years |
| Computer hardware and software | 3 - 10 years |
| Furniture and equipment | 5 - 20 years |
| Leasehold improvements | term of lease |
| Library holdings | 10 years |

Tangible capital asset write-downs are recorded when conditions indicate that they no longer contribute to the University's ability to provide services, or when the value of future economic benefits associated with the tangible capital assets are less than their net book value. The net write-downs are recognized as an expense in the statement of operations.

Intangible assets, works of art, cultural and historical properties, and archival materials are expensed when acquired and not recognized as tangible capital assets because a reasonable estimate of the future benefits associated with such property cannot be made.

(f) Foreign currency translation

Transaction amounts denominated in foreign currencies are translated into their Canadian dollar equivalents at exchange rates prevailing at the transaction dates. Carrying values of monetary assets and liabilities and non-monetary items included in the fair value category reflect the exchange rates at the statement of financial position date. Unrealized foreign exchange gains and losses are recognized in the statement of remeasurement gains and losses.

(g) Employee future benefits

Pension

The University participates with other employers in the Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP) and the Universities Academic Pension Plan (UAPP). These pension plans are multi-employer defined benefit pension plans that provide pensions for the University's participating employees based on years of service and earnings.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices (continued)

(g) Employee future benefits (continued)

Pension (continued)

Pension expense for the UAPP is actuarially determined using the projected benefit method prorated on service and is allocated to each participating employer based on their respective percentage of employer contributions. Actuarial gains or losses on the accrued benefit obligation are amortized over the expected average remaining service life of the related employee group.

The University does not have sufficient plan information on the PSPP to follow the standards for defined benefit accounting, and therefore follows the standards for defined contribution accounting. Accordingly, pension expense recorded for the PSPP is comprised of employer contributions to the plan that are required for its employees during the year; which are calculated based on actuarially pre-determined amounts that are expected to provide the plan's future benefits.

Administrative Leave Plan

The University provides for certain senior administrators to accrue a compensated leave. The expense for this plan is actuarially determined using the projected benefit method prorated on service. Actuarial gains or losses on the accrued benefit obligation are recognized immediately in the statement of operations.

Life Insurance, Short Term Disability, and Long Term Disability

The cost of the employee future benefit, if any, is not recognized as a liability. The cost of providing non-vesting and non-accumulating benefits under these plans is expensed in full when the event occurs that obligates the University to provide the benefit. Future premium rates are negotiated annually. Rate adjustments are determined based on a combination of the insurer's manual rate and the University's actual claims experience over the past five years. Any plan assets resulting from the surplus or deficit of the plans are attributed to the insurer.

Extended Health and Dental Care

The costs of benefits earned by employees are the actual claims paid during the period, the insurer's cost of administration (net of interest), plus the year-over-year change in the estimate for any claims that may have occurred but have not been paid. The net change is recorded as an expense or recovery in the statement of operations. Employees on administrative leave or disability (short or long-term) leave are also eligible for this benefit.

(h) Expense by function

The University uses the following categories of functions on its statement of operations:

Instruction and non-sponsored research

Expenses relating to the academic activities supporting innovative learning, programming, and teaching. This function also includes expenses incurred by faculty and within academic departments for their scholarly and non-sponsored research activities.

Academic and student support

Expenses relating to activities directly supporting the academic functions and support of the student body. Includes expenses incurred by the library and centralized administrative activities supporting students such as registry, counseling services and scholarship awards.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

2 Summary of significant accounting policies and reporting practices (continued)

(h) Expense by function (continued)

Institutional support

Expenses relating to administration, governance, public relations and marketing, alumni relations, fund development, finance, human resources and any other centralized university-wide administrative services.

Computing and communication

Expenses relating to the delivery and support of centralized core computing, networks, data communication, and other information technology activities. Includes operations, maintenance, and amortization of information technology systems.

Sponsored research and special purpose

Expenses specifically funded by externally restricted grants and donations; sponsored research activities and expenses for student scholarships, bursaries, and other initiatives involving teaching and learning, and community service.

Ancillary services

Expenses relating to the provision of course materials to students, including textbooks (print or electronic) and other learning resources, print production materials, shipping and handling.

Facility operations and maintenance

Expenses relating to the operation and maintenance of all University facilities (owned or leased) that house the teaching, research and administrative activities. Includes utilities, rental costs, facilities administration, building maintenance, custodial services, grounds keeping, major repairs and renovations, and amortization of building and facility related equipment.

(i) Internally restricted funds and reserves

Certain amounts, as approved by the Board of Governors, are set aside in accumulated operating surplus for future operating and capital purposes. Transfers to or from funds and reserves are an adjustment to the respective fund when approved.

(j) Future accounting changes

In August 2018, the Public Sector Accounting Board issued PSA Handbook Section PS 3280, Asset Retirement Obligations. This accounting standard is effective for fiscal years starting on or after April 1, 2021. PS 3280 Asset Retirement Obligations provides guidance on how to account for and report a liability for retirement of a tangible capital asset.

In November 2018, the Public Sector Accounting Board issued PSA Handbook Section PS 3400, Revenue. This accounting standard is effective for fiscal years starting on or after April 1, 2022. PS 3400 Revenue provides guidance on how to account for and report on revenue, by distinguishing between revenue that arises from transactions that include performance obligations from transactions that do not have performance obligations.

University management is currently assessing the impact of these new standards on the financial statements.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

*(thousands of dollars)***3 Cash and cash equivalents**

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Cash | \$ 21,260 | \$ 21,405 |
| Cash equivalents | - | - |
| | <u>\$ 21,260</u> | <u>\$ 21,405</u> |

Cash equivalents include money market funds and short-term investments with a maturity less than three months from the date of purchase.

4 Portfolio investments

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Portfolio investments - non-endowment | \$ 42,541 | \$ 43,831 |
| Portfolio investments - restricted for endowments | 3,092 | 4,073 |
| | <u>\$ 45,633</u> | <u>\$ 47,904</u> |

All of the University's investments are in units of pooled investment funds and are valued based upon quoted prices in active markets for identical investments. The composition of portfolio investments measured at fair value is as follows:

| | 2020 | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|----------|----------|------------------|
| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Total |
| Pooled Investment Funds | | | | |
| Bonds listed in active market | \$ 24,399 | - | - | \$ 24,399 |
| Equities listed in active market | 17,093 | - | - | 17,093 |
| Money Market Funds | 4,141 | - | - | 4,141 |
| Total Investments | <u>\$ 45,633</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>\$ 45,633</u> |
| | | | | |
| | 2019 | | | |
| | Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3 | Total |
| Pooled Investment Funds | | | | |
| Bonds listed in active market | \$ 34,601 | - | - | \$ 34,601 |
| Equities listed in active market | 6,793 | - | - | 6,793 |
| Money Market Funds | 6,510 | - | - | 6,510 |
| Total Investments | <u>\$ 47,904</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>\$ 47,904</u> |

The fair value measurements are derived from:

Level 1: Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets.

Level 2: Inputs other than quoted prices included with level 1 that are observable for the assets, either directly (i.e. as prices) or indirectly (i.e. derived from prices).

Level 3: Valuation techniques that include inputs for the assets that are not based on observable market data (unobservable inputs).

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

4 Portfolio investments (continued)

The average effective yields and the terms to maturity are as follows:

- Money Market pooled funds: 2.16%; term to maturity: less than one year.
- Pooled funds of government and corporate bonds: 2.6%; terms to maturity: range from less than one year to more than 10 years.

In addition to recognizing the realized gains and losses on the sale of portfolio investments in the statement of operations, the University reports unrealized gains and losses on portfolio investments as follows:

| | 2020 | | 2019 | |
|---|---|--|------------|--------|
| | Deferred revenue endowments (Note 7) | Accumulated remeasurement gains and losses | Total | Total |
| Net unrealized gains, beginning of year | \$ 471 | \$ 154 | \$ 625 | \$ 204 |
| Unrealized (losses) gains attributable to portfolio investments | (1,054) | (3,183) | (4,237) | 541 |
| Amounts reclassified to statement of operations | - | (619) | (619) | (120) |
| Net unrealized (losses) gains, end of year | \$ (583) | \$ (3,648) | \$ (4,231) | \$ 625 |

5 Financial risk management

The University is exposed to the following risks:

Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the value of a financial instrument will fluctuate as a result of changes in market prices, whether those changes are caused by factors specific to the individual security, its issuer or general market factors affecting all securities. To manage this risk, the University has established an investment policy with a target asset mix that is diversified by asset class with individual issuer limits and is designed to achieve a long-term rate of return within specific risk tolerances.

The University assesses its portfolio investment sensitivity to a percentage increase or decrease in market prices. At March 31, 2020, if market prices had a 5% (2019 - 5%) increase or decrease with all other variables held constant, the increase or decrease in accumulated remeasurement gains and losses and deferred revenue for the year would have been a total of \$2,282 (2019 - \$2,395).

Credit risk

Credit risk on portfolio investments arise from the potential failure of a counterparty, debtor or issuer to honor its contractual obligations. To manage this risk the University has established an investment policy with required minimum credit quality standards and issuer limits. The credit risk from accounts receivable is low as the majority of balances are due from government agencies and corporate sponsors.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

5 Financial risk management (continued)

Credit risk (continued)

The credit rating distribution of bonds held are as follows:

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Credit rating | | |
| AAA | 39 % | 50 % |
| AA | 10 % | 8 % |
| A | 37 % | 30 % |
| BBB | 14 % | 12 % |
| | <u>100 %</u> | <u>100 %</u> |

Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the University will encounter difficulty in meeting obligations associated with its financial liabilities. The University does not have an available line of credit, however it manages liquidity risk by maintaining a portfolio of short-term investments with rolling maturity dates to manage short-term cash requirements.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that future cash flows or fair values will fluctuate from the degree of volatility of interest rates. The University invests in units of pooled investment funds. Indirectly the University is exposed to risks associated with interest rate fluctuation and volatility. This risk is managed by managing the term to maturity of certain fixed income securities that the University holds.

The maturity of the interest bearing investments held in pooled funds are as follows:

| | Less than 1 year | 1 to 5 years | Greater than 5 years | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| Money Market Funds | \$ 4,141 | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 4,141 |
| Bonds listed in active market | 1,907 | 9,607 | 12,885 | 24,399 |
| | <u>\$ 6,048</u> | <u>\$ 9,607</u> | <u>\$ 12,885</u> | <u>\$ 28,540</u> |

The impact of a change in interest rates on those pooled investment funds, that are primarily invested in fixed income debt instruments, are as follows:

| | 0.50% decrease | 0.25% decrease | 0.25% increase | 0.50% increase |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Dollar value change | \$ 339 | \$ 170 | \$ (170) | \$ (339) |

Foreign currency risk

Foreign currency risk on investments is the risk that the value of a financial instrument will fluctuate as a result of changes in foreign currency. The University invests primarily in Canadian dollar denominated securities and therefore has minimal exposure to currency risk. The University's exposure to foreign exchange risk is negligible due to minimal business activity conducted in foreign currency.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

6 Employee future benefit liabilities

Employee future benefit liabilities are comprised of the following:

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Universities Academic Pension Plan (UAPP) | \$ 12,107 | \$ 11,758 |
| Administrative Leave Plan | 1,864 | 1,779 |
| | <u>\$ 13,971</u> | <u>\$ 13,537</u> |

(a) Defined benefit plans accounted for on a defined benefit basis

Universities Academic Pension Plan (UAPP)

The UAPP is a multi-employer contributory joint defined benefit pension plan for academic and professional staff members. An actuarial valuation of the UAPP was completed as at December 31, 2018, and was then extrapolated to March 31, 2020, resulting in a UAPP deficiency of \$1,276,243 (2019 - \$996,451) consisting of a pre-1992 deficiency of \$882,337 (2019 - \$827,872) and a post-1991 deficiency of \$393,906 (2019 - \$168,579). The University's portion of the UAPP pre-1992 deficiency and post-1991 surplus has been allocated based on its percentage of the plan's total employer contributions for the year.

The unfunded deficiency for service prior to January 1, 1992 is financed by additional contributions of 1.25% (2019 - 1.25%) of salaries by the Government of Alberta. Employees and employers equally share the balance of the contributions of 2.90% (2019 - 2.90%) of salaries until June 30, 2020 and 3.04% (2019 - 2.90%) thereafter required to eliminate the unfunded deficiency by December 31, 2043. The Government of Alberta's obligation for the future additional contributions was \$266,237 at March 31, 2020 (2019 - \$258,570).

The unfunded deficiency for service after December 31, 1991 is financed by special payments, all shared equally between employees and employers, of:

- 3.38% (2019 - 4.93%) of salaries until June 30, 2020, then reducing to 3.24% (2019 - 4.44%) of salaries until December 31, 2021
- 1.71% (2019 - 1.71%) of salaries for 2022 and 2023
- 0.70% (2019 - 0.70%) of salaries for 2024 and 2025
- 0.25% (2019 - 0.25%) of salaries for 2026 and 2027

Administrative Leave Plan

The University provides for certain senior administrators to accrue a compensated leave. The individual's salary and benefits in effect at the time of commencing the leave are paid for the duration of the leave. The leave obligation is actuarially determined using the projected benefit method prorated on service and is calculated based on assumptions that have been adopted as a best estimate. An actuarial valuation of these benefits was carried out as at March 31, 2020. Net actuarial gains or losses are recognized immediately in the statement of operations. The University has provided for the plan by accruing a benefit obligation of \$1,864 (2019 - \$1,779) in employee future benefit liabilities. The University's Administrative Leave Plan has no plan assets. The University plans to use its working capital to finance these future obligations.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

6 Employee future benefit liabilities (continued)

(a) Defined benefit plans accounted for on a defined benefit basis (continued)

The University's expense and financial position of these defined benefit plans is as follows:

| | 2020 | | 2019 | |
|---|------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| | UAPP | Administrative Leave | UAPP | Administrative Leave |
| Financial Operations | | | | |
| Expense | | | | |
| Current service cost | \$ 5,679 | \$ 346 | \$ 4,580 | \$ 313 |
| Interest cost | 1,290 | 37 | 347 | 31 |
| Amortization of net actuarial loss (gain) | 882 | (110) | (996) | 134 |
| Total Expense | \$ 7,851 | \$ 273 | \$ 3,931 | \$ 478 |
| Financial Position | | | | |
| Accrued benefit obligation: | | | | |
| Balance, beginning of year | \$ 155,461 | \$ 1,779 | \$ 123,684 | \$ 1,818 |
| Current service cost | 5,679 | 346 | 4,580 | 313 |
| Interest cost | 8,831 | 37 | 7,523 | 31 |
| Benefits paid | (6,880) | (188) | (5,770) | (517) |
| Actuarial (gain) loss | (10,236) | (110) | 25,444 | 134 |
| Balance, end of year | 152,855 | 1,864 | 155,461 | 1,779 |
| Plan assets | (125,594) | - | (134,352) | - |
| Plan deficit | 27,261 | 1,864 | 21,109 | 1,779 |
| Unamortized net actuarial gain (loss) | (15,154) | - | (9,351) | - |
| Accrued benefit liability | \$ 12,107 | \$ 1,864 | \$ 11,758 | \$ 1,779 |

The significant actuarial assumptions used to measure the accrued benefit obligation are as follows:

| | 2020 | | 2019 | |
|---|------------|----------------------|------------|----------------------|
| | UAPP | Administrative Leave | UAPP | Administrative Leave |
| Accrued benefit obligation: | | | | |
| Discount rate | 5.60% | 3.85% | 5.60% | 1.80% |
| Long-term average compensation increase | 3.00% | 2.00% | 3.00% | 2.00% |
| Benefit cost: | | | | |
| Discount rate | 5.60% | | 5.60% | |
| Long-term average compensation increase | 3.00% | 2.00% | 3.00% | 2.00% |
| Alberta inflation (long term) | 2.00% | | 2.00% | |
| Estimate average remaining service life | 10.6 years | 9.0 years | 10.6 years | 9.0 years |
| Retirement age | 65 | 67.5 | 65 | 67.5 |

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

6 Employee future benefit liabilities (continued)

(b) Defined benefit plan accounted for on a defined contribution basis

Public Service Pension Plan (PSPP)

The PSPP is a multi-employer contributory defined benefit pension plan for support staff members. As the University does not have sufficient information to follow the accounting standards for defined benefit plans, it is accounted for on a defined contribution basis. The pension expense recorded in these financial statements is \$1,361 for 2020 (2019 - \$1,343).

An actuarial extrapolation of the PSPP was carried out as at December 31, 2019 from the actuarial valuation as at December 31, 2017 with the updated assumptions. At December 31, 2019, the PSPP reported a surplus of \$2,759,320 (2018 - \$519,218). For the year ended December 31, 2019, PSPP reported employer contributions of \$321,306 (2018 - \$337,390). For the 2019 calendar year, the University's employer contributions were \$1,356 (2018 – calendar year - \$1,397).

The fair value of the pension plans are subject to significant market volatility due to the economic crisis stemming from the global pandemic COVID-19 virus. To the extent that the pension plans may not recover market-losses during the remainder of 2020, the funded status of the plans would experience a correlated decline. The financial market impact of the outbreak has been rapidly evolving, which precludes a reasonable estimate of the impact.

7 Deferred revenue

| | 2020 | | | 2019 |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Unspent externally restricted grants and donations | Tuition and other fees | Total | Total |
| Balance, beginning of year | \$ 15,068 | \$ 14,248 | \$ 29,316 | \$ 27,466 |
| Grants, tuition and donations | 2,852 | 65,453 | 68,305 | 72,699 |
| Investment income | 804 | - | 804 | 246 |
| Unrealized losses (Note 4) | (1,054) | - | (1,054) | (32) |
| Transfers to spent deferred capital contributions (Note 9) | (1,424) | - | (1,424) | (535) |
| Recognized as revenue | (7,148) | (65,184) | (72,332) | (70,528) |
| Balance, end of year | \$ 9,098 | \$ 14,517 | \$ 23,615 | \$ 29,316 |

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

8 Tangible capital assets

| | 2020 | | | | | 2019 | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Land | Buildings and site improvements | Computer hardware and software | Furniture and equipment | Leasehold improvements and library holdings | Total | Total |
| Cost | | | | | | | |
| Beginning of year | \$ 2,180 | 61,958 | 42,621 | 7,903 | 7,436 | \$ 122,098 | \$ 122,801 |
| Acquisitions | - | - | 2,673 | 363 | 74 | 3,110 | 3,275 |
| Disposals, including write-downs | - | - | - | (57) | (120) | (177) | (3,978) |
| | <u>\$ 2,180</u> | <u>61,958</u> | <u>45,294</u> | <u>8,209</u> | <u>7,390</u> | <u>\$ 125,031</u> | <u>\$ 122,098</u> |
| Accumulated amortization | | | | | | | |
| Beginning of year | \$ - | 30,273 | 32,248 | 6,569 | 7,050 | \$ 76,140 | \$ 73,037 |
| Amortization expense | - | 1,610 | 3,599 | 350 | 172 | 5,731 | 6,471 |
| Effects on disposals, including write-downs | - | - | - | (57) | (120) | (177) | (3,368) |
| | <u>\$ -</u> | <u>31,883</u> | <u>35,847</u> | <u>6,862</u> | <u>7,102</u> | <u>\$ 81,694</u> | <u>\$ 76,140</u> |
| Net book value at March 31, 2020 | <u>\$ 2,180</u> | <u>30,075</u> | <u>9,447</u> | <u>1,347</u> | <u>288</u> | <u>\$ 43,337</u> | |
| Net book value at March 31, 2019 | <u>\$ 2,180</u> | <u>31,685</u> | <u>10,373</u> | <u>1,334</u> | <u>386</u> | | <u>\$ 45,958</u> |

Included in computer hardware and software is \$952 (2019 - \$1,442) work in progress, that is not amortized as the assets are not yet available for use.

No interest was capitalized by the University for the year ended March 31, 2020. Write-downs in the amount of \$0 (2019 - \$536) are included within the disposals amounts.

The University holds a number of works of art, cultural and historical properties, and archival materials. These items are expensed when acquired and therefore not included in tangible capital assets.

9 Spent deferred capital contributions

Spent deferred capital contributions is comprised of externally restricted grants and donations spent on tangible capital assets, less amortization recognized as revenue.

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Balance, beginning of year | \$ 35,628 | \$ 38,428 |
| Transfers from restricted grants and donations | 1,424 | 535 |
| Expended capital recognized as revenue | (3,157) | (3,335) |
| Balance, end of year | <u>\$ 33,895</u> | <u>\$ 35,628</u> |

Athabasca University**Notes to the Financial Statements**

Year ended March 31, 2020

*(thousands of dollars)***10 Net assets**

| | Accumulated surplus from operations | Investment in tangible capital assets | Endowments | Total |
|---|---|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Balance as at March 31, 2018 | \$ 2,261 | \$ 11,336 | \$ 3,499 | \$ 17,096 |
| Annual operating surplus | 14,199 | - | - | 14,199 |
| Endowments | | | | |
| New donations | - | - | 19 | 19 |
| Capitalized investment income | - | - | 84 | 84 |
| Tangible capital assets | | | | |
| Acquisition of tangible capital assets | (2,740) | 2,740 | - | - |
| Amortization of tangible capital assets | 3,136 | (3,136) | - | - |
| Net book value of tangible capital asset disposals | 610 | (610) | - | - |
| Change in accumulated remeasurement gains (losses) | 453 | - | - | 453 |
| Balance as at March 31, 2019 | 17,919 | 10,330 | 3,602 | 31,851 |
| Annual operating surplus | 3,056 | - | - | 3,056 |
| Endowments | | | | |
| New donations | - | - | 8 | 8 |
| Capitalized investment income | - | - | 65 | 65 |
| Tangible capital assets | | | | |
| Acquisition of tangible capital assets | (1,686) | 1,686 | - | - |
| Amortization of tangible capital assets | 2,574 | (2,574) | - | - |
| Change in accumulated remeasurement gains (losses) | (3,802) | - | - | (3,802) |
| Balance as at March 31, 2020 | <u>\$ 18,061</u> | <u>\$ 9,442</u> | <u>\$ 3,675</u> | <u>\$ 31,178</u> |
| Net assets is comprised of: | | | | |
| Accumulated surplus | \$ 21,709 | \$ 9,442 | \$ 3,675 | \$ 34,826 |
| Accumulated remeasurement losses | <u>(3,648)</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>-</u> | <u>(3,648)</u> |
| | <u>\$ 18,061</u> | <u>\$ 9,442</u> | <u>\$ 3,675</u> | <u>\$ 31,178</u> |

11 Contingent assets

The University has no contingent assets as at March 31, 2020.

12 Contingent liabilities

The University has no legal claims as at March 31, 2020 that management believes would have a material adverse effect on the financial position or the results of operations of the University.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

13 Contractual rights

Contractual rights are entitlements of the University to economic resources arising from contracts or agreements that will result in both assets and revenues in the future when the terms of those contracts or agreements are met. The University has no material contractual rights arising from such contracts or agreements.

14 Contractual obligations

The University has contractual obligations that will become liabilities in the future when the terms of the contracts or agreements are met.

The estimated aggregate amounts payable for the unexpired terms of these contractual obligations are as follows:

| | Service Contracts | Information Systems and Technology | Long-term Leases | Total |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------|------------------|
| 2021 | \$ 10,901 | \$ 2,225 | \$ 757 | \$ 13,883 |
| 2022 | 2,130 | 713 | 757 | 3,600 |
| 2023 | 810 | 83 | 63 | 956 |
| 2024 | 441 | - | - | 441 |
| 2025 | 72 | - | - | 72 |
| Thereafter | 6 | - | - | 6 |
| Total at March 31, 2020 | <u>\$ 14,360</u> | <u>\$ 3,021</u> | <u>\$ 1,577</u> | <u>\$ 18,958</u> |
| Total at March 31, 2019 | <u>\$ 9,180</u> | <u>\$ 1,265</u> | <u>\$ 1,213</u> | <u>\$ 11,658</u> |

Service contracts include contractual obligations for services such as course delivery, learning materials, electricity, and consulting services. Information systems and technology include contractual obligations for services to systems. Long-term leases are contractual obligations the University has entered into for facility space with fixed term costs.

The University is one of 64 members of CURIE, the Canadian Universities Reciprocal Insurance Exchange, a self-insurance reciprocal established to share the insurable property, liability, and errors and omissions risks of member universities. The projected costs of claims against the exchange is based on actuarial projections and is funded through members' premiums. As at December 31, 2019, CURIE had an accumulated surplus of \$90,185 (2018 - \$79,338), of which the University's pro rata share is approximately 0.53% (2019 - 0.52%). This accumulated surplus is not recognized in the financial statements.

Athabasca University**Notes to the Financial Statements**

Year ended March 31, 2020

*(thousands of dollars)***15 Government transfers**

| | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Grants from Government of Alberta | | |
| Advanced Education: | | |
| Operating | \$ 44,065 | \$ 44,863 |
| Special purpose | - | 5,655 |
| Total Advanced Education | <u>44,065</u> | <u>50,518</u> |
| Other Government of Alberta departments and agencies: | | |
| Economic Development, Trade and Tourism | 132 | 819 |
| Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women | 120 | 106 |
| Labour and Immigration | 30 | 187 |
| Total other Government of Alberta departments and agencies | <u>282</u> | <u>1,112</u> |
| Total grants received | 44,347 | 51,630 |
| Expended capital recognized as revenue | 2,954 | 3,109 |
| Deferred revenue | 3,142 | (2,243) |
| Total Government of Alberta grants | <u>\$ 50,443</u> | <u>\$ 52,496</u> |
| Grants from Federal and other government | | |
| Special purpose grants received | \$ 1,571 | \$ 1,557 |
| Expended capital recognized as revenue | 198 | 223 |
| Deferred revenue | (82) | (231) |
| Total Federal and other government grants | <u>\$ 1,687</u> | <u>\$ 1,549</u> |

In addition to the grants listed above, the University received \$343 (2019 - \$228) from the Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, included in sales of services and products, for a service agreement to assist with the delivery of a specific program.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

16 Related parties

The University is a related party with organizations within the Government of Alberta reporting entity. Related parties also include key management personnel, and their close family members, of the University. Transactions with these entities and individuals are considered to be in the normal course of operations and are recorded at the exchange amount, which approximates fair value.

During the year the University conducted business transactions with related parties, including Ministries of the Government of Alberta, Alberta universities and colleges, and school districts. The revenue and expense incurred for these business transactions have been included in the statement of operations but have not been separately quantified.

During the year, the University received and provided the following services at nominal or reduced amounts:

- the University occupied space owned by Bow Valley College, an entity subject to common control, on an operating cost recovery basis.
- the University operated a research observatory station on land leased, at nominal cost, from the Alberta Ministry of Environment and Parks.
- the University leased space to Northern Lakes College, an entity subject to common control, on an operating cost recovery basis.

17 Expense by object

| | 2020 | | 2019 |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Budget (Note 20) | Actual | Actual |
| Salaries ⁽¹⁾ | \$ 86,556 | \$ 83,950 | \$ 78,362 |
| Employee benefits | 18,415 | 17,726 | 12,212 |
| Fees and purchased services | 31,071 | 20,594 | 17,921 |
| Cost of goods sold | 8,631 | 8,132 | 8,270 |
| Materials and supplies | 3,788 | 4,058 | 4,215 |
| Communication and travel | 3,070 | 3,523 | 3,055 |
| Rental, insurance and utilities | 2,713 | 2,666 | 2,569 |
| Scholarships and bursaries | 1,053 | 1,238 | 1,178 |
| Amortization of tangible capital assets | 6,571 | 5,731 | 6,471 |
| | <u>\$ 161,868</u> | <u>\$ 147,618</u> | <u>\$ 134,253</u> |

(1) Includes \$2,017 (2019 - \$456) termination benefits as defined under PSA Handbook section 3255. Of the current year amount, \$1,069 is a result of a Voluntary Work Transition Program offered to eligible employees in March 2020.

Athabasca University**Notes to the Financial Statements**

Year ended March 31, 2020

*(thousands of dollars)***18 Salary and employee benefits**

| | 2020 | | | 2019 | |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| | Base salary ⁽¹⁾ | Cash benefits ⁽²⁾ | Non-cash benefits ⁽³⁾ | Total | Total |
| Governance⁽⁴⁾ | | | | | |
| Board of Governors | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - | \$ - |
| Executive | | | | | |
| President ⁽⁵⁾ | 337 | 155 | 104 | 596 | 601 |
| Provost and Vice-President Academic ⁽⁵⁾ | 290 | 23 | 91 | 404 | 413 |
| Vice-President Finance and Administration and CFO | 253 | 19 | 35 | 307 | 307 |
| Vice-President Information Technology and CIO | 256 | 19 | 41 | 316 | 323 |
| Vice-President University Relations | 245 | 17 | 41 | 303 | 288 |

⁽¹⁾ Base salary includes pensionable base pay.

⁽²⁾ Cash benefits include, if applicable, earnings such as vacation payouts, amounts to compensate for the UAPP salary cap, expense allowance, relocation benefit, and other non-pensionable direct cash lump sum payments.

⁽³⁾ Non-cash benefits include the University's share of all employee benefits and contribution payments made on behalf of employees for pension, extended health care, dental, vision, group life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment insurance, and long and short-term disability plans. Non-cash benefits for some of the executive include the University's current year expense (current service cost, the related net actuarial gains or losses and adjustments for past service accrued at current salary rates) of the Administrative Leave Plan.

⁽⁴⁾ The Chair and Members of the Board of Governors receive no remuneration for participation on the Board.

⁽⁵⁾ The individual in this role earned future administrative leave benefits during the year that have been included in other non-cash benefits.

The current service cost and accrued obligation for each executive in the Administrative Leave Plan is as follows:

| | Accrued Obligation | | Interest and other costs | Benefits paid | Actuarial loss (gain) | Accrued Obligation ⁽⁶⁾ | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| | March 31, 2019 | Service costs | | | | March 31, 2020 | |
| President | \$ 245 | 70 | 5 | - | (13) | \$ 307 | |
| Provost and Vice-President Academic | \$ 154 | 59 | 4 | - | (13) | \$ 204 | |

⁽⁶⁾ The significant actuarial assumptions used to measure the accrued benefit obligation are disclosed in Note 6.

Athabasca University

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2020

(thousands of dollars)

19 Subsequent events

In March 2020 the University offered a Voluntary Workforce Transition Program to eligible employees who have elected to voluntarily end their employment with the University. The application period was open from March 30, 2020 to April 8, 2020. There were 40 applications approved that were received after March 31, 2020 with an estimate value of \$4,074. The effect of this event will increase accounts payable and accrued liabilities and decrease cash and cash equivalents balances on the statement of financial position.

The University is an on-line learning institution providing the majority of its services virtually and therefore was not significantly impacted by certain federal and provincial government measures designed to combat the spread of COVID-19, such as campus closures to students during the health pandemic. However, the negative impacts to the economy at March 31, 2020 and uncertainty surrounding future economic activities could continue to have a significant impact on the University's portfolio investments and employee future benefit obligations. University management continues to assess the impacts on its operations and learners as governments respond and the economy reacts to these uncertainties.

20 Budget figures

The University's 2019-2020 budget figures have been provided for comparison purposes. The budget was approved by the Board of Governors and was presented to the Minister of Advanced Education as part of the University's 2019-2022 Comprehensive Institutional Plan.

21 Comparative figures

Certain 2019 figures have been reclassified to conform to the presentation in the 2020 financial statements.

22 Approval of financial statements

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Governors of Athabasca University.

“

The flexibility to work on courses year-round and on my own schedule was great; it allowed me to fit my studies in with work and other life demands. It also allowed me to work and to graduate without any student loan debt.

Kevin Gray, Bachelor of Commerce, 2019

“

My goal was to continue working full-time, and study full-time; and Athabasca's online platform provided me with the flexibility to accomplish both. I loved the program, especially my teaching-focused courses!”

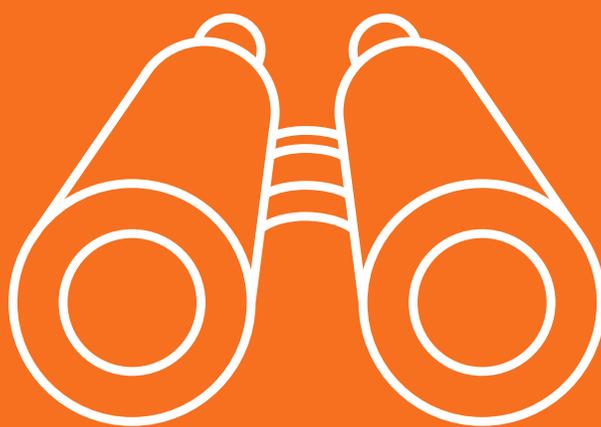
Sydney Farkas, Master of Nursing, 2016

“

When you take learners from across the country, from every imaginable career and personal background and let them collaborate in academia – astounding things can happen.

Cynthia Gordon, Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, 2016

2020



2070



Athabasca
University

1970-2020

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LOOKING BACK

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