



Candidate Brief

Athabasca University

Associate Vice-President, University Relations

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About Athabasca University

Athabasca University respectfully acknowledges that we live and work on the Traditional Lands of the Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, Métis) of Canada. We honour the ancestry, heritage, and gifts of the Indigenous Peoples and give thanks to them.

Guided by [Like No Other](#), Athabasca University's (AU) strategic plan, AU's approach to accessible yet transformative education and research is truly distinctive. Our academic mission is to remove barriers to post-secondary education for learners, regardless of their age, location, career, or educational background.

Based in the beautiful region of Athabasca, Alberta, AU is one of four Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities (CARUs) in the province. We are a public, board-governed, open, and online university serving more than 37,000 students across Alberta, Canada, and around the world.

AU seeks to be an agile and inclusive workplace in which all team members can grow, make their highest contribution, and each make a difference to our academic vision and mission.

Led by President Dr. Alex Clark, AU is embarking on an exciting new chapter. Drawing from five decades of growth in distance and online education, we aim to grow our position as Canada's foremost innovator in flexible, online and accessible learning. With an inclusive Senior Leadership Team dedicated to empowering every team member to contribute, learn and thrive, AU stands poised for an exciting and ambitious next stage of development.

A university like no other for people like no other

Athabasca University (AU) has widened access and increased opportunity to higher education for over 50 years for everyone by providing access to high-quality university education and professional development for students by removing physical, digital and systemic barriers to learning and success.

An open and online university, AU is a unique hybrid workplace with more than 1300 staff working across five faculties and six portfolios. From AU's home on the Indigenous lands of Treaty 6, Treaty 8 and Metis Northern Alberta, we are Alberta's only rurally-situated university with:

- Over 37,000 students across five faculties—with 33,000 undergraduates and 4,000 graduate students
- 900 courses over 70 programs—with choices from micro-credential and baccalaureate to masters and doctoral levels
- Some of the country's most well established and largest accredited academic and professional programs in business, registered nurse and nurse practitioner programs, science, and humanities & social sciences
- 560,000 alumni across 101 countries

As Alberta and Canada's premier and largest online university, AU's commitment to widening access and participation has been consolidated under its current [Like No Other Strategic Plan](#), which focuses on fostering a better and more equitable world via teaching, research, and impact in place and digital space.

Under the Like No Other plan, AU seeks to be a trust- and team-oriented workplace focused on quality and innovation in which everyone is respected authentically and is and feels welcome.

Putting our learners at the centre, AU seeks to reduce barriers to access, build opportunities for growth, and foster community and connection while integrating equity,



diversity and inclusion, Indigenous conciliation, and transformative systems across our activities and impacts.

AU's centre for Indigenous peoples and communities, Nukskahtowin (or "Meeting Place"), is a welcoming place for all people and ideas to come together. Since 2001, the main goal has been to recognize and develop traditional Indigenous knowledge and to support, protect, and keep Indigenous knowledge, education, and oral traditions strong. After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we renewed our commitment to all forms of Indigeneity at AU.

Acting from values, AU is committed in our systems and practices to working together to create a respectful, safe, and healthy environment in which to work and learn. The university, staff and students share the responsibility of creating and fostering a safe, healthy, and respectful working and learning environment.

AU seeks to be and build a welcoming community and connection in place and digital space. Throughout the year, AU has a range of in-person, hybrid, and online activities that span working, team meetings, retreats, and staff celebrations. AU's campus in Athabasca has been modernized over the past years to create an attractive and inclusive workplace for all people and teams with capacity for small to large gatherings and hybrid events, as well as portfolio, faculty, and organization-wide professional development, retreats, and celebrations. With onsite library, laboratory and makerspace facilities for staff and students, AU seeks to build culture and community throughout the year through a program of staff professional development and recreational activities.

Considerations in applying

A hybrid workplace, AU encourages applications from all eligible candidates—women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, persons of any sexual orientation, persons of any gender identity and expression, and members of equity-deserving groups are encouraged to apply.

AU is committed to fostering an inclusive, accessible workplace and learning environment that supports students and staff with disabilities, aiming to remove social, physical, and technological barriers. We welcome and encourage applications from people with disabilities. Accommodations are available on request for candidates taking part in all aspects of the selection process. We are committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for all candidates. If you require accommodation at any stage of the recruitment process, please contact hrca@athabascau.ca.

AU recognizes that life circumstances such as illness, disability, family and community responsibilities (e.g., maternity leave, parental leave, leaves due to illness) are expected to have an impact on any candidate's record of achievement. These impacts should be taken into consideration during the hiring process.

Athabasca First

Wherever possible, AU seeks to attract and hire qualified team members to reside in the Athabasca region of Alberta, Canada. We will offer relocation assistance for the right candidate should you decide to relocate to Athabasca. As a resident of the town or county of Athabasca, you can choose to work on and from our beautiful campus in Athabasca. To discover the Town and Region of Athabasca, go to: [Visit Athabasca](#).



Associate Vice-President, University Relations

Athabasca University is seeking an exceptional and visionary leader to serve as Associate Vice-President, University Relations (AVPUR), a pivotal role that will shape and advance the university's academic, teaching, and research mission and strategic priorities by strengthening internal and external connections and telling AU's many stories of success and impact.

Reporting to the Vice President Governance and University Relations and General Counsel (VPGURGC), the Associate Vice President, University Relations (AVPUR) supports Athabasca University's academic, teaching and research mission and strategic direction through planning, directing, and overseeing the strategy and delivery of high-quality internal and external relations functions of the university. The significant overlap between key interest holder groups demands fully integrated external and internal relations strategies that go beyond communications and marketing to authentic engagement with communities and helps interest holders understand how AU supports and promotes their lives, cultures, and society.

As a senior administrator, the AVPUR promotes and protects AU's reputation, values, and integrity by establishing and integrating, throughout the university, a standard of leadership excellence for areas of responsibility including marketing and communications, community engagement, digital and web operations, events (including convocation), and alumni and donor relations activities. The AVPUR ensures that university branding and messages are coordinated, strategically positioned, and effectively communicated across the university and externally, to further AU's academic mission and Like No Other strategic plan. As a leader at the University, the AVPUR provides coaching and sets a standard for integrative and collaborative work that includes line management, communication, delegation, transparency, accountability, and stability.

With a positive, collaborative and integrative approach the AVPUR advances and enhances AU's reputation and relationships with internal and external interest holders. The AVPUR supports the academic mission and the university's long-term sustainability through advocacy, community building, storytelling, partnerships, special events, and initiatives. Areas of responsibility include strategic communications, marketing and brand, community engagement, institutional events, fundraising and alumni

affairs. The AVPUR will effectively support and implement AU's strategic plan, the Academic Plan and departmental operational plans.

With a diligent focus on the department budget the AVPUR ensures transparency and accountability in a strategic manner. In all facets of this role, the AVPUR endeavours to integrate and advance the University's commitments to Access, Opportunity and Community and, with Indigenous Peoples and communities, conciliation.

Strategic Communications (25%)

Under the direction of the VPGURGC, the AVPUR increases understanding and engagement among the university's internal and external communities through thoughtful and inspiring communications strategies and approaches that effectively tells AU's stories in an impactful, meaningful way. These strategies amplify the university's reputation locally, provincially, nationally, and globally across web, mobile, social media, and other platforms, in ways that safeguard and grow the university's reputation, and reflect the university's mission and Like No Other Strategic Plan.

Under the direction of the President and the VPGURGC, and in collaboration with the Provost, the AVPUR supports crisis communications and issues management, in collaboration and cooperation with other members of SLT and unit leads, as needed, to protect and support the university's reputation.

Marketing and Brand (25%)

With a strong collaborative approach with faculties and units, and in close alignment with the university's strategic enrolment growth initiatives led by the Provost, the AVPUR oversees the development and execution of the AU marketing and brand strategy that strives to increase the understanding of, and engagement with AU's strengths, sustain and grow university enrolments, and promote AU's unique open university mission among the university's



internal and external communities, locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Digital and Web Operations (10%)

The AVPUR provide vision and leadership in the management of the university’s websites and digital platforms, ensuring that online information is accurate, accessible, and user-friendly and integrated with the strategic efforts of other groups in University Relations. The AVPUR provides direction in the maintenance of web content, development of new websites implementation of digital tools and systems, and provide leadership in working with departments across the university to deliver a consistent, engaging digital experiences for prospective students, current learners, alumni, and staff.

Community Engagement and Events (20%)

Under the direction of the President and VPGURGC and in consultation with the Provost, the AVPUR supports and maintains positive, productive relationships between AU and its communities, by building community pride in the University through the development and execution of an effective, relational, and relevant community engagement events – including convocation sponsorship and other opportunities. The AVPUR supports AU’s growing local and regional presence and champions proactive strategies to link the university to communities in Northern Alberta and

beyond, in ways that serve our communities and advance the mission of the university.

Advancement (20%)

The AVPUR provides the vision and leadership for the development and implementation of the University-wide advancement program, that produces measurable results, including alumni relations, major gift, annual fund, and planned giving; corporate and foundation giving; donor relations; and other fund-raising support.

Under the direction of the VPGURGC, provides strategic counsel to the President, Provost, deans and other members of SLT on advancement and alumni relations.

Develops and implements an alumni relations program that cultivates meaningful and lasting relationships with the university’s local, national and international alumni.

The incumbent inspires the growth of philanthropic support for the University, and manages key donor relationships to support measurable results including strategic funding initiatives, by elevating the visibility and importance of AU among donors and alumni.



The Individual

This individual is a strategic and values-driven thinker who prioritizes the university's academic mission and reputation, builds strong and trusting relationships, and fosters collaboration across diverse internal and external communities. Highly relational and emotionally intelligent, the successful candidate is an effective communicator and listener who demonstrates integrity, self-awareness, and sound judgment in decision-making, even in times of complexity and change. They are a visionary leader who can guide the future of communications, marketing, community engagement, digital operations, events, and advancement, while grounding decisions in data and organizational impact.

Qualifications

Education and Experience

- A Master's degree in a relevant field.
- Ten or more years of progressively advancing professional and management experience, with a strong record of leadership, management, and teamwork effectiveness in a complex administrative environment with multiple stakeholder groups.
- A minimum of five years at the management level, of which at least three years are in a senior management position
- Experience in post-secondary or public sector management is preferred.
- Experience in a unionized environment is preferred.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- Ability to prioritize the academic vision, mission, and reputation of the University at all times.
- Highly relational with strong team-building skills, both as team leader and collaborator
- Effective at building and sustaining all aspects of strategic and interpersonal partnerships for the benefit of the organization.

- Ability to learn and reflect to promote and growth in self and others.
- Effective listener and empathetic communicator.
- Strategic-thinker and decision maker.
- Values-driven Integrity, reflection, and self-awareness.
- Excellent problem-solving skills across a wide variety of both routine and unusual requests over acute and long timelines.
- Ability to meet strict deadlines.
- Committed to upholding confidentiality and sensitivity to controversial issues.
- Builds relationships internally and externally - understanding and responding effectively to the priorities and needs of diverse internal and external stakeholders.
- Ability to resolve disagreements, conflict and problems, while nurturing a safe and positive work environment and advancing the interests of the University.
- Versatile suite of work effectiveness skills combined with a strong work ethic.



Additional Information

KEY DATES

Consideration of candidates will begin in spring 2026, with the new AVP ideally taking office in the summer of 2026.

HOW TO APPLY

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the required criteria. The preferred method of application is online at:

<https://careers.odgers.com/en-ca/30667>

Nominations, applications and/or expressions of interest should be submitted, in confidence, to Andrea Patrick or Cora Hui of Odgers at AVPUR@odgers.com no later than May 29th, 2026.

YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

At Odgers, we have always respected the privacy and the confidentiality of the personal information provided to us in context with our executive search assignments. This has been a fundamental value in building trust with our candidates and clients. We are committed to keeping your information secure and managing it in accordance with our legal responsibilities wherever we operate in the world, including the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act ("PIPEDA") in Canada.

For more information on your rights and to find out more about how we process your personal data, a copy of our Privacy Policy is available for your review on our [website](#).

By providing us with a copy of your resume and any subsequent personal information directly or from third parties on your behalf such as references, you understand that it has been furnished with your consent for the purpose of possible disclosure to our client, who has agreed to comply with our Privacy Policy. We will not disclose your personal information to clients without your prior knowledge and consent.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION.

Odgers is deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all the work that we do. As part of our efforts to better understand our ability to reach as broad a pool of candidates as possible for our searches, our DEI team would like to encourage you to take a moment and access our [Self-Declaration Form](#).

CONTACT DETAILS

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

Andrea Patrick, Partner
Andrea.Patrick@odgers.com

Cora Hui, Senior Consultant
Cora.hui@odgers.com

