

CREATING OUR NEW STORY

An Integrated Action Plan for Building and Sustaining a Vibrant,
Equitable and Interconnected University Community

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A Note About Language

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

- **“Our”** means all of us – not just senior leadership, individuals with EDI in their titles, or an abstract concept. When the words “our” or “we” are used, they are intended to represent the whole interconnected community of people who work, study and engage across all areas of the University of Alberta.
- **“Institutional Story”** refers to the narrative used to guide us, instruct us and give us a sense of shared identity.
- **“Equity, Diversity and Inclusion”** or **“EDI”** refers to a framework intended to promote belonging and meaningful participation. The three concepts of EDI are separate, yet interrelated. When used together in continuous and coordinated ways, they have the potential to create environments that not only respect human dignity, but also encourage the development of learning and working environments shaped by curiosity, rigorous inquiry, mutual flourishing and respect. You can learn more about how EDI is understood in a university context in [Module 1: Foundations of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#).
- **“Institutional Ecosystem”** refers to the complex network of interacting, interconnected and interdependent parts (e.g., people, spaces, units, policies, technologies, to name a few) of our institutional whole.
- **“Institutional Decision Makers”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem where strategic decisions are approved and communicated to the university community.
- **“Coordinating Offices and Groups”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem responsible for coordinating institutional priorities and mandates with the needs and insights shared by community members at all levels of the university.
- **“Everyday Contributors and Advocates”** refers to the section of our institutional ecosystem that represents everyday actions and grassroots advocacy taking place in various locations across the university.
- **“Trajectories of Action”** is used to describe the interconnected paths required to build and sustain a vibrant, equitable and interconnected university. The word “trajectory” signals a shared direction, which may not be linear, and emphasizes the importance of approaching this work as ongoing, dynamic, responsive and perpetually in motion.

Introduction

The University of Alberta's Strategic Plan for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusivity reached the end of its four-year horizon in 2022. Since that time, the Office of the Provost has engaged in a number of consultative processes and published three reports that have been instrumental to the development of the Strategic Plan's next phase.

1. The 2018/2019 Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity Annual Report mapped our first year of institutional progress by highlighting major achievements in the areas of institutional leadership, research, teaching, workforce, student life and culture.
2. Stories from the Field: Reporting on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Action offered final reflections on the Strategic Plan by highlighting key learnings, major successes, personal frustrations and institutional challenges.
3. Continuing Our Stories: What We Heard During Consultations for the Integrated EDI Action Plan summarized priorities and needs to be addressed by the Integrated EDI Action Plan.

Collectively, these documents emphasize that a great deal has been accomplished to advance EDI at the department, faculty, college, unit and institutional levels. But they also suggest that there is still much more to be done. Common themes that emerge across all three documents highlight the need for an integrated approach to EDI that 1) interweaves the various institutional strategies, plans and structures; 2) develops coordinated processes to support and amplify the work of faculties, departments, colleges, units and other institutional groupings alongside everyday contributors and advocates; 3) adopts shared outcomes that amplify the voices and experiences of diverse knowledge holders; 4) recognizes the need for institutional commitments that move beyond values statements and instead translate into values-enacted actions that shift our culture as we move from EDI as "in addition to," to EDI as "what we do"; and 5) embraces the principles of mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interconnectedness.

Drawn from the learnings and insights of the past, especially these past five years of rapid and disorienting – and at times life-altering – changes, these themes have shaped the development of this document, which outlines a multi-level approach to building and sustaining a vibrant, equitable and interconnected university community.

Institutional Alignment

Equity is a core commitment in all of the University of Alberta's strategic documents. Positioned as a value statement, an aspirational goal and/or a key objective, our commitment to equity offers a mandate for deliberate and purposeful action toward greater access and belonging across the three core aspects of our mandate: education, research and engagement.

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

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

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

- **People Strategy**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Our university demonstrates strength in research that addresses systemic inequities and injustices for equity-denied groups through numerous researchers who bring a diversity of perspectives and knowledge. We are willing to have courageous conversations in support of our national commitments to reconciliation, the Scarborough Charter and the Dimensions Charter. Our university commits to centering the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization to embrace diverse ways of knowing, learning and doing” (p. 18).

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

Intended to help realize the commitments outlined in these strategic documents, *Creating a New Story* details the practices and actions that will be required in order to successfully build and sustain a vibrant, equitable and interconnected university community.

Honouring Lands and Relations

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

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

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

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

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

A History of EDI at the University of Alberta

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

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

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

1928: President H.M. Tory makes the promise for the U of A to “uplift the whole people.”

1977: Collège St. Jean becomes a full faculty at the U of A, becoming Faculté Saint-Jean and in 2005 Campus Saint-Jean.

1980: Student Support and Disability Services is established.

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

1990: The Office of Human Rights is formed.

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

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

2005: The first Associate Dean of Diversity at the U of A is established (held by Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2020: The Black Faculty Collective, a Black-led, grassroots group, is established.

2020: The Board of Governors approves a major revision to the Recruitment and Selection of Employees Policy Suite.

2021: The University of Alberta signs the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black Racism and Black Inclusion in Canadian Higher Education.

2021: The U of A conducts its first Student Diversity Census.

2022: The U of A launches *Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan*.

2022: The position of Vice-Provost (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) is established.

2022: The U of A undertakes the Black Academic Excellence Cohort Hire.

2022: The U of A launches the all-gender washroom pilot program.

2023: The Council on Systemic Ableism is established.

2024: The U of A implements the Primary-Affirmed Name Project.

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

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

The gains we have made and the learnings we have shared in the name of equity, diversity and inclusion must not be undervalued. EDI has been a useful framework for promoting fairness and belonging and increasing representation. The three letters together have come to signal a shared understanding that to be truly excellent, we need all voices and perspectives at the table as well as a collective commitment from those responsible for writing, approving and enacting strategic direction. But we have also made many mistakes and missteps in our efforts to build a more equitable, diverse and inclusive university – mistakes and missteps that have alienated and excluded people at all levels, across all disciplines and within all social locations. It would be easy to meet such mistakes with defensiveness and a narrowing of our collective work towards a more 'right' kind of EDI. Instead, with the release of this Integrated Action Plan, we hope to mobilize these learnings towards embracing a plurality of practices, multiple paradigms and diverse approaches to action that might collectively enable all members of the University of Alberta to come together across many kinds of difference in order to co-create a different story – a story that acknowledges our past, reflects our present and helps transform our future.

Toward a Different Story: Adopting Values-Based Practices

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

These pages are an invitation to embrace a kind of unified disunity – to create a university community that challenges the politics of sameness by ensuring everyone has the freedom to be different while remaining connected. These pages are an invitation for us to create a different story by learning from ideas from varied disciplines, paradigms, ideologies and cultural traditions. A story where the values-based practices in the list below (practices you can learn in the online module titled [Module 2: Practices of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)) are no longer things we aspire to, but are foundational to how we might collectively operate.

Some of the practices listed below might not feel like practices a university can, or should, embrace. But this does not need to be the case. Collectively, we must guard against the temptation to believe that our institutional boundaries define the limits of how we relate to each other and the outcomes of those relations. This list below, while not exhaustive, is intended to offer new, more expansive, ways of conceptualizing our responsibilities to one another, with the overall goal of redefining what it means to study and work at the University of Alberta.

Embracing Our Interconnectedness

We are, as we always have been, already interconnected. No matter what unit, college, faculty, or department we study or work within, our research, teaching, administration, service, supervision, mentorship and communication activities have been impacted by interconnected pieces of the past and will go on to impact interdependent pieces of our future. "*This*", as noted by the sociologist and activist Ruha Benjamin, "*is what disability justice organizers have been trying to tell us, and what Indigenous peoples have long asserted — that whether we want to accept it or not, we are connected, not just to other living things but to those yet born Interdependence is not only part of a sacred philosophy but also a guiding ethos for refashioning social and political structures*" (*Viral Justice: How We Grow the World We Want*, 2022, p. 9).

Engaging in Acts of Collective Remembering

Having collective understandings of history is essential when attempting to embrace our interconnectedness. Learning from the past through multiple, divergent perspectives and

methods better equips us for understanding and collectively engaging with complex contemporary and future challenges. In this sense, history – when shared by a number of diverse voices – is a teacher. It teaches us about the injustices of the past, highlights the strength of those who have survived these injustices and reminds us that there is no such thing as a predetermined future. This is how collective remembering becomes a tool for collective action. If we look back with a critical curiosity, we come to see that, at particular points in time, things were very different than they are now, which means they could also be very different in the future.

Promoting Mutual Flourishing for All

Mutual flourishing is the outcome of a world-making project that strives to ensure all living beings, both human and non-human, are thriving, peaceful and connected. The concept of mutual flourishing is rooted in an acknowledgement that all living things are simultaneously interconnected and interdependent. In order to realize mutual flourishing, building and sustaining equity is not optional. Those who are committed to the realization of mutual flourishing are therefore committed to transforming decision-making frameworks and interpersonal relationships in ways that ensure accessibility, create belonging and cultivate healing.

Realizing the Possibilities of Uncomfortable Encounters

Encounters tend to be understood as unexpected meetings, within or across species, ideas or with the world around us. They may have many qualities: surprising, banal, uncomfortable, unfamiliar, disruptive and so forth. Everyone of us carries a history of encounters that, to a greater or lesser degree, contribute to who we are. Thus, it could be said that encounters carry within them the possibility to catalyze something new, such as a new perspective or approach. When thinking about encounters, the question isn't, "How do we reduce or eliminate uncomfortable, unfamiliar, or disruptive moments?" Rather, the question is, "What potential for learning is there, in the encounter?"

Engaging our Critical Consciousness

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

Positioning Love as a Guiding Ethos

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

Investing in Processes of Creation and Community Building

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

Our future is not predetermined. Telling different stories – ones that result in different futures – is therefore timely and necessary work. It is work that begins by noticing the ways small actions create complex connections that, in turn, shape larger ecosystems. No one person or no one decision exists in isolation. What we practice in our offices, our labs and our classrooms sets the patterns for the entire ecosystem. Therefore, whether we are contributing to our university community as students and staff, as decision-makers, or through influence of committees and networks, we are impacted by and can impact our institutional ecosystem.

Building Our New Story

A Multi-dimensional Model for Transformation

It bears repeating: we are, as we always have been, already interconnected. In an attempt to illustrate the relationship among existing forms of institutional coordination, the following multi-dimensional model has been organized around three interdependent sections of our institutional ecosystem. Each section of our ecosystem is positioned as part of a larger wheel, which represents collaboration and steady movement. As the three interdependent sections –

Institutional Decision Makers, Coordinating Offices and Groups, and Everyday Contributors and Advocates – make mutually beneficial decisions and take transformative action, the wheel gains traction and momentum across four trajectories: 1) Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters; 2) Ensuring Inclusive Excellence; 3) Enhancing Access to Academic and Community Life; and 4) Nurturing Transformative Collaborations.

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

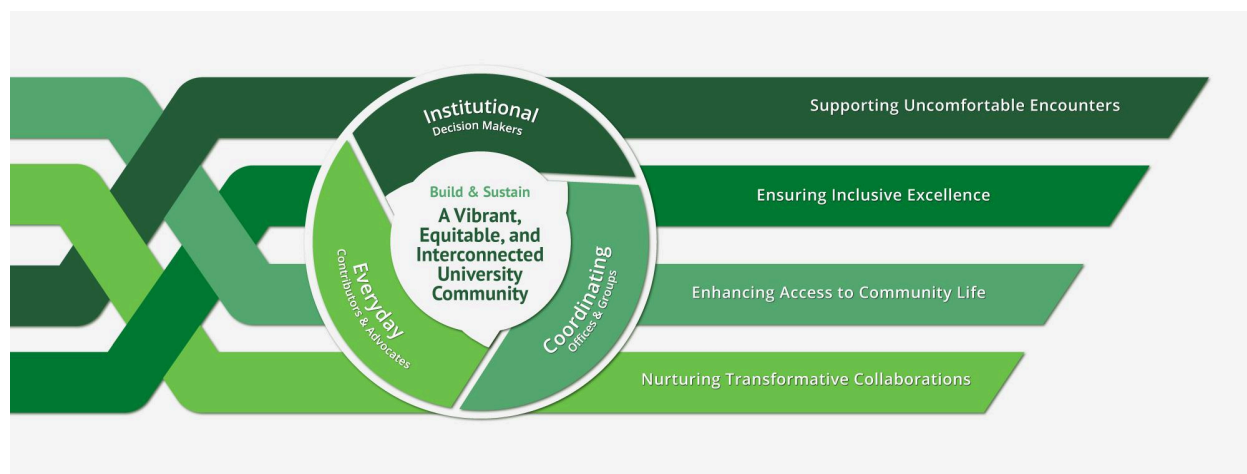


IMAGE 1. A MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL FOR TRANSFORMING THE U of A'S INSTITUTIONAL ECOSYSTEM

Interdependent Sections of Our Institutional Ecosystem

Universities are ordered and patterned in many ways, whether through academic disciplines and departments, service units, or policies and procedures. There are many ways the patterns and connections that exist across our institutional ecosystem could have been articulated. The three interdependent sections that are detailed in the model above are meant to attend to the historical and structural relations that predate this document, while simultaneously accounting for the possibilities that exist when the relationships between and among these sections are reimagined. Each section should therefore not be viewed as static, nor the relationships unidirectional. New mechanisms and documents will be added as outdated ones are removed. Additionally, different groups and strategies will guide our work at different times and from different locations. It is for this reason that these core pieces of our institutional ecosystem are not overly detailed. Each section needs to allow for the ever-changing elements and collaborative constellations that come with transformative action. By limiting the pieces of the ecosystem to the three sections detailed below, the model provides a tool to help conceptualize the differing roles and responsibilities, while also recognizing that these roles and responsibilities will (and must) adapt to changes in our institutional ecosystem.

Institutional Decision Makers

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

Coordinating Offices and Groups

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

Everyday Contributors and Advocates

This section of the ecosystem represents everyday actions and grassroots advocacy taking place in various locations across the university. Representing the wealth of knowledge and innovation among members of the university community, this section highlights the essential role of researchers, teachers, staff members and students. It also emphasizes the need for equity-oriented community leadership and reinforces the importance of “nothing about us without us.” Examples of communities and mechanisms that are included in this section include: community-driven initiatives, student groups and clubs, research labs, faculty and staff collectives and other individuals attempting to influence systems and enact change in their own sphere of influence.

Trajectories for Action

Cutting across the interdependent sections in the model there are four trajectories for action: 1) Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters; 2) Ensuring Inclusive Excellence; 3) Enhancing Access to Academic and Community Life; and 4) Nurturing Transformative Collaborations. The word “trajectory” has been used to signal that as a university and as individuals, we are not at the beginning, nor is there a specified end – instead, there is a shared direction, which may not be linear, with many indicators of success plotted all along each trajectory. It also demonstrates that the work requires vertical, horizontal and cross-cutting relationships and interactions. There

is not one entry point into the work, nor is it fixed – it is ongoing, dynamic, responsive and in motion. People, units, or initiatives from all three areas of the institutional ecosystem can act in any trajectory at any point along our path to build and sustain a vibrant, equitable and interconnected institution. As has been previously noted, small actions create complex connections that, in turn, shape larger ecosystems. As we collectively work to transform our institutional ecosystem we must remember that every person and every decision is part of a greater whole. What we practice in our offices, our labs and our classrooms sets the patterns for the entire ecosystem. Therefore, whether we are contributing to our university community as students and staff, as decision-makers, or through influence of committees and networks, we have a role to play in crafting our new institutional story.

Telling Our New Story through Collective Actions

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

The actions in the following pages reflect our commitment to telling this new institutional story. Gathered through a series of engagements with the members of the university community, these actions are intended to contribute to work that is already underway, while simultaneously highlighting new actions that can be started over the next two years. Some actions echo, amplify and add weight to those in other institutional strategic and action plans, whether explicitly or implicitly. The actions help us demonstrate where connections and relationships already exist, identify what bridges must be built, determine where efficiencies could be leveraged and highlight the need for mechanisms that engage and amplify diverse voices.

In each trajectory, the actions have been organized using a series of tables. Each table represents a different suite of actions in three domains: 1) Improving Structures that Guide Us (e.g., guidelines, policies, procedures); 2) Improving Cultures that Support Us (e.g., transformative processes, resources); 3) Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge (e.g., equity-oriented tools for communication, learning, celebrating). All sections of our institutional ecosystem – Institutional Decision Makers, Coordinating Offices and Groups, and Everyday Contributors and Advocates – have a role to play in realizing the actions in each domain.

Trajectory #1: Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters

Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters represents our institutional commitment to fostering spaces where freedom of expression, intellectual pluralism, individual consent, dissent and safe-enoughness can co-exist. There is much to be gained during moments of tension, discomfort and disagreement. But in order for these moments to be useful and transformative, they must be handled with care. For diversity to flourish, we need to equip U of A members with the skills they need to lead and succeed in a pluralistic community. The actions in this trajectory are intended to help us build the skills, capacities and strategies required to meaningfully engage within and across difference.

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

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

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Develop transparent principles to guide decision-making and official communications in times of conflict and crisis.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop a more robust, equity-oriented 'toolkit' of institutional programs and policies that can be efficiently mobilized in response to emergent conflicts, crises (personal, institutional, local and global) and harms.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Develop transparent institutional strategies for supporting safety while forefronting freedom of expression in relation to contentious conversations and dissent-based events held on U of A campuses.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Continue to develop and implement non-disciplinary accountability options (e.g., restorative, skill-building, trauma-informed) that can be chosen in instances of interpersonal harm, conflict, and breach of University policy	Institutional Decision Makers
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Clarify and diversify trauma-informed supports and responses for community members in all roles who are impacted by personal, institutional, local and global crises.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop and share (through a knowledge-sharing digital space) resources that enable those in teaching, researching, service and leadership roles to support contentious conversations and uncomfortable encounters across difference by drawing on critical thinking and critical consciousness while prioritizing dignity and safe-enoughness for all.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Profile and amplify the work of everyday contributors and coordinating offices and groups who offer innovative or exemplary approaches to supporting brave spaces and dialogues with dignity across differences.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
Develop and collaborate on regular gatherings, workshops, and events in colleges, faculties and units that involve collective sharing, storytelling, and developing greater capacity for supporting uncomfortable encounters.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Develop mechanisms to clearly articulate how the U of A statement on freedom of expression and academic freedom are operationalized for different roles within the University, and in relation to human rights, Treaty rights and collective agreements, including the responsibility to serve and teach all community members with dignity and respect.	Institutional Decision Makers
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Trajectory #2: Ensuring Inclusive Excellence

Ensuring Inclusive Excellence represents our institutional commitment to acknowledge the relationship among diversity, equity and quality. True innovation involves engagement with novel and wide-ranging perspectives, ideas, theories and methods. Diversity drives innovation and creativity, and equity ensures all can succeed. Our definition of excellence understands equity as essential to a true understanding of merit. The actions outlined in this trajectory are intended to contribute to the relational, structural and systemic changes required to attract and retain the students, faculty and staff who can best support the University's vision of outstanding achievements in learning, discovery and citizenship.

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

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

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Support colleges and faculties to identify collaborative opportunities for cohort hiring for better retention of equity-denied faculty and staff through increased community, informal mentorship and peer-support.	Institutional Decision Makers
Explore and communicate recommended practices for chairs, deans and hiring managers for more equitable recruitment, hiring, and onboarding including equitable practices for offers (e.g., salary guidelines for greater pay-equity, partner-hire principles, etc.).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Review and offer recommendations for frameworks around more equitable approaches to annual evaluation and awards processes (e.g., faculty evaluation, academic and support staff evaluation, teaching evaluation, teaching awards, etc) for individual and collective success.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Explore and review opportunities for collaborative, transparent, equitable and flexible work policies and/or guidelines.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Develop recommended guidelines for graduate/undergraduate programs seeking to implement holistic recruitment/admissions practices that address multiple indicators of success while reducing known discriminatory barriers.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Integrate strategies during student transition to university that support retention and success, considering the specific needs of equity-denied students.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
Maintain, and where feasible establish, peer-led affinity groups and/or spaces that support equity-denied students and staff by connecting them with mentorship, resources, advocacy networks and community.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Develop, coordinate and support the adoption of resources on student assessment course design and teaching practices that are learner-centred, evidence-based and promote equity, accessibility, interdependence and success.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Develop resources and strategies that enable all staff to learn about Indigenous, anti-oppressive, restorative, trauma-informed and emerging pedagogies and ways of working together.	Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Identify and prioritize plans to bring student and employee census data together with data in administrative systems (respecting confidentiality) for data-informed decision-making around allocating resources and supports in a manner that promotes equity and belonging (e.g., to better understand the student experience lifecycle, or research grant support needs, or staff retention opportunities).	Institutional Decision Makers
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Clarify how existing benefits can be leveraged to support equity-denied employees and their goals (e.g., what suite of benefits can be accessed to support gender affirmation, fertility, caregiving).	Coordinating Offices and Groups
Create/review and circulate resources that support greater equity in assigning or assessing teaching, service and workloads for faculty and staff.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop and adopt principles that establish transparency on when institution-wide resources (print, services, training, etc.) must be developed and/or offered in both French and English.	Institutional Decision Makers
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Trajectory #3: Enhancing Access to Academic and Community Life

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

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

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

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Develop detailed, transparent plans for how various administrative offices will support and invest in the institutional commitment to cultural and psychological safety and well-being, recognizing the differential impact of safety considerations on members of equity-denied communities.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop guidelines and/or processes to ensure that new or revised policies, procedures and academic programs adequately account for equity-denied communities, reducing the need for exceptions and accommodations and resulting in efficiencies and increased belonging; ensure these are reflected in regular review mechanisms (e.g., Quality Assurance review, etc.).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Identify and adopt shared access frameworks and access practices for determining, communicating and enhancing accessibility and community connection, reducing the need for exceptions and accommodations and resulting in efficiencies and increased belonging (e.g., in digital infrastructure).	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Commit to and fund strategic, sustainable and impactful access improvements to the built environment, including commitments for all new builds and prioritized renovations as well as resourcing strategic access enhancements.	Institutional Decision Makers
Plan and coordinate space allocation to address under-met community needs (e.g., prayer & lactation spaces, affirming washrooms, diverse study spaces).	Institutional Decision Makers
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Improve the student and staff accommodation process by promoting mutual and collaborative responsibility for access and accessibility across all levels of the organization alongside identifying opportunities for greater clarity around and potential improvements to formal accommodations processes.	Institutional Decision Makers/ Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Develop more robust, transparent and intersectional wrap-around supports for international students, particularly in areas where there are known challenges and barriers.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
Expand the Options Navigation Network and confidential disclosure mechanisms to include all forms of interpersonal and psychosocial harm (e.g., racism) and ensure support staff ONN members are given training, role clarity.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Find or appoint an access "champion" or committee that will work with other champions across campus in supporting the integration of the above-described initiatives into each team, unit or faculty.	Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

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

Trajectory #4: Nurturing Transformative Collaborations

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

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

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

Improving Structures that Guide Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Develop detailed and transparent plans that outline how administrative offices will support and invest in those who lead others and those who lead with influence to support change and culture crafting.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop an equity and access audit as part of the institutional review of shared services (CASIP) and expand to review of strategic partner models (e.g., research partner networks) for improved collaboration.	Institutional Decision Makers
Develop a set of collaboration and community-engagement guidelines that can be used by groups wanting to enable values-enacted, equity-oriented practices in reaching their project or team goals.	Coordinating Offices and Groups
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving Cultures that Support Us	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Finalize EDI online learning modules and certification, as well as develop processes to encourage the uptake of these modules and other EDI-related online learning (e.g., Black Canadians course) for individuals, teams, and committees (e.g., hiring, awards) looking to calibrate their work around equity, access and belonging.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Build more formalized processes for recognizing, accounting for, mentoring and supporting those who are often called on to engage in or support equity-related work, including embedding recognition into existing programs and developing novel recognition procedures (e.g., awards) for those advancing the goals of all four trajectories in this plan.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Establish dedicated support for internal university groups and networks to host events or launch initiatives that amplify the core practices of this Integrated Action Plan or contribute to our collective capacity to enact this plan.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups// Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Improving the Ways We Share Knowledge	
Action	Section of the Ecosystem Responsible
Create a resource hub for accessing all tools, resources, services and learning opportunities across the institution that support the four trajectories and identify gaps to be updated at regular intervals.	Institutional Decision Makers
Improve the communication of strategic actions (including those in institutional strategic and action plans beyond this plan) that advance the principles of equity, mutuality, reciprocity, responsibility and interdependence, including reviewing the structure and impact of equity-oriented coordinating groups as well as communication among institutional decision makers on equity-related matters.	Institutional Decision Makers / Coordinating Offices and Groups
Develop mechanisms by which individual action plans (below) along with informal groups and champions feed into transformative institutional change.	Institutional Decision Makers / Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Champion the accessible and impact-driven mobilization of U of A research that can support the implementation and reach of this action plan.	Everyday Contributors and Advocates
Indicators of Success (to be developed)	

Sustaining Our New Story

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

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

Improving the Ways We (Re)Imagine Our Story
Design an evaluative framework, in collaboration with key researchers and practitioners, to assess how well the institution and units within the University are progressing across all four trajectories that measure outcomes, process alignment and impact.
Develop a community-facing dashboard to communicate institutional goals and report on progress. The evaluative framework will provide the data to be displayed on the dashboard.
Establish mechanisms for continuous community feedback, reviewing and updating the plan when stories need to be continued, closed, expanded, woven in and changed. This includes communicating updates to the plan to the community.
Gather everyday contributors and advocates, coordinating networks and groups, decision-makers and community interest holders intermittently to share in constructive and solutions-focused conversations that propel the trajectories and actions of this plan.
Craft and lead an equity-oriented change management approach to support everyday contributors and advocates, coordinating networks and groups, decision-makers and the U of A community that promotes shared understandings, tools and frameworks that enable broad change through unit-specific and contextual transformations.
Indicators of Success (to be developed)

But improving the ways we (re) imagine our stories isn't just the work of the Office of the Vice Provost (EDI). Creating, and recreating, new institutional stories requires all of us. Each of us can be pattern-changers, world-makers and cycle-breakers. And we can do so in our own way and with our unique skills. We therefore invite you to share your story by using the *Individual Action Planning Workbook* (see appendix) to consider what role(s) you play within our institutional ecosystem and articulate your commitments to building and sustaining a vibrant, equitable and interconnected university community.

Improving the Ways We Share in Responsibility: Writing Your Story

Complete the *Individual Action Planning Workbook* using the below worksheet and uploading your commitments at the link provided. You may also use the Form <link to be developed> to complete the questions.

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

Appendix: Individual Action Planning Workbook

Building and sustaining a vibrant, equitable and interconnected university community requires all of us. Each of us can be pattern-changers, world-makers and cycle-breakers. We invite you, in your role as a researcher, teacher, staff member, student or community ambassador, to use this template to identify the actions you will take to help make our new institutional story a reality.

Trajectory #1: Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters

Supporting Uncomfortable Encounters represents our institutional commitment to fostering spaces where freedom of expression, intellectual pluralism, individual consent, dissent and safe-enoughness can co-exist. Consider the following questions as you identify actions in this trajectory.

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

<p>What skills do you have that could help your unit, college, faculty, department, or other groups you work with meaningfully engage within and across difference?</p>		
<p>Thinking about your unique skills, what actions could you take to help foster spaces where freedom of expression, intellectual pluralism, individual consent, dissent and safe-enoughness can co-exist?</p> <p><i>*Think about the actions you can take within your sphere of influence.</i></p>	<p>What other people/areas of the institution would need to be involved?</p>	<p>How will you know if you've been successful?</p>

Trajectory #2: Ensuring Inclusive Excellence

Ensuring Inclusive Excellence represents our institutional commitment to acknowledge the relationship among diversity, equity and quality. True innovation involves engagement with novel and wide-ranging perspectives, ideas, theories and methods. Consider the following questions as you identify actions in this trajectory.

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

<p>What skills do you have that could help your unit, college, faculty, department, or other groups you work with to acknowledge, and better understand, the relationship between diversity and quality?</p>		
<p>Thinking about your unique skills, what actions could you take to support the sharing of diverse perspectives, ideas, theories and methods? <i>*Think about the actions you can take within your sphere of influence.</i></p>	<p>What other people/areas of the institution would need to be involved?</p>	<p>How will you know if you've been successful?</p>

Trajectory #3: Enhancing Access to Academic and Community Life

Enhancing Access to Academic and Community Life refers to our institutional commitment to ensure all students, staff and faculty have the support they need to flourish. Consider the following questions as you identify actions in this trajectory.

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

<p>What skills do you have that could help your unit, college, faculty, department, or other groups you work identify and address recurring and preventable barriers?</p>		
<p>Thinking about your unique skills, what actions could you take to ensure all students, staff and faculty have the support they need to flourish? <i>*Think about the actions you can take within your sphere of influence.</i></p>	<p>What other people/areas of the institution would need to be involved?</p>	<p>How will you know if you've been successful?</p>
Empty space for response	Empty space for response	Empty space for response

Trajectory #4: Nurturing Transformative Collaborations

Nurturing Transformative Collaborations refers to our institutional commitment to not only come together across units, faculties, disciplines and paradigms, but to also question the boundaries of those entities in ways that transform how we collectively work, teach, learn and research.

Consider the following questions as you identify actions in this trajectory.

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

<p>What skills do you have that could help your unit, college, faculty, department, or other groups you work reimagine how we learn, relate, and innovate together?</p>		
<p>Thinking about your unique skills, what actions could you take to develop transformational collaborations? <i>*Think about the actions you can take within your sphere of influence.</i></p>	<p>What other people/areas of the institution would need to be involved?</p>	<p>How will you know if you've been successful?</p>

Upload completed responses at the following Form <[link to be developed](#)>.