

AUSU Strategic Plan

2020 – 2023

Introduction

Since 1992, the Athabasca University Students' Union (AUSU) has stood alongside Athabasca University (AU) students to enrich their online academic experience. At the organization's core is a driven "student first" team of elected student councillors, executive committee members, and team of professional staff that are committed to meeting the unique online learning needs for AU students.

By remaining adaptable, relevant, and professional, AUSU can serve its student membership while offering valuable services and continually advocating for AU students at all levels of Athabasca University, as well as the provincial and federal governments.

The strategic plan is an opportunity for AUSU to develop long-term strategies for meeting the organizational mission and vision. Through the creation of overarching goals, actionable strategies to fulfill those goals, and values to guide the organization along the way, AUSU will continually strive for excellence within the AU community.

AUSU's Strategic Plan structure consists of the following elements:

- **Mission Statement:** Defines why AUSU exists and identifies who it serves.
- **Vision Statement:** An aspirational description of what AUSU is seeking to accomplish and is the organization's road map of and what AUSU strives to become by setting a direction for the organization.
- **Values and Guiding Principles:** Identifies what is most important as AUSU executes its goals.
- **Core Goals:** Overarching goals that support AUSU's mission and vision. Executive and staff goals support this list to maintain organizational momentum and accountability.
- **Goal Strategies:** Actionable items that broadly outline how AUSU will achieve success and fulfill its mission.
- **Organization Plan:** Detailed document that captures all goal strategies & tasks undertaken throughout the life cycle of the strategic plan, and includes task ownership, timelines, and status of the action being taken.
- **Executive Workplans:** Annually developed workplans that are council-approved and outline the ongoing individual tasks associated with each executive portfolio, which tie into the strategic plan.
- **Annual Report:** An annual document that keeps the organization accountable to its membership and outlines the work done throughout the year in relation to all the contributing elements of the strategic plan, as well as the reporting of the year-end financial statements.

While the Strategic Plan is reviewed every 3 years, the goals, workplans, and numerous annual tasks are reviewed throughout each year with ongoing metrics guiding AUSU's decision making. The alignment of the above strategic plan elements ensures AUSU's yearly momentum is maintained and focus remains on AU student success.

Mission

The Athabasca University Students' Union exists to serve its student membership and enhance their AU undergraduate experience. Through meaningful services, advocacy, and student leadership, AUSU embraces its student diversity while supporting an exceptional online learning experience.

Vision

The Athabasca University Students' Union has students at the heart of the organization and supports their exceptional online learning journey, while continually seeking opportunities to enhance the AU student experience, now and in the future.

Values and Guiding Principles:

Students First: AUSU will keep students at the forefront of its decision making, understanding that its primary objective is to enhance the overall undergraduate student experience at Athabasca University. AUSU is proud of the student diversity within the organization and celebrates the successes of its members. AUSU will continually strive to bring awareness and recognition of its AUSU members and adapt to their ever-changing needs.

Relevance: AUSU services are developed based on the needs of AU undergraduate students and must be relevant to those ever-changing needs. Adaptability is essential to ensure services achieve a high level of value to our members.

Accountability: AUSU will strive to be transparent and accountable in all aspects of the organization, while always respecting student dollars.

Excellence: AUSU will continually strive for a high level of integrity, quality, professionalism, and respect, while holding AU to the same standard of excellence at all levels of the University.

Community: AUSU will promote and participate in developing awareness and recognition of open, online and distance education, while fostering an interactive and engaging virtual student community that connects students across borders and faculties.

Advocacy: AUSU will advocate to all levels of the university and government to ensure that undergraduate students are represented, and their voices are heard. AUSU will foster strong student leadership and promote the value of an online-distance education.

AUSU Council will strive to uphold the values and principles of our organization and constantly measure ourselves against them.

Core Goals:

- 1) **Advocacy Goal:** AUSU will support and advocate for all AU undergraduate students while representing their unique needs to the university, and provincial and federal governments.

In pursuit of the advocacy goal, AUSU will:

- Continue to update and expand on position policies on an annual basis;
- Advocate for universal accessibility to post-secondary education;
- Utilize an annual AUSU advocacy document, based on the goals and priorities identified by the membership;
- Bring the unique AU student experience to the table with stakeholders;
- Advocate for essential student mental health services;
- Advocate for enhanced accessibility needs for all AU students;
- Develop the capacity to be a research leader in student advocacy and to support the students' council, executive committee, and professional staff;
- Represent AU students and their unique needs while advocating for affordable and predictable tuition and fees;
- Be a strong resource for Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) to ensure the voices of AU undergraduate students are heard at the federal level; and
- Advocate to all faculties of Athabasca University for innovative teaching excellence.

- 2) **Student Engagement Goal:** AUSU will cultivate a collaborative environment that fosters a high level of student engagement. Within this environment AU undergraduate students should feel supported and aware of all services offered by the AU Students' Union, and the value they bring to their online learning experience.

In pursuit of the student engagement goals, AUSU will:

- Foster an environment where all AU undergraduate students are aware of what services are available to them throughout their academic careers, and communicate them across multiple channels;
- Conduct annual surveys seeking feedback from the AUSU membership on relevant topics facing AU students;
- Showcase student governance in an online distance environment;
- Highlight student leadership opportunities through AUSU elections;
- Develop an Indigenous student representative role within AUSU;
- Implement the Social Media and Communications Strategy; and
- Utilize The Voice Magazine as a student engagement tool to promote the AU community and foster member engagement.

- 3) **Member Services Goal:** AUSU will create awareness of all its services and student resources, while continuing to seek feedback from its student membership in order to maintain relevancy and meet the ever-changing needs of AU students.

In pursuit of the member services goal, AUSU will:

- Collect data and student feedback to assist in measuring the success of its member services;
- Ensure AUSU's services are meeting the unique needs of AU undergraduate students from application to graduation and beyond;
- Ensure mental health support is maintained as an AU priority for its membership;
- Investigate innovative services unique to the online distance learning environment;
- Remain adaptable during the COVID-19 pandemic and other difficult times, to ensure AUSU continues to meet the needs of AU students;
- Continuously review existing student awards and develop future awards that meet the diverse needs of the AU student body; and
- Be a strong advocate for The Voice Magazine to elevate its profile within the AU community.

- 4) **Community Partnerships Goal:** AUSU will strive to create partnerships internally and externally from AU, that seek mutual benefit and enhancement of the AU student experience.

In pursuit of the community partnerships goal, AUSU will:

- Develop strong internal relationships by hosting regular meetings with AU stakeholders;
- Create a partnership with AU for a new student mobile app platform that will create community and enhance students' ability to engage with their university;
- Be a strong resource for AU to ensure they always seek to have a student at the table when making decisions;
- Partner with AU to establish AUSU office space within the new AU campus space located in Edmonton, AB;
- Strengthen AUSU's relationships with student led organizations at the provincial and federal levels;
- Connect with Open UK to expand AUSU's reach and develop partnerships with fellow online students' union;
- Foster an environment of inclusion and equality with all members of AUSU's diverse student community;
- Act as ambassadors for online and distance learners to the general public and post secondary community; and
- Strengthen AUSU's relationships with fellow student led organizations.

5) **Organizational Goal:** AUSU will strive to be an organization of significance, with undergraduate students' needs always being at the forefront of its decision making. AUSU's strong foundation makes it a leader amongst its fellow student organizations.

In pursuit of the organizational goal, AUSU will:

- Continue to develop a strong foundation for AUSU to grow as an organization;
- Keep professionalism, collaboration, and teamwork as pillars for the organization;
- Foster transparency and be fiscally responsible, while respecting the student dollar;
- Be accountable for its actions and continually track its progress throughout the life cycle of the strategic plan to ensure all tasks and decisions are captured for record keeping and future decision making;
- Create a professional environment that maximizes the potential of staff, executives, and councillors;
- Foster a culture of importance, understanding that what AUSU does for students matters;
- Become experts in managing change to allow for seamless transitions for AUSU's executive teams and council;
- Offer both distance and face-to-face opportunities for student leadership collaboration; and
- Solidify AUSU's governance structure by maintaining relevant bylaws and policies.