UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



EAS MONTHLY

NOV 2026

[Departmental Newsletter]



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Building on Our Strengths, Planning for Our Future

This week, our department finalized a draft of its five-year faculty hiring plan. Although it might sound like a fairly routine administrative exercise, I found the process genuinely encouraging. This wasn't simply an attempt to identify positions we would like to fill over the next five years. It was more an opportunity to think collectively about the next generation of science and scholarship in our department, and how we might position ourselves to contribute meaningfully to the challenges facing society.

One of the interesting things about our department is how diverse we are. We have five broad areas of disciplinary strength: palaeontology, human geography, planning, environmental geoscience, and geology. These are remarkably different disciplines. Certainly, other departments encompass a diversity of research interests, but I suspect few on campus bring together fields that are as distinctive in their approaches, methodologies and (intellectual) traditions. After all, almost everyone in a chemistry department understands the foundations of chemistry. The same cannot necessarily be said of the disciplines represented in our department.



Like our department, the industrious North American beaver (Castor canadensis) builds on what is already there, adapts to changing conditions, and occasionally undertakes ambitious engineering projects. Fortunately, our five-year plan requires considerably less tree felling. I know, this is a little sappy. But hey, you try to write a newsletter article every month!
Photo: Courtney Celley, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (public domain).

What made this planning exercise rewarding was the way our different research groups approached it. Each group was asked to consider the faculty positions that would best support its future, but what emerged was something more thoughtful than a collection of competing wish lists. There was a genuine appreciation for the needs of other groups and a recognition that building a stronger department requires some give and take.

One particularly good example was the identification of GIS and remote sensing as a departmental priority. Even colleagues who do not work directly in these areas recognized their importance across our teaching and research programs. More generally, I was impressed by how readily people acknowledged the needs of disciplines outside their own. There seemed to be a shared understanding that strengthening one part of the department can create opportunities for others.

For students reading this, the positions we identified might offer an interesting glimpse into where we hope the department will be heading. They include opportunities to rebuild our capacity

in atmospheric science and climate modelling, strengthen GIS and remote sensing, expand environmental sustainability and human geography, and develop expertise in mineral systems, geochemistry and critical resources. We also identified priorities in northern environmental geochemistry, human systems and geospatial analysis, environmental and community planning, structural geology, carbonate sedimentology and biostratigraphy.

These aren't simply replacements for retiring colleagues, although maintaining our established strengths is very important. They represent opportunities to build new research connections and develop programs that respond to emerging scientific and societal needs. Critical minerals and resource security, for example, are increasingly important, but understanding mineral resources also requires consideration of environmental stewardship, communities and the social dimensions of resource development. Similarly, research in northern environments offers opportunities to bring together geoscience, environmental change, human geography, planning and meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities. Climate resilience, sustainability and the responsible management of natural resources are challenges that benefit enormously from the breadth of expertise represented in our department.

Of course, preparing a hiring plan and receiving approval to implement it are two (very) different things. We don't yet know how much of our proposal will be supported by the College or Faculty, and there will undoubtedly be difficult decisions ahead. But, it's nice to dream. The exercise was valuable regardless of the eventual outcome. It gave us an opportunity to reflect on who we have been, what we do particularly well, and what we might become.

Perhaps most reassuring was the recognition that our historical strengths need not be abandoned to pursue new directions. In many cases, the most exciting opportunities involve taking areas in which we have long excelled and expanding them to address contemporary questions. In other cases, we have opportunities to establish entirely new strengths that complement what we already do.

I suppose that's what I enjoyed most about the process. It's not every day that we get to sit down as colleagues and have a positive, forward-looking conversation about what our department could become. And it was particularly gratifying to see that conversation conducted with such respect for the different disciplines and perspectives that make up EAS.

So here's to building on our old strengths, forging some new ones, and creating a department that offers even better opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students while preparing the next generation of scientists, scholars and professionals to contribute to society.

Most Gorgeous Gourd Award

Seven teams competed, and the winner has been chosen. This year's title of 'Most Gorgeous Gourd' goes to **Gourd Lovers**!
See all of the entries here.



Fall Franks Recap

Thank you to everyone who came out for hotdogs, we had a great turnout!



Winter Gear Donations: Last Call

We will accepting donations in the main office (ESB 1-26) until November 5th.
Starting November 6th at 1pm, all items will be made available for students in ESB 1-39. We will keep items out through Reading Week.



EAS Holiday Potluck: Save the Date

We will be holding our annual holiday lunch potluck on **Thursday December 10th**. Stay tuned for more details.



Find a Person Directory Changes

As part of the ongoing work to improve the accuracy and reliability of employee information in the U of A Directory (Find a Person), several changes will be applied on November 3, 2026. These changes will clarify which information comes from PeopleSoft HCM, restore previously removed contact-card functionality, and address reported contact-card issues.
The following are the changes that faculty and staff will see:

Department Information

- Employees will no longer be able to override the Department information displayed on their Directory profile. The Department will reflect their current employment record in PeopleSoft HCM.
- Employees may continue to hide their Department and display their Department Group instead, including where privacy or security considerations apply.
- For previously hidden contact cards, the department group will be displayed.

Contact Card Information

- Employees will continue to be able to edit their contact cards, including Title, Location, Email, etc. Non-contact card features remain unchanged in this release.
- Beginning in December, the option to create an additional contact card will be available. The new card may include Title, Department, Email, Phone, and Address.
- Previously hidden contact cards will become visible. Employees will have the option to hide the Title and Department displayed on these cards.

Employees are encouraged to log in after the November 3 implementation to review their profile. If you previously had an additional card that is still required, you will be able to create a new one when the functionality becomes available in December. Additional support information will be shared closer to implementation.

Outstanding Expense Claims, PCard Transactions and Cash

Outstanding expense claims, including PCard transactions and cash advances that have been in a pending status for more than 240 days, will be automatically deleted in PeopleSoft Financials on November 27, 2026. A "pending" status means that an expense report(s) has been started, but not fully submitted.

To check if you have any pending claims, navigate to PeopleSoft Financials: Self Service Center > Travel and Expenses > Modify Expense Report. If you have pending claims that still require reimbursement, follow the instructions below:

1. Update your claim details
2. Click 'Submit Expense Report'
3. Check the small flag on the confirmation page before clicking 'OK'
4. If you have submitted your expense correctly, you will see the following confirmation message: 'Your expense report has been submitted for approval' at the top of the page.

Action Required: Technology Impacts of the Alberta Time Transition

Alberta is moving to permanent Alberta Time, meaning clocks will not fall back an hour on Nov. 1, 2026. To prevent technology disruptions, please complete the following actions:

- **University-managed computers:** Computers in the office connected to a network port will receive the required updates. If you work offsite or only use wireless at the office, connect your university device to the university's VPN for at least two hours before Nov. 1 so your computer can receive automated time zone updates. If your clock is one hour behind on Nov. 1, you can manually set your time zone to Saskatchewan.
- **Google Calendar:** Some events scheduled after Nov. 1 have shifted by one hour. Log in to Google Calendar on the web (calendar.google.com) and look for events flagged with a "!" badge to fix the time.
- **Zoom:** Update your Zoom Workplace desktop client to version 7.1.0 or later and restart the application.

For additional information, including impacts to Digital Teaching & Learning Tools (Canvas, eClass) and step-by-step instructions for all systems, please visit our web page on the Alberta Time transition.

ATLAS Call for Speakers

Are you interested in sharing your work with the department? Sign up for an ATLAS talk in Winter 2027! We would also love to hear from visiting scholars, grad students, and postdocs. If you're interested, please fill out this form. We look forward to hearing from you!

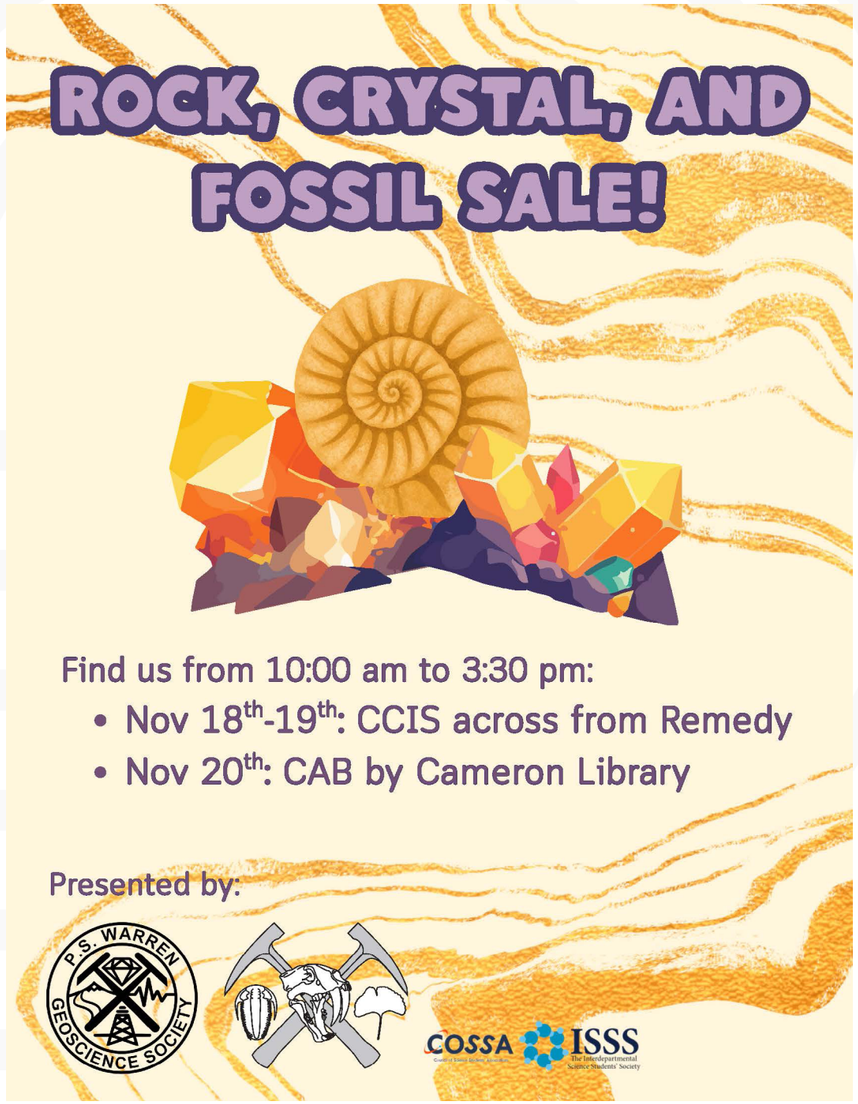
EAS ATLAS Holiday Party: Save the Date

Please save the date for the EAS Holiday Party! Join us on **December 4th** at the University Club. Ticket sales begin November 2nd, with more details to follow. We hope to see you there!



PS Warren Rock, Crystal, and Fossil Sale

Is your rock collection kinda schist? Come find us for our Rock, Crystal and Fossil Sale!
Our table will be located in CCIS, across from Remedy on **Nov 18th-19th**, and in CAB by the entrance to Cameron Library on **Nov 20th** from 10:00am-3:30pm. Proceeds will be used to support the P.S. Warren Geoscience Society and the UofA Palaeontological Society.
Don't be (s)late!



RESEARCH FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

UofA/VPR: Research Accessibility Support Fund

Description: This supports researchers who have accessibility-related costs associated with their research or research dissemination.

RAS Full Application Deadline: N/A
Sponsor Deadline: November 9, 2026

University of Oulu: Strategic Partnership Development Funding

Description: This provides up to 10,000 Euros to support academic staff in establishing new partnerships or deepening existing international relationships, with a priority on preferred institutions in Canada, India, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea.

RAS Full Application Deadline: October 23, 2026
Sponsor Deadline: November 1, 2026

AXA Foundation for Human Progress: AXA New Gen

Description: This call provides up to 140,000€ over 2 years for post-doctoral researchers (within 5 years of PhD completion) to conduct innovative, transdisciplinary research on Responsible Nature-Based Solutions (NbS).

Pre-Application sponsor deadline: November 12, 2026
RAS Full Application Deadline: December 10, 2026
Sponsor Deadline: December 17, 2026

Call for Submissions

If you would like to submit an event, or information to be included in next month's issue, please email s.hemrick@ualberta.ca by **November 25, 2026**.



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