Thank you very much to President Turpin and the entire strategic planning team for creating the opportunity to participate in this engagement process and for reviewing all of the input from across the University.

4 key ideas to inform the strategic plan

1. Cities and city-regions are becoming increasingly important scales to impact social, economic and environmental challenges. It is important to therefore cultivate engaged relations with municipal and regional systems of governance, but also with private and civic institutions. It is critical that the University continue to foster and build partnerships with cities and city-regions, such as the ones that exist in the Faculty of Extension including City Regions Studies Centre and the Centre for Public Involvement.

2. Faculty of Extension can act as a key hub and go to place with the University to build further capacity for engaged scholarship across the institution. Within the scholarship of engagement there has been a longstanding argument about the need for universities to cultivate robust forms of engagement which connect communities and academic scholars throughout the life-cycle of the research process. Such research approaches recognize the knowledgeable contributions of publics, support trust building between partners and support the meaningful uptake of research in practice.

3. Universities provide important spaces for building communities around shared challenges. It is important that the University of Alberta promote and value engagement which transcends its traditional strengths in knowledge mobilization and outreach. This could include promoting long-term partnerships which extend beyond individual research projects to address broad priorities, supporting engagement through professional facilitation, and providing learning opportunities for students which are strongly contextualized through community relations. The Faculty of Extension is an established hub where a diverse range of community partners foster collaboration with the University and could support this work across the institution.

4. The University can support its engagement priorities by creating physical spaces and institutional infrastructure which supports bringing communities together with academics, staff and students. The University's commitment to a downtown presence is an important priority in this regards, and provides a venue which is accessible to a range of publics (often, who are not present on campus) and which expresses an openness to community-based research initiatives. It is a strong symbol of the University's commitment to the City of Edmonton, and an asset which could be more robustly used.

5. Engaged research is supported by inter-disciplinarity. The University should make it a strategic objective to facilitate research partnerships across Departments and Faculties. To achieve this, it is important to recognize inter-disciplinarity within academic staff appraisals, within the hiring process and within the internal grant processes. Barriers to collaboration, for instance in the management of research funds or inter-faculty barrier to graduate student supervision should be eliminated. Cross faculty research institutes and centres provide an important institutional focus for both engagement with communities and as a hub for research and graduate teaching.
In my opinion, the Faculté Saint-Jean could become a definite asset to the University by becoming a centre of excellence in the training of much-needed French-immersion and minority-Francophone teachers and educational administrators for Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan and the North.

In fact, this is not only my opinion, but that expressed by different outside expert panels commissioned by the University, including the Presidential Academic Review and Renewal Committee of 2013 and the External Evaluation of the B. Ed. and M. Ed. Programs of 2015.

In carrying out this mission, the Faculté could rely on the public’s considerable good will towards, and even appetite for, education in French. It could also count on receiving considerable federal financing for these programs. Last but not least, its place in the University would be easily understood by all.

Dear Dr. Turpin,

I am compelled to write because I desperately do not want to see the University of Alberta miss an opportunity in its strategic planning process relative to the Augustana Campus.

Please be aware that I am not writing this at anyone’s behest but rather as a community member who has had an opportunity to become part of the Augustana community and gain an understanding of the value it brings to Camrose and rural Alberta as a whole. Perhaps more importantly, though, I’ve had the opportunity over that time to see what Augustana could be, if the University were to see it, not as an add-on who needs ever-more funding but rather as a fundamental component of who the University of Alberta is and how it could market itself.

My sense at this point is that the University of Alberta does not know quite what to do with Augustana. There is no question that Augustana has benefitted greatly from its merger with the U of A 11 years ago, particularly in terms of enhanced facilities and prestige, but I’m not entirely sure that the University as a whole has known how to maximize that investment, either financially or strategically.

I would argue that many in the U of A community barely know who or what Augustana is (e.g., when the Augustana Vikings hockey team beat the Bears hockey team a couple of years ago in their annual encounter, it was posted on the Athletics website that the Bears had lost to “Augustana University College” -- they weren’t even aware that Augustana had been a U of A faculty for over 10 years by that point!). At your installation, which I had the pleasure to attend, Augustana barely rated a mention in the video montages and the excellent work that Augustana has done in terms of indigenous student inclusivity was overlooked entirely when all the focus was placed on the Maskwa House of Learning (and do understand that I’m very pleased and supportive of that initiative) and none on the Wahkohtowin Lodge, which Augustana has recently completed. Good things are happening all over the University, not just on North Campus but it seems that many are not aware of that.

Be that as it may, the point here is to contribute to the strategic planning process and I will make the argument that the University should make Augustana a strategic priority: with small class sizes and low student-professor ratios, it is not only an alternative way of obtaining a liberal arts education, it is the ideal way to do so and the U of A should stop hiding its light under a bushel and tell the whole world
that. We’ve all heard student complaints that “class sizes are too big” or “my professor doesn’t even know who I am.” The answer to this should always be, “That’s not true for the entire U of A -- our Augustana campus might be exactly what you’re looking for” but my impression is that this option is rarely presented, at least if anecdotal evidence and the structure of the website are any indication. In a world where many first-year students would welcome the human touch, the sense of belonging and family that inheres in Augustana could be exactly what they’re seeking in the post-secondary experience, but someone has to tell them that.

Of course, along with an altered strategic focus must come the appropriate funding, the mechanics of which I’ll leave to the Dean and others to discuss. What I see most directly, though, in my role as a member of Augustana’s Athletics Advisory Board, is the difficulties that the Athletics Department faces on a daily basis. Augustana competes in the ACAC but has less staff and less funding than any of the other schools in that conference. The staff are incredibly overworked and team coaches have to make their own hotel and travel arrangements, etc., which I’m fairly certain the Bears/Pandas coaches do not have to do (as a junior high coach, even I don’t have to do that!). Bear in mind that approximately 20% of Augustana’s student population participates in athletics, so this is no small contribution to the U of A’s coffers or its student life. Not everyone is good enough to play at the CIS level, so Augustana can and should be a viable alternative in that regard but the program has to be properly supported for that to happen.

Overall, my point here is that the U of A has a potential strategic gem in the Augustana Campus, which it has heretofore not utilized remotely to its potential. Augustana should not be seen as an afterthought or as a financial need but as a critical weapon in the competition against other institutions, such as GMU and MRU, that purport to offer a more personalized educational experience. Small class sizes? We can do that. Low teacher-professor ratios? We can do that, too. Opportunity to participate in non-CIS athletics? Yep, that, too. We just have to let everyone know.

Thank you for taking my thoughts into consideration.

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Dear ISP Fellows

Introduction

As Dr David Turpin mentions that we at UA are in the midst of major changes with a new UA Administration led by a new President and Provost, a new provincial government and a new federal government, all newly installed and determined to ensure that the future will continue to be bright and shiny and to implement changes. Together with the newly released TRC recommendations for the betterment of indigenous peoples, we have the opportunity to make bold and significant changes that will impact our university and society for the foreseeable future.

Here are my 3 suggestions for the ISP:

1. Indigenous Peoples

This is a great opportunity to participate in the uplifting of the founding peoples of Canada. The TRC "Calls for Action" list improving education attainable levels and providing adequate funding for First
Nations students seeking a post secondary education. The ISP Discussion Paper acknowledges that university attainment rates for aboriginal people in Alberta remains less than half of the rate for the overall population.

As Alberta's preeminent higher education institution, my suggestion is that UA can fully contribute here and make a bold statement by making hundreds of scholarships (at least 500 to 1000 if not more) available to aboriginal students so that UA can contribute to the development of our first nations peoples and increase their goal of attaining higher education.

2. Development of Academic and Non Academic Staff

There is no better place for development of the mind and skills than in our own University, which has a rich faculty and hundreds of academic programs.

If we are serious about staff development, we can achieve this by allowing staff members to attend classes, lectures and enrol in programs, both degree and non-degree, at little cost to the institution.

My suggestion is that the University should consider a more generous allowance for staff to attend classes either for "audit" purposes or for obtaining a degree or advanced degree. This would include providing some time during working hours to attend one course per semester.

3. Connections and Partnerships

Sustainability is a key value in the face of declining budgets and the economic downturn in our largest industry of the oil sands. The University Library faces a tremendous loss of purchasing power for its library collections of both digital and traditional resources due to the power of publishers in raising prices and the declining value of the Canadian dollar.

a) UA should lead an initiative with other academic institutions in setting up a nation wide buying consortium that can negotiate better pricing from the publishers. Today CRKN exists for scientific journals but even this consortium has not been able to stem the tide of rising prices and lofty margins from the publishers.

b) As the leading academic institution in Alberta, UA can provide a lot more help to other smaller academic institutions through the provision of learning, teaching and research services support, which would be greatly appreciated by the province and the smaller institutions.

In Conclusion, we have the opportunity to make dramatic and bold initiatives and the ISP should visibly demonstrate UA's commitment to enhancing education amongst our First Nations peoples, investing in staff development and assisting other educational institutions.

UofA Strategic Plan – the Dilemma

Public and Provincial vs Research Intensive International

I get where it comes from, I came here when we seemed proud to be #4 in Canada, Proud of what we had accomplished so far and where we were heading – and then passing through the era where our
leadership spent a lot of energy reminding us we were not good enough because we were in too insular, provincial etc.
And now we seem to be recoiling from that undermining our self-image by wanting to turn to basics of a public institution that serves its local community above all else.

The either or choice:
Either focused on the providing access for Albertans and put our energy into endeavors for Alberta, an perhaps incidentally increase our international profile
Or striving to be an Internationally Renowned Global Citizen as an institution and engaging our backyard only as an experimental playground of convenience

But I do not understand why it needs to be either-or.
Why can’t we blend it well
Why not imagine ourselves, not as a vessel that pulls in the best and the brightest or a factory that produces graduates of a particular flavor
Why not imagine ourselves as a conduit – a two way conduit between Alberta and the world.
One that brings the ideas of Albertans to the world, and the world of ideas to Albertans

I did want to identify one key issue that may need to be addressed, explicitly or implicitly, in the new strategic plan - that being information management.

In order to build a great university for the public good and the betterment of our community, nation and world (the central question, page 19 of the discussion paper) and to answer the other questions posed in the discussion paper, the University must be able access, share and disseminate accurate, reliable, relevant information/knowledge (structured and unstructured) in a consistent and timely fashion. As the discussion paper so accurately identifies, the University's greatest asset is its people. However, the value of this asset can not be fully realized unless the University's people can access the information they require. It is not enough for U of A staff and students to be able to simply access or share the information, they must be able to do so in a timely fashion. They also must have confidence that it is accurate and reliable. The information must be in the appropriate format and in the right media to be fully utilized and the it must be accessible in a multitude of locations around the globe. Accessing, using and understanding the "right" Information will help enable the University 1) to provide leadership and service; 2) to promote excellence, creativity, entrepreneurship and economic diversification; 3) to engage in advocacy; 4) to empower individuals; 5) to embrace diversity and 6) to facilitate global, government and community engagement.

Hope this helps and please forward as appropriate.

Thank you again for discussing the Institutional Strategic Plan with Library Council on December 17th.

You will remember that you ended the meeting with a request for me to send suggestions regarding how University of Alberta Libraries (UAL) could be recognized for its contribution to some of the initiatives outlined in the plan, especially partnerships.
Having put energy into reviewing and reinvigorating the Libraries’ partnership program, I would be delighted to see UAL specifically cited for its role in developing partnerships with external agencies, perhaps best placed under the heading “Community Engagement”. I list a few examples as an appendix to this note. However, I am also copying Steve Dew and members of the Institutional Strategic Planning Team on a few more general points which I would also love to see considered for the plan:

- I think “the public good” expressed in the Discussion Paper’s invitations needs closer definition. I would be pleased to see a more explicit commitment to returning research, learning and other service outcomes to our local and global communities without additional charge in exchange for the tuition and public funding we receive.
- The visual (photographic) representation of the university in the final Plan needs careful and separate attention. In particular, I would especially welcome a visual recognition of the diversity of our communities and at least one image that reflects the fact that 4.8 million visits are paid to university libraries each year.
- As a member of the Negotiating Team with AASUA, I recommend the text is carefully examined in relation to collective bargaining. The section of the Discussion Paper on faculty renewal, for example, appears to me to suggest that the lifting of mandatory retirement was just an expensive mistake.
- I find some of the charts in the Discussion Paper are misleading. In particular, the league table of U15 publications and citations per full-time faculty member (p. 13) is not counterbalanced by any comparable diagrams to measure progress on teaching outputs; and the league table of provincial grants (p. 16) seems to invite an unhelpful discussion regarding the level of such grants over the life of the plan. I fear these visual aids indicate we are valuing what we can measure rather than undertaking to do the harder work of measuring what we value.
- Finally, I would like the authors of the Plan to prefer the concept of “inclusive excellence” over just “excellence”. The phrase was developed I believe on U.S. campuses. I am not confident the university will otherwise know how to resolve tensions between its selective promotion of academic excellence, as measured so poorly by external rankings, and its explicit and very welcome aim to promote and measure greater diversity, gender balance, etc. across its campuses.

Thank you for considering these points and please do not hesitate to follow up with questions or comments. I truly appreciate the open and consultative process through which the new Plan will be developed, and look forward to leading and supporting Learning Services’ role in its fulfilment.

APPENDIX: A FEW EXAMPLES OF LIBRARY COLLABORATION

**ALBERTA**

**NEOS:**

NEOS began as an initiative of the University of Alberta Libraries in 1994. Through our common library catalogue (managed by UAL) we share our collections and benefit from a cost-shared delivery network. At this time, NEOS consists of 17 institutional members in Edmonton and beyond including post-secondary, government and health libraries. NEOS, with its 2014-17 agenda for collaboration and growth, already serves more than 140,000 primary clients through 47 libraries sharing a database of 11 million items.

**FNIC:**
The First Nations Information Connection (FNIC) was developed in 2006-07 by UAL in partnership with six First Nations institutions to address technology needs so that the First Nations libraries would be able to benefit from the Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library (LHCADL), a province-wide initiative which licenses electronic resources for all post-secondary institutions. A needs assessment is currently underway to re-evaluate and reinvigorate the FNIC.

TAL & CAMPUS ALBERTA:

UAL is the largest institutional member of The Alberta Library (TAL), a province-wide consortium created in 1997 to share resources across sectors with all Albertans and now serving 49 public, special and academic libraries in over 300 locations. UAL continues to support the consortium’s Lois Hole Campus Alberta Digital Library and other province-wide initiatives.

EPL:

All OneCard holders have access to the Edmonton Public Library system as one of various partnership agreements between the two largest library operations in the City.

WESTERN CANADA

PRAIRIE ROOTS ENDOWMENT:

The Prairie Roots Endowment Fund generously inaugurated in 2014 by Chancellor Young and his wife Gay enables the Libraries to build significant special collections related to the history of the Canadian Prairies and to support publishing and other outreach endeavours in the same field.

COPPUL:

The Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) is comprised of 23 university libraries located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, plus 15 affiliate members that participate only in licenses for electronic resources. Collaborative projects also include a Shared Print Archive Network (SPAN) and a digital preservation initiative.

NATIONAL

CARL:

As a Past President (2013-15) of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries, I am proud of UAL’s engagement in its many initiatives to build capacity and share expertise amongst its 31 research library members, notably including the secondment of UAL’s Chuck Humphrey to be the first Director of Portage, a CARL initiative to develop a national infrastructure to support academic research data management.

CRKN:

The Canadian Research Knowledge Network claims to save $100 m. per annum for its 75 university members by purchasing 54 licenses for academic content with major publishers including Elsevier, Wiley, Taylor & Francis and Springer.

INTERNATIONAL

LIRO:
Since 2010 the Library International Relations Office has organized visits by UAL staff to libraries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East, speaking at conferences, providing specialized training and consultation, and developing projects and programs with our international partners. During this time we have also hosted visitors from academic libraries in many of these countries through our Professional Library Immersion Program.

ARL:

UAL is one of 15 Canadian members of the U.S.-based Association of Research Libraries and will host over 20 ARL Leadership Fellows in September 216 as one of three sites selected for leadership development in North American academic librarianship.

During my time here, we have had many laudatory goals, such as improving teaching, improving graduate student supervision, and promoting interdisciplinary research, yet seemingly little gets done because the calls get repeated.

The strategic planning team and university leaders should remember and internalize the central lesson of the classic paper by Steven Kerr called "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B" (1975, Academy of Management Journal, 18: 769-783). The title is the central lesson.

If there are to be changes in the actions of faculty, changes at FEC are needed. If there are to be changes in the actions of staff and university administrators, changes in their respective evaluation systems are needed.

Thank you for considering this suggestion and for your work on the strategic plan

I raise the inquiry of the general well being of medical students pursuing their surgical residency with the University of Alberta.

Reputed for its intensity, quality and high volume facilities, the program is sought after by numerous medical students across Canada, matching with some of the most promising aspiring surgeons. The concerns I express below could be extended to medical doctors enrolled in other residency programs, but my observations are merely anecdotal: based on the opportunity of living with resident surgeons from different subspecialties.

With the high prevalence of burnout among medical residents well documented and linked to consequences that range from medical errors to suicide, the pressure is on residency programs to come up with meaningful interventions to tackle the problem. Recently, studies have shown that restricting duty-hours is not merely enough to counter-balance the hardships undergone by residents. They are challenged by demands for excellence and productivity in clinical care, research, and teaching. The increased competition for grants, fellowships and permanent post-residency positions, the accumulation of monstrous debt, the creation of new medical school curricula and residency competencies, and the multitude of quality and cost measures for clinicians...
seem to have resulted in new stresses amongst residents. The expectations for productivity conflict with the desire of residents to lead a physically and mentally healthy life, as well as achieving a certain work-life balance.

They barely have time to tend to their basic physiological needs during their long days; early rounds, limited bathroom breaks (if any), rare occasions to even have a snack, cognitively and physically demanding tasks. Their most common meal is cereal or oatmeal, for lack of time to prepare anything else. They grimace as they gulp down their protein drinks, and eat fistfuls of spinach for fibers and iron. The evenings are dedicated to studying or preparing presentations, academic rounds or a board exam. I’ve found them fallen asleep in the oddest situations: standing in the kitchen while waiting for the coffee to drip, sitting in front of a computer, on the bench while putting on their shoes, and sitting on the toilet. They are exhausted, always. When they do choose to unwind and have a medicine-free evening or day, they will periodically frown and drift off into what I’ve started to call “the to-do list dissociation”. They are never ahead of their tasks or responsibilities – always lacking time to do all they should to be a better student, a better resident, a better physician, a better citizen, a better husband, mother or friend. As for their psychological wellbeing? It’s a stigma and a taboo; a dangerous one. The situation is truly concerning: the surgery residency program goes against all medical or pedagogical knowledge and logic.

Assuming the current model is the only viable one (is it?) and since restricting duty-hours is not the solution, it could be an opportunity for the University of Alberta to lead a profound inquiry and develop more effective approaches to resident burnout and general well-being. Numerous ideas are finding success with measures that, instead of only imposing mandatory restrictions, focus also on the emphasis of promoting core values, such as physical activity, nutrition, social engagement, and self-reflection—all basic elements that one need not attend medical school to understand are important to healthy living. Paradoxically, these elements seem to be lost or at least neglected by medical residents as they plunge into the stressful training of providing healthcare to others. To achieve success in implementing such measures a challenge will be to ensure the willingness of staff members and preceptors to support the system changes.

The University could lead a Canada-wide cultural shift in the way the residency programs are supported, as some currently rid the medical doctors of their own health and ideals, through the toxicity of the clinical and academic schedules, demands and pressure.

The most concerning issue is that these residents do not even have time to think of solutions that could support them throughout the program. As a scholarly community, we should unite in finding ideas and possibilities to make their lives more balanced and healthy, as they sacrifice everything to make ours so.

It needs to be said, the best research universities have university presses. An earlier contributor to the Institutional Strategic Plan said, “We have a fantastic campus press in the U of A Press.” UAlberta Press is key to the university’s mission of disseminating research. UAlberta Press authors have won many awards for their books which are distributed in print and eFormats locally and internationally. UAlberta Press is also noted for its editorial, design, and marketing expertise. (uap.ualberta.ca)

In its nearly 50-year history (founded in 1969) UAlberta Press has specialized in publishing in the humanities and social sciences. Some highlights include:
- Scholarly monographs (*The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*).
- Indigenous studies (*Spoken Cree*) and history (*Disinherited Generations: Our Struggle to Reclaim Treaty Rights for First Nations Women and their Descendants*).
- Regional books (*Edmonton In Our Own Words*, the innovative web publication, *Atlas of Alberta Railways* and the culturally-rich, *Baba’s Kitchen Medicines: Folk Remedies of Ukrainian Settlers in Western Canada*).
- Subjects of international importance and interest (*Apartheid in Palestine: Hard Laws and Harder Experiences*).
- Literary works by Governor General award-winning authors such as Robert Kroetsch, E.D. Blodgett and Rudy Wiebe.
- Translation projects (*Dramatic License: Translating Theatre from One Official Language to the Other in Canada*, the French-language edition received two prestigious awards including the Prix Gabrielle-Roy and the Ann Saddlemyer Book Award; and *The Beginning of Print Culture in Athabasca Country: A Facsimile Edition & Translation of a Prayer Book in Cree Syllabics by Father Emile Grouard, OMI, Prepared and Printed at Lac La Biche in 1883 with an Introduction by Patricia Demers*).
- Forays into engineering (*Upgrading Oilsands Bitumen and Heavy Oil*) and science (*The Algal Bowl: Overfertilization of the World's Freshwaters and Estuaries*).
- Niche textbooks (*Ukrainian Through its Living Culture: Advanced Level Language Textbook*).
- Reference books (*The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*).

UAlberta Press has published well-known scholars (Olive Dickason, Sarah Carter, Patricia Demers, I.S. MacLaren, Daniel Coleman and many others) and new voices (Timothy Caulfield, James Gifford, Ghada Ageel, Barbara Miller, Jon Gordon and many others).

While always interested in publishing northern topics (*Arctic Hell-Ship: The Voyage of HMS Enterprise 1850–1855*), UAlberta Press expanded its interest in Northern studies dramatically with the acquisition in 2013 of CCI Press and its backlist of more than 140 titles and the subsequent launching in 2015 of a new northern studies imprint, Polynya Press.

Hello,

I wanted to share a couple of comments / questions following today's campus forum.

1) I was wondering whether any forums were held with students directly and exclusively? I noticed that the audience / speakers at today's forum came from academic and non-academic staff, which might have hindered student participation. Having a campus forum for students-only might provide university with a broader student perspective, which is obviously important (although I realize that there are also other ways to get involved).

2) As a recent undergrad student and a current grad student, I would like to respond to David's question of what criteria to use to gauge importance of different pursuits that UofA could undertake: one such criteria is *relevance* to employers and the emerging fabric of our society. As a student, I find it so important to learn about things that will prepare me to make a meaningful contribution though my employment and citizen participation. From my experience, much of what
students learn today is rather irrelevant (in terms of skills and content), and it would be wonderful if we could reverse that trend.

3) As a graduate student, I also wanted to echo and highlight the importance of access to knowledge and knowledge distribution. It is hard to make an impact when our research is siloed, especially if our aim is to produce interdisciplinary or participatory research (i.e. solving real-world problems). Thus, UofA should take a firm stance of advocating for and implementing open access (for example, by adjusting how tenure is evaluated). At the very least, this ties in with the objectives of sustainability, teaching quality, community engagement, and faculty recruitment.

Thank you kindly - it is wonderful to be able to make our voices heard.

________________________________________

Dear Dr. Turpin,

I am writing you to express concerns that I have regarding the Faculty of Law at this University. I have become aware of significant staffing reductions among Faculty members. Through our discussions and deliberations on a range of subjects, it emerged that the Faculty of Law is now down to 26 faculty members. Apparently, this is from a previous high of 45.

I reviewed the number of law faculty at other Universities across Canada and found that we were quite understaffed by comparison. For instance, UBC has 49 faculty members, U of T has 65, and even U of C has approximately 30, with a much smaller law program.

Although I have learned of this situation from becoming involved in governance activities at the Faculty of Law, I write to you today entirely in a personal capacity. As a student, this staffing problem is affecting course registration; I am unable to take courses in areas of the law that interest me because the few sections offered are full and over-subscribed. It also affects our school’s reputation. I was very proud to see the University ranked fourth nationally in a recent survey. However, by various rankings our law school is ranked 7th or 8th nationally. This should be concerning to the University as a whole. In my opinion, a top law school is a mark of quality and depth in education for any University. In my studies of the law, I have found that the subject has engaged me in matters of human rights, citizenship and critical thinking in ways that my undergraduate degree in business simply did not.

The law school is in the process of hiring three or four new faculty members. But more needs to be done. While this action is a start, I write you to ask that you please consider more robust ways to remedy this situation. I know that you have recently been installed as President, and my congratulations to you. But please consider this an early personal plea for your and your office’s attention to the matter of the under-performance of our law school nationally, in particular the understaffed nature of our Faculty. As a student at the Faculty, it is my interest to see the law school thrive and demonstrate excellence amongst its peers. I believe that alerting you of my concern as a student in the law school can only help raise awareness of this issue. Thank you for reading this letter.
Since the discussion with Dr. Dew and the GSA about the Institutional SWP, we have been working on how to define a grad student. We took on the task, which has then gone through several iterations with our Board. We've finally arrived on a definition that we believe captures the essence of a grad student, which encompasses a variety of roles and responsibilities on campus beyond just being a 'student', while demonstrating the necessity for mutual respect between grad students as junior colleagues and senior academics who they work with.

Our definition for the SWP is:
A graduate student is a junior colleague who contributes to their field of study in pursuit of an advanced degree through collaborative work with the professoriate and senior colleagues in the research, teaching, administrative, and learning environment of a university. These contributions may be accomplished through extensive coursework for which tuition is paid; through many hours of assistantship for which they are paid; through the co-creation and writing of scholarly work; through the securing of academic funding; through presentations, conferences, and community engagement; and, through their capstone projects, theses, and dissertations. This multifaceted, collaborative position takes place in an environment of mutual respect and fairness to develop skills and knowledge for future careers.

1) Interdisciplinary program of studies needs to be strengthened. This should be a top priority. It was a difficult and time-consuming process for me to gather any information on how to develop a program of this nature. It is about asking the right person the right question, so being able to easily find information is key to the success of building this program of study.

2) Moodle and eClass and the collaborative forums need to be a requirement in some meaningful form in every course, in every faculty. Dialogue and collaborative complex problem-solving are critical skills that we need to strengthen in our programs. Support collaborative digital scholarship.

3) Student writing and publishing needs to be supported in significant ways in all faculties.

4) Alumni need to be supported more adequately in terms of advancing their learning, and strengthening their research in the private and public sector by having better access to library resources, higher level communication accessibility to new research initiatives, by being invited in to participate in campus events by welcoming them, for example into inter-disciplinary co-curricular discussion groups, seminars and workshops. This would give alumni more incentive to stay connected to the campus, and to give back in non-financial (social ways), as well as create a stronger bridge between the learning community and the broader community context. I am aware of the CSL program, and there could be more opportunities to strengthen this bridge, as well.

5) Co-curricular learning workshops, seminars, on topics such as academic writing and publishing, and library sessions need to be offered in a more coordinated way so that one could go to a main page calendar, and see what learning events are happening in each faculty that week. Perhaps these learning workshops could be added by way of notes to a co-curricular sort of transcript for attending/participating, and/or perhaps notations given through FGSR, for example. Also maybe there is a way to track these, or an electronic solution for students to help them to track these for themselves, through the departments or faculties, for instance, to help to build student's resumes, CVs, teaching dossiers, leadership experience, and to allow them to continue to make connections
and build networks and mentoring communities, with the interdisciplinary/broader learning community.

6) The Career Centre needs to make stronger connections with the learning community on campus, and services need to be evaluated to better service the campus learning community, as well as alumni.

7) More resources need to be directed at student success, and student support. For instance, learning relationships that are fostered in a mentoring community framework such as around the research issues table in the faculty of education. This is what a strong and supportive learning and research community should looks like - and this is the type of support that many learners need, to be successful and confident in their program of study - it is a framework that supports retention, mental health, and academic writing, and achievement, along with collaborative problem-solving skills, social skills, a type of support network, and helps to explore research issues in disciplinary, and interdisciplinary ways.

It is a way to encourage peer-support and is a solid way to build peer-mentoring learning communities, led by both senior students, alongside faculty members to support all students who wish to participate. It also serves to get a sense of any issues around how students are doing and where they might be struggling, and even who might be struggling, and to find individual or group ways to provide different support. It is an academic support strategy - a safe place to share and create new ideas - take risks and practice professional development and collaborative skills. This would include different types of academic learning circles, including literature, writing or learning circles, research round tables, what ever the name or focus. STEAM is a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math, in a way that also includes the Arts. And this mentoring community approach includes or integrates a way of thinking about the importance of arts in its practice methods - making it an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary approach to mentoring students in a cost-effective way.

This conceptual framework of mentoring communities also helps faculty members to support their graduate students by lessening the load when students may be having academic and other challenges that are impacting their learning. And it is a way to encourage interdisciplinary discussions where all students are made to feel welcome, where they have a place, and where they feel welcome, and especially belonging, which an antecedent to motivation - leading to perseverance and resilience and retention. A place where diversity, dialogue and collaboration are encouraged. A mentoring communities approach to building strong learning communities is also a key way to nurture important 'graduate attributes'.

The ONLY way for this strategy to be effective is to have this approach mandated by the UA governing bodies as part of the strategic plan and goals for the UA learning community.

8) Leadership. Find ways to integrate leadership and collaboration into all aspects of learning and assessment. This is an important way to develop citizenship and community engagement skills, alongside analytical and critical thinking skills. Deeper and more meaningful learning happens in collaborative learning environments.

9) Focus on quality teaching, learning and assessment in respectful learning communities and environments. Emphasize group spaces for gathering to discuss and build learning community
networks, and for knowledge mobilization. Access to physical space on campus that encourages group work needs to be emphasized. Make library spaces more group friendly.

10) As a frequent user of the UA website, perhaps one of the easiest and most important fixes for the UA to do is to clean-up the website - somehow find a way to make it easier to navigate, highlight programs, and ways to find co-curricular seminars and workshops and guest speakers to attend, to encourage interdisciplinary exploration and discovery. The co-curricular is important to enrich the post-secondary learning culture. Make it more digitally accessible and inviting. Maybe a google docs kind of calendar, for example, with nice design and graphics consistent with the UA brand, where entries can be shown for the day, the week and the month. This way, one can plan to attend. Currently notifications are thrown randomly via list-serve emails, which feels a bit random and hap-hazard. If we are interested in professional development, then these kinds of events need to be presented professionally. Not just lists in emails, for instance. This will help to enhance international image - consider that people regularly comment on how hard it is to find information on the UA website. It could be better and more professionally presented with a more of a cohesive narrative that pulls it altogether. It all just seems too messy and unorganized, and inconsistently presented. As communities should have architectural guidelines, so should websites - with easy and consistent access.

11) Find ways to implement quality controls and incentives for front-line staff and front-line units - those individuals and teams that regularly interact with the public, especially with students at all levels throughout the institution. Customer service is inconsistent across campus - some units and some staff and faculty are exceptional, and others significantly compromise the U of A brand when they do not answer phones, again and again, and do not return messages, or they turn you away because it is near end of day, for instance. Perhaps provide recognition incentives for those whose service exceeds expectations, and implement a secure comment box system, as they have done at the Career Centre, including an online feedback system. The libraries, for instance, have a great contact system, all available on one page - for asking a question, by chat, by email, by phone. This central system - a directory for finding the right person to answer a question, is really important. Quick access to info - manned 24 hours, and connected to campus health care and emergency/security services. A commitment to exceptional customer service - going that extra mile, as some do, though many do not, can make all the difference in student experience and to support learners in their learning community.

12) Find ways to mandate privacy, and email security, perhaps by stressing academic integrity, and discipline for infractions of email privacy. It has been my experience that in some departments it seems that there is an embedded cultural resistance/hesitancy to use email because it seems that there are anxieties around email communications being monitored by others within the faculty. This creates an unhealthy distrust in the learning community.

13) There is a ridiculous online ethics course that is a requirement for grad students. Different aspects of ethics needs to be mandated to somehow be woven into or integrated into each course and program of study.

There is something else that I think would be helpful. It would be nice to have an electronic link to somewhere, or a contact person, to help to review and establish new processes.

For instance, this policy:
This was sent to me via email, from Student Connect. "Open Studies will remain indefinitely if you actively remain if you continuously enroll in courses. However, there is a maximum of 10 courses ie. 30 credits to be taken under Open Studies. Once you have reached the maximum amount of courses, no new admission will be granted."

Why would a student be required to actively remain continuously enrolled in courses to keep their Open Studies student status. This seems counter-productive when we are trying to be an inclusive educational institution. Does somebody actually think that this is how people’s lives work? geesh. This is an annoying and bad policy - one that would discourage, rather than encourage Open Studies students.