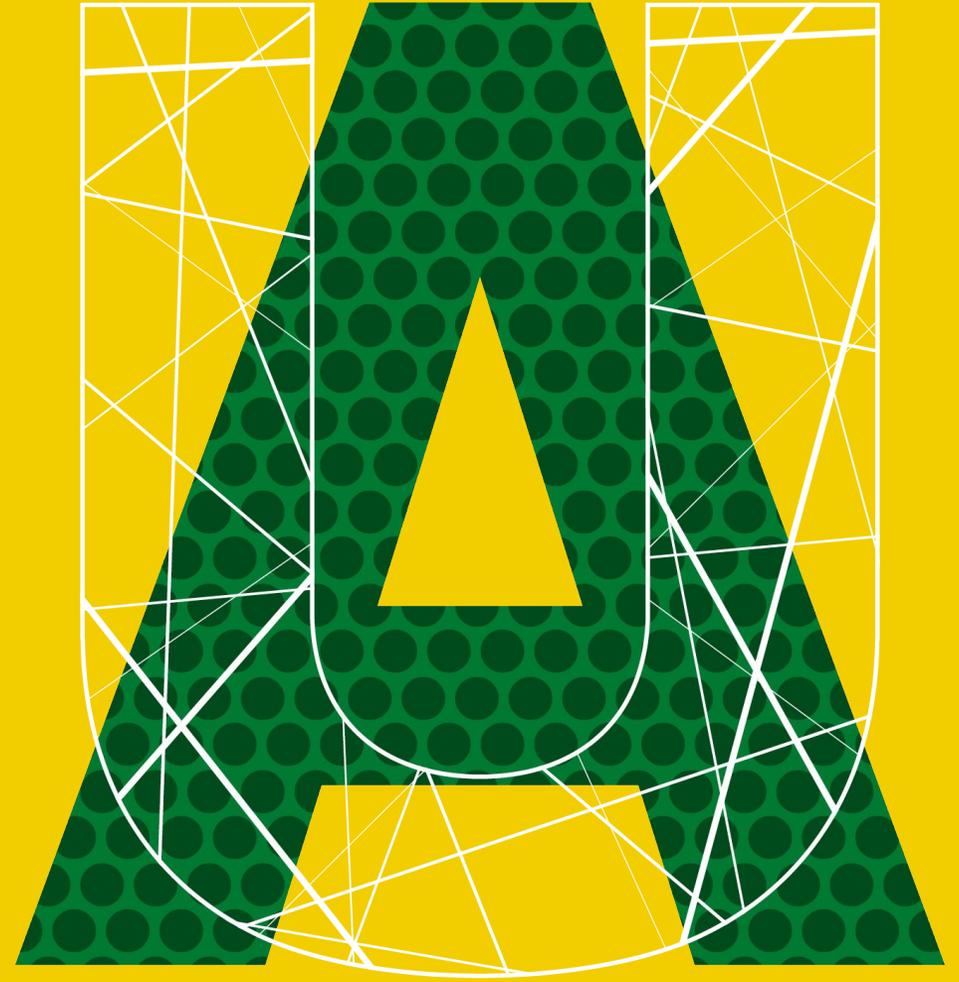


STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN

WHAT WE HEARD
JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2023



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA



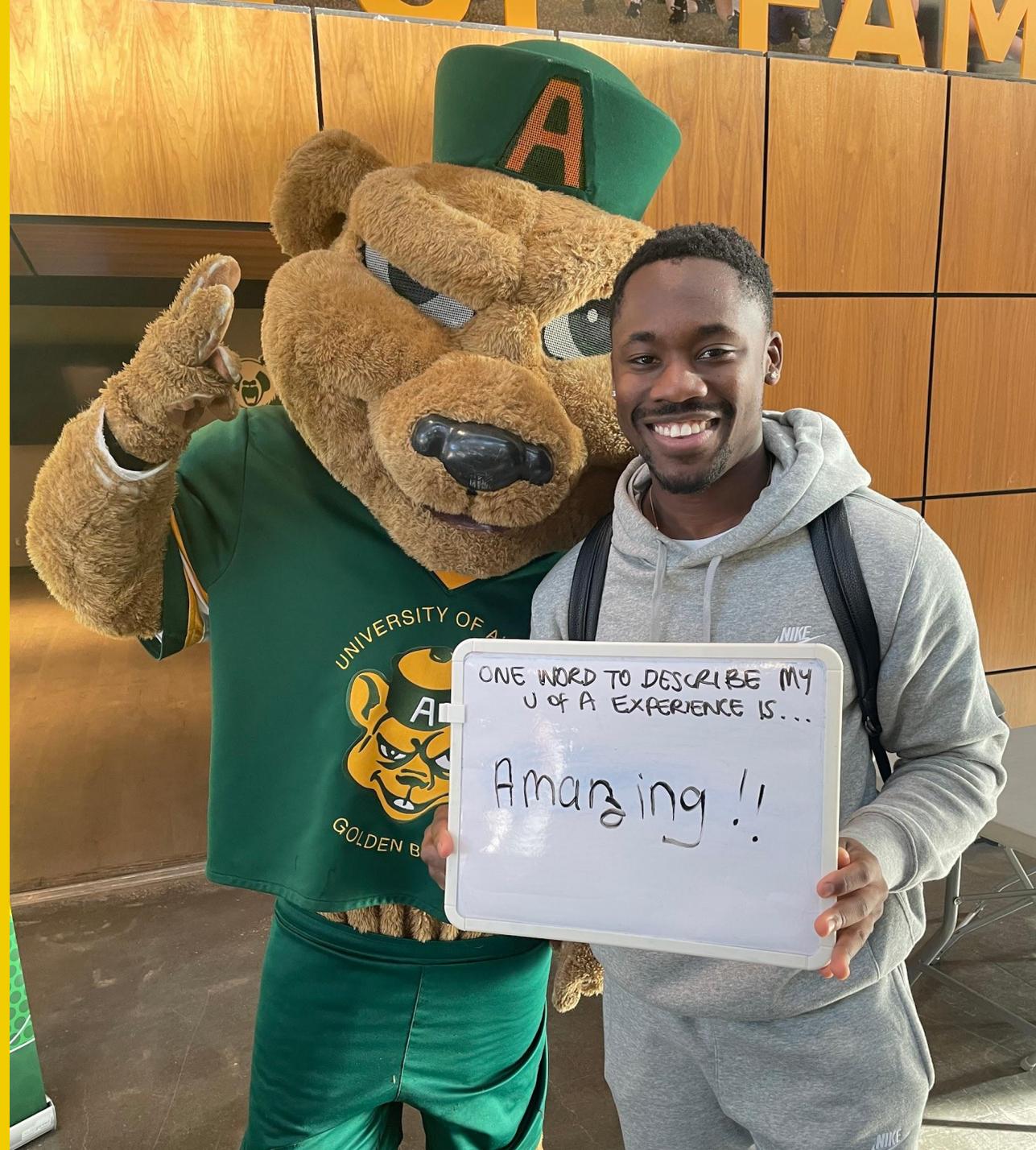


The Big Why

In preparation for growth, we place a high value on crafting and delivering a truly ***exceptional student experience.***

Co-creation Approach

Working directly with students, faculty and staff and having representation from these groups on our project team, allows SEAP to go beyond consultation to deliver a plan that reflects the diverse voices, needs and aspirations of our communities.



Goals & Progress

The project has three overarching goals:

1.

Refine: Co-create an engaging “student experience commitment” that is unique to the U of A

← Jan - Feb 2023

2.

Plan: Identify university steps needed to deliver that student experience

3.

Measure: Track and report on specific metrics to monitor success

How We Engaged

- Heard from **~650** students during drop-in engagement sessions and focus groups
- Collected **over 1,000** qualitative responses from students
- Presented to **4** student groups and **2** university committees
- Engaged with **~200** staff through a survey and focus groups
- Handed out **14 pounds** of candy and chocolate and **350+ cups** of coffee and hot chocolate
- We coded data into **16 themes**, shared them with stakeholders and used them in our co-creation workshop to design the first draft of our student experience commitment statement.
- Gathering feedback on our draft, we revisited the data and further refined the findings into **7 emerging themes**.

Emerging Themes

3 MAJOR THEMES

Relationships, Connection & Belonging

Beautiful & Accessible Campuses

Academic Success, Agency & Flexibility

4 SMALLER THEMES

Transitions Into & Out of Study

Supporting Student Success

Transparent & Affordable Costs

Geographic Context: Edmonton

Major Themes

1.

Relationships, Connection & Belonging

- Students highly value opportunities the university provides to connect with other students. There is an appreciation for a diversity of views and forging relationships through shared experiences, be it through classroom activities, clubs and events.
- Students equally value the opportunity to meet peers with backgrounds and perspectives that differ from their own.
- Students value the university as being a place where they can show up as themselves and express and explore their identity, but loneliness and difficulty making friends is a prominent issue.
- Many students value opportunities to be participants in shaping the future of the university, be it through formal participation in committees or informal participation in projects such as this.

“[I feel] connected to other students who are going through the same things. A shared experience through difficulty.”

“[My biggest challenge has been] friendships and meeting people. Making good friendships.”

Major Themes

2.

Beautiful & Accessible Campuses

- Students appreciate having a variety of beautiful and accessible spaces to meet their diverse needs: quiet study spaces, loud study spaces, variety of food options, clean spaces, libraries, bright sunny windows, working elevators, reliable wifi, push button doors, gym access, and prayer spaces.
- Students report that key student areas in the university, such as dining locations and hallways are crowded.
- Students notice the inconsistent care and attention to the renovation and maintenance of different spaces.

“We need more prayer spaces in different buildings - Tory, Telus, Cameron, CAB, and SAB especially.”

“SUB has all of the food and it's crowded. Lots of students around.”

Major Themes

3.

Academic Success, Agency & Flexibility

- Academic success is perceived differently depending on the student. For some, it's achieving excellence, the pursuit of innovation, accolades and recognition. For others, it's as simple as staying on top of homework and household tasks.
- Time management is a prominent challenge for students. Students struggle to achieve the right study/life balance.
- Students appreciate the U of A's diverse program and class offerings, even if they don't participate in all of it.
- Students value opportunities for experiential/hands-on learning like co-ops, apprenticeships and exchanges.
- Students highly value flexibility and agency, be it scheduling breaks in their day or extending a program over a longer period of time.
- Many stress the importance of hybrid options or components to classes where they can access materials when they are ill or have a need to participate in classes outside the regularly scheduled time.

"[My biggest challenge is] time management!"

"I like that you can take fewer classes. It's one thing that makes it easier to fit school to my schedule."

Smaller Themes

4.

Transitions Into & Out of Study

- The transition to the U of A (from high school, post-secondary or the workforce) is challenging for students and many wish they were better prepared.
- Students seek a sense of confidence as they near the end of their program about what is next, though the pathways are diverse. Some students feel well prepared and/or are confident that their U of A degree will open doors for them, while others wish the U of A helped them be better equipped to start a career after graduation.
- Many grad students appreciate professional development and connections to further their research careers.

“Having more advertised/readily available resources for career advising or internships for all programs would be amazing!”

“[What I want out of my time here is] future career options, networking through my supervisors and the work I get to do with them through research and teaching.”

Smaller Themes

5.

Supporting Student Success

Support from faculty:

- Students feel most supported by faculty who are invested in their emotional well-being and both their academic and non-academic successes.
- Students also value academic supports such as professor availability, helpful TAs, information on how to use the library, how to format an essay and learning to study.

Support from the university:

- Students value prompt, reliable and easy access to additional supports that are essential for their success and wellbeing as a student. Most prominently are mental health supports, but also include user-friendly administrative supports.
- Students want guidance from experienced and professional staff, and are disappointed if their needs can't be met quickly, or if they are bounced around between offices.
- This theme is underpinned by the need for clear and concise communication pathways for finding available services and supports, beyond what was shared at orientation.

“Students would benefit from a first year introduction into writing and library services. Profs assume students know how to access these services.”

“I wish there was more (and easier) access to mental health services!”

Smaller Themes

6.	Transparent & Affordable Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● On top of tuition and fees, students are struggling with the rising cost of living. Many find it necessary to work while going to school so they can afford living expenses while studying.● As the affordability becomes a challenge, some students are seeking further justification for their rising tuition and fees.● Students want to understand where their money goes and why.● Online study was not seen as being as valuable as in-person, particularly for international students who are paying higher tuition.
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“Tuition is expensive... I would like to see a detailed breakdown of what tuition is spent on.”

7.	Geographic Context: Edmonton*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The student experience is impacted by the environment our campuses exist in and by circumstances that fall outside of the university.● Students have a sense of pride for Edmonton and praise many of its unique features like great downhill and cross-country skiing, the river valley and access to trails.● Students also have concerns about the cold weather, crowded transit (ETS Bus and LRT) and long commute times.
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“I dread my 45 minutes bus ride + LRT on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.”

*Our data was for this phase was collected on North Campus. Upcoming engagements are planned for Augustana and Campus Saint-Jean.

Draft Commitment Statement

As one university, we listen and act ***together***.

Collectively, we advance the academic mission of the university by cultivating a student experience where students are empowered to find their passions, find their communities and find their purpose.



Next Steps

Project Team:

- Phase 2 Engagements
 - Test the draft student experience commitment statement
 - Journey Mapping

You:

- Visit and share: uab.ca/SEAP
- Provide feedback online
- Attend future engagements
- Contact us: seap@ualberta.ca

Our Team

Project Sponsors:

- **Abner Monteiro**, SU President
- **Monisha Vinod**, GSA VP Student Services
- **Melissa Padfield**, Deputy Provost, Students and Enrolment
- **Leo Wong**, Associate Dean, Education, Alberta School of Business

Project Team:

- **Sarah Wolgemuth**, Assistant Dean, Student Life – Project Director
- **Trevor Phillips**, Manager, Indigenous Recruitment – Project Specialist
- **Gail Breum** – Senior Project Manager
- **Carmen Norris** – Senior Service Designer
- **Kat Black** – Project Team Member

**Leading with
Purpose.**



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