



FEB. 9, 2026

Leading with Our Values

Overview

The University of Alberta's values are our long-term "guiding lights." Developed through a year-long consultation process and building on three years of input through other engagement, these values sit alongside our mission and vision to provide a common basis for how we work, make decisions and treat one another.

As a leader, you play a critical role in bringing these values to life – moving them from words on a page to the heart of your team's culture.

Our values are embodied in the words of the university's first president, Henry Marshall Tory:

"... knowledge shall not be the concern of scholars alone. The uplifting of the whole people shall be its final goal."

We live this credo through:

- **UNWAVERING CURIOSITY** devoted to Quaecumque vera
 - A **SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY**, grounded in caring and respect
 - **SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY** for a sustainable future
 - The tireless pursuit of **IMPACT THROUGH EXCELLENCE** in all we do
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1. Key Messages

Use these points to ensure consistent communication across the university.

- **Community-Led:** These values represent the voices of thousands of students, faculty and staff. They are authentic to the U of A, action-oriented and designed for the long term.
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- **The How and Why Versus the What:** Our mission and vision describe *what* we aim to achieve. Our values describe *how and why* we behave collectively and make decisions to get there.
- **Belonging & Connection:** Values are the cornerstone for building a stronger sense of belonging. They help every individual make a deeper personal link to the institution.

2. Understanding the Values

When discussing the values with your team, use these deeper definitions:

UNWAVERING CURIOSITY devoted to *Quaecumque vera* – whatsoever things are true. It is the spark behind every courageous question, big breakthrough and bold new idea. We value the pursuit of knowledge and the continuous asking of new questions in our labs, libraries and lecture halls.

Inspiration behind the art - an abstract eye symbolizes how curiosity opens our perspective and invites deeper exploration of big ideas.

A **SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY** grounded in caring and respect. Where voices gather, belonging grows – and together we go further. We are active partners with communities, locally and globally, because the work we do together reaches farther than anything we could accomplish alone.

Inspiration behind the art - overlapping faces show people coming together and sharing a common purpose.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY for a sustainable future. What we're given, we honour – preserving possibility for generations. We act as custodians for the long-term well-being of society, our planet, our culture and the university's legacy.

Inspiration behind the art - repeating arrows show shared directions and responsibility for the future.

The tireless pursuit of **IMPACT THROUGH EXCELLENCE** in all we do. Success is measured not only by what we create but also by the lives changed because of it. We translate knowledge into action to solve real-world problems, creating discoveries that ripple outward and shape a stronger future.

Inspiration behind the art - radiating shapes illustrate how ideas and actions spread outward and affect the world beyond their starting point.



3. Action Guide: Bringing Values to Life

To support the People Strategy goal to “Rebuild trust in senior leadership,” leaders should prioritize always being present (visible), communicating openly (transparency) and remaining accessible (available) to their teams.

A. Lead with Transparency

- **Values-Based Decision-Making:** When announcing changes, consider how you might link them to a value. (e.g., *“To ensure our shared accountability for a sustainable future, we are shifting our approach to ...”*)
- **Open the Floor:** Use regular team meetings for “values labs” – brief sessions to discuss how a specific value applies to a current conversation or project.

B. Lead with Visibility

- **Active Presence:** Find time to be present where the work happens – whether that’s visiting a lab, attending a student performance or joining a safety inspection.
- **Champion Initiatives:** Visibly support institutional priorities like the [Culture of Care: University of Alberta’s Safety Action Plan](#) or [Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan](#), showing that these values are active commitments.

C. Lead with Availability

- **Relationship-Rich Environments:** Explore a shift from purely transactional meetings (if that is the norm in your area) to relationship-building ones. Host informal touchpoints or social gatherings to acknowledge work and forge personal contacts.
- **Accessible Mentorship:** Consider your role as an accessible resource for your team’s professional growth.

4. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: How were these values developed? This wasn’t a top-down process. It was a phased engagement over a period of a year through “values labs” and community surveys. It also incorporated extensive input over the past three years around the university’s core principles, building on input from the [Shape: A Strategic Plan of Impact](#), [Igniting Purpose: Student Experience Action Plan \(SEAP\)](#), [Braiding Past, Present and Future: University of Alberta Indigenous Strategic Plan](#) and many other consultations.



Q: How do these relate to our mission and vision? Think of it this way: the mission/vision is our destination. The values are our compass – they guide our behaviour and choices as we journey toward that destination.

Q: Are these values relevant for my specific role? Yes. Whether you are in a lab, an office or a lecture theatre, these values are universal. They provide a common basis for expectations on how we achieve our goals together.

Q: How will we measure if we are living these values? On a team level, success is seeing these values used as a lens for priority setting and daily interactions.

5. Team Discussion Starters

- “Henry Marshall Tory spoke about the ‘uplifting of the whole people.’ How does our team’s work contribute to that goal?”
- “In our recent project, how did ‘unwavering curiosity’ lead us to a better result?”
- “What is one shared accountability practice we can adopt to better care for our team’s future resources or well-being?”

6. Resources

Resources for Leaders

Faculty and portfolio teams will receive materials to place around your work areas, including posters and “table talkers,” as well as postcards for employees. Please also explore the [University Values Website](#). It is our central hub for all things related to our values. Here, you can find digital resources, including meeting and desktop backgrounds, as well as print materials to help make these values visible in our physical and virtual workspaces. These resources are designed to help you bring our shared values to life every day: