



UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA



2025-28

GPS Action + Partnership Plan

MAY 2025

Contents

**Message from the Vice-Provost and Dean,
Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies4**
Historical and institutional context4
What’s ahead5

Our Story in Data6

Our Mandate10
Our unique role at the University of Alberta10
Legislated commitment10
Our community and partners11

Advancing through Partnership and Leadership12

Our Vision14

Our Guiding Principles14

Our Four Priorities16
Priority 118
Priority 220
Priority 322
Priority 425

Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholar Journey Maps26

Building This Plan36

Acknowledgements39

The University of Alberta, its buildings, laboratories and research stations are primarily located on the territory of the Néhiyaw (Cree), Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Métis, Nakoda (Stoney), Dene, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe (Ojibway/ Saukteaux), lands that are now known as part of Treaties 6, 7 and 8 and homeland of the Métis. The University of Alberta respects the sovereignty, lands, histories, languages, knowledge systems and cultures of all First Nations, Métis and Inuit nations.

To acknowledge the territory is to recognize the longer history of these lands. The acknowledgement signifies the University of Alberta’s commitment to working in Good Relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as we engage in our institutional work, uplifting the whole people, for the university for tomorrow.

Message from the Vice-Provost and Dean, Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

With more than 8,400 graduate students and 600 postdoctoral scholars, graduate and postdoctoral studies at the University of Alberta account for 19% of our institution’s student and scholar population and play a critical role in enabling the university’s strategic research, teaching and engagement goals.

To support the success of this important group of students and scholars, the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) has the unique mandate of shaping and administering graduate education within the institution. This includes facilitating interdisciplinary education, research and strategic initiatives that engage the university and local and global communities.

Together, we aim to position graduate and postdoctoral studies at the U of A as a compelling choice for learning, teaching and personal development in harmony with the university’s vision and purpose. This action and partnership plan outlines how we will work together with graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and our campus community partners in service of shared goals and where GPS will focus its efforts and resources in 2025-28.

Historical and institutional context

In the spring of 2023, the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (GPS), formerly the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR), underwent an [external unit review](#). The reviewers provided many recommendations. One of significance for our U of A community was that:

“The leadership, coordination and administration of graduate studies and postdoctoral affairs at the U of A must remain centralized under a cohesive one-university unit. It is our strong recommendation that these overarching roles and responsibilities remain with a newly named [Faculty of Graduate Studies & Postdoctoral Studies].”

In response to this review, we have undertaken many changes, including our new name, the Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies. More importantly, we have been actively working to improve how we interact with our partners across campus to collaboratively uplift the graduate student and postdoctoral scholar experience. This plan is the direct result of extensive engagements and co-creation activities with our graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and the faculty, staff and leadership at the U of A, which are noted at the end of this document.

The 2025-28 GPS Action + Partnership Plan is grounded in [SHAPE: A Strategic Plan of Impact](#) and the [Student Experience Action Plan](#) (SEAP). SHAPE urges us to educate, research and lead with purpose. SEAP enables partnership across the institution

“The leadership, coordination and administration of graduate studies and postdoctoral affairs at the U of A must remain centralized under a cohesive one-university unit. It is our strong recommendation that these overarching roles and responsibilities remain with a newly named [Faculty of Graduate Studies & Postdoctoral Studies].”

External Review of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research



to support student success. We are also committed to Truth and Reconciliation as reflected in [Braiding Past, Present and Future](#), to supporting the people who drive the university’s mission and vision in alignment with [Forward Together: The University of Alberta People Strategy 2024-2034](#) and to building and sustaining a vibrant and interconnected university as outlined in [Changing the Story](#).

What’s ahead

The U of A is a top five university in Canada and one of the top research-intensive universities in the world. This plan creates an important foundation for positioning our institution as a leader in graduate and postdoctoral education, practices, ideals and values and as a vibrant environment and community where our students and scholars are inspired and motivated to pursue research, education and personal growth.

I am excited to continue to work with our partners to deliver an outstanding graduate student and postdoctoral scholar experience as we implement the priorities outlined in this plan.

With curiosity to explore, courage to lead and collaboration at our core, we have the power to shape what comes next. Now, we invite you to join us in bringing this plan to life.

Together, we can tackle many challenges, including creating exciting, sustainable graduate programming pathways for new and diverse learners and attracting talented and curious student and postdoctoral researchers to our growing community. I cannot wait to see what we will do!

Tracy Raivio

Vice-provost and Dean,
Faculty of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Our Story in Data

Each year, GPS plays a vital role in shaping the graduate and postdoctoral experience at the U of A, from admissions and program progression to partnerships and professional development. We are delighted to share this snapshot of 2024-25 that highlights the scope and impact of our work.

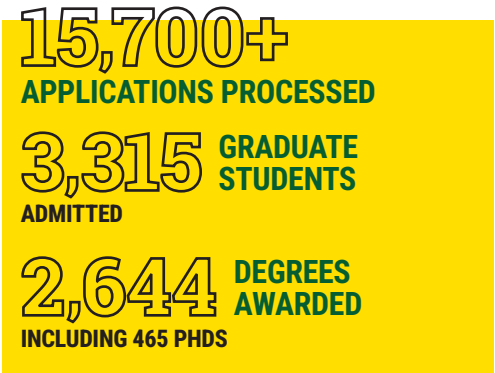
GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES AT THE U OF A

Our institution offers one of the most comprehensive graduate program portfolios in Canada.



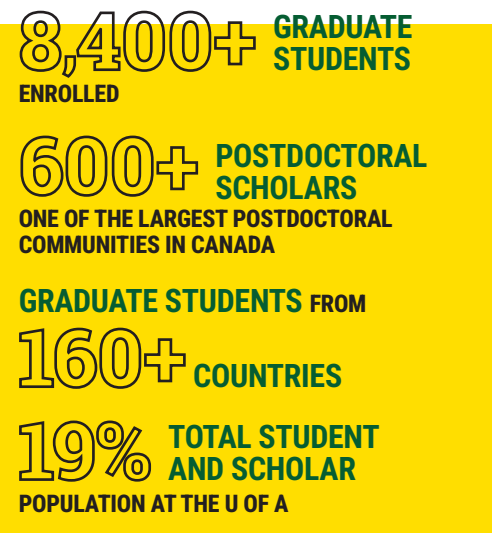
GRADUATE ADMINISTRATION

We administer across the full graduate student and postdoctoral scholar lifecycle, from application through convocation.

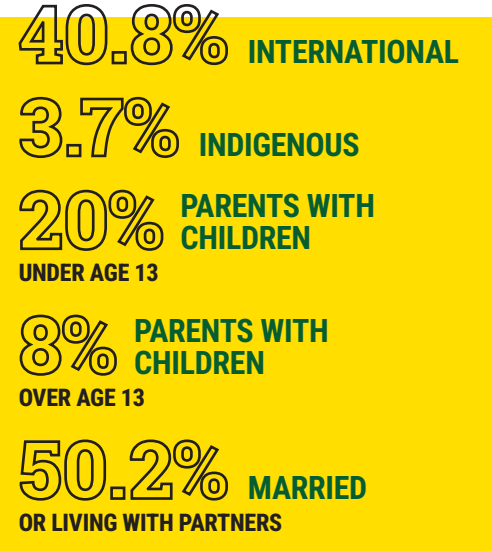


STUDENT COMPOSITION

Our graduate and postdoctoral community is global, diverse and growing.

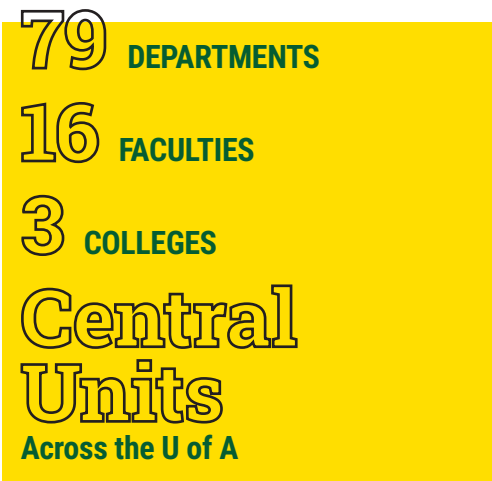


Students and postdoctoral scholars self-identify as:



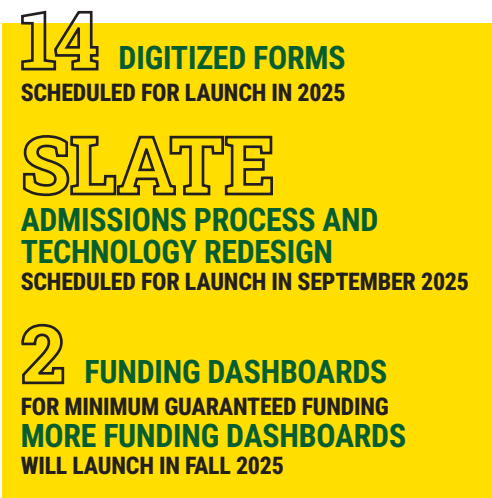
PARTNERING

We collaborate with campus-wide service partners and graduate education communities across Canada to enhance the graduate student experience.



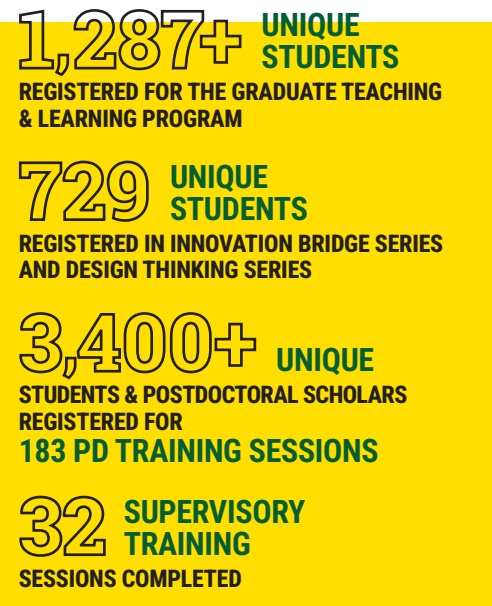
PROCESS MODERNIZATION

We're committed to streamlining experiences through digitization and smart platforms.



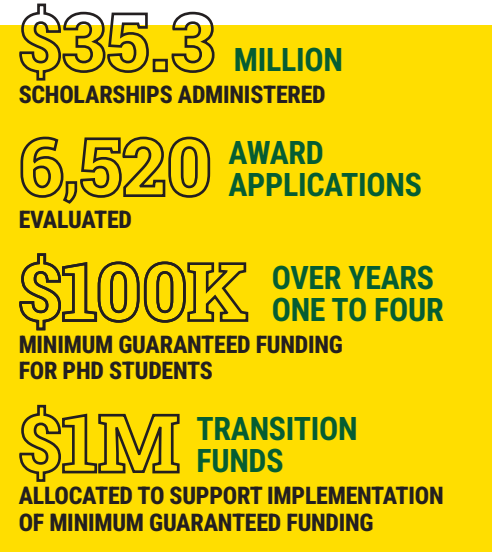
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We support supervisors, graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in their developmental journey through workshops and training.



SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS AND FUNDING

We manage and secure funding to support access and equity in graduate education.



**INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH, LEARNING AND
WORK OPPORTUNITIES**

We foster interdisciplinary opportunities for knowledge translation, networking and real-world skill building.

1,000+

PEOPLE
WATCHED
THE 2025 THREE MINUTE THESIS (3MT)
COMPETITION

40

GRADUATE STUDENTS +
POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS
FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA,
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY AND UNIVERSITY
OF SASKATCHEWAN applied to the 2024 Falling
Walls Lab Edmonton competition

161

GRADUATE STUDENT
RESEARCH IMAGES
ARE DISPLAYED IN THE IMAGES OF RESEARCH
DIGITAL REPOSITORY

600+

U OF A GRADUATE
STUDENTS
SUCCESSFULLY PLACED IN THE GRADUATE
STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM (GSIP)

**OTHER NOTABLE
ACHIEVEMENTS**

2,700+

STUDENTS
REGISTERED
FOR INTD 710:
ETHICS AND ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

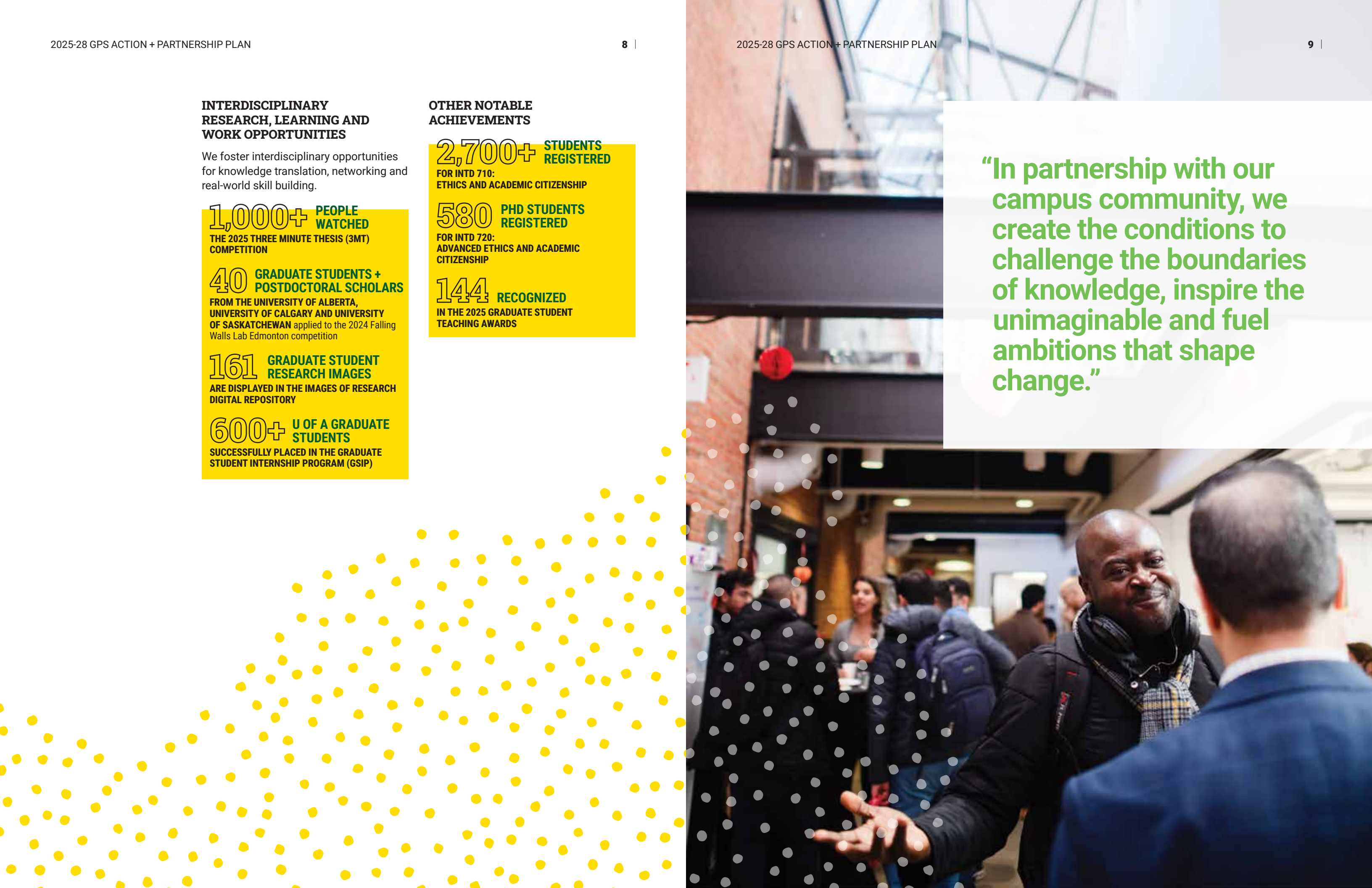
580

PHD STUDENTS
REGISTERED
FOR INTD 720:
ADVANCED ETHICS AND ACADEMIC
CITIZENSHIP

144

RECOGNIZED
IN THE 2025 GRADUATE STUDENT
TEACHING AWARDS

“In partnership with our campus community, we create the conditions to challenge the boundaries of knowledge, inspire the unimaginable and fuel ambitions that shape change.”



Our Mandate

Our unique role at the University of Alberta

We have the unique mandate of providing both academic leadership and administrative services for graduate and postdoctoral studies. We shape graduate education within the institution, facilitating interdisciplinary education, research and strategic initiatives that engage the university, local and global communities. Through collaboration with campus partners, we aim to position the university’s graduate and postdoctoral studies as a compelling environment for learning, teaching and personal development in harmony with the university’s vision and mission.

OUR PURPOSE

In collaboration with our campus community partners and governance councils, we co-create the environment for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to gain the skills, wisdom and connections to become the change makers for tomorrow.

We do this through:

- Providing personalized and responsive guidance to students, scholars, supervisors and faculty from start to finish of the multi-faceted graduate and postdoctoral experience, recognizing everyone’s unique path to, through and after their time at the U of A
- Empowering our campus community partners to uphold quality standards and responsibly steward institutional resources
- Building a vibrant community and fostering strong, mutually beneficial connections within the university, locally and globally to support collaborative learning and the mobilization of knowledge
- Improving access and inclusivity in graduate and postdoctoral education
- Leading the creation of new methods, programs and initiatives that align our practices with current realities and emerging needs while embracing the changes of our times
- Cultivating iterative and adaptive learning for graduate scholars, the university community we serve and ourselves through skills enhancements, critical thinking and training programs

Legislated commitment

The Post Secondary Learning Act states that GPS Council operates with delegated authority from the General Faculties Council and serves as GPS’s governance body. It oversees the policies, programs and standards that shape graduate education within the institution with additional responsibilities carried out through GPS’s standing committees.

Our community and partners

Graduate Students: Mature students, with an undergraduate degree or significant life experience as a prerequisite, pursuing advanced studies that include research, teaching, learning, engagement and other forms of scholarship. Graduate students include:

- Graduate certificate students
- Thesis-based master’s students
- Course-based master’s students
- PhD students
- Non-degree students
- Visiting students

Campus Community Partners:

Individuals or groups who contribute to and collaborate in the shared support, development and delivery of academic, research and student experiences. Our partners include:

- Colleges
- Faculties
- Departments
- Programs
- President, Provost, Vice-President and Vice-Provost portfolios
- Graduate Students’ Association, representing the voice of graduate students
- Postdoctoral Fellow Association, representing the voice of postdoctoral scholars

Postdoctoral Scholars (also known as Postdoctoral Fellows): individuals who have completed a doctoral degree and who are seeking the opportunity to train further in a particular area of research.

- The U of A is one of the largest communities of postdoctoral scholars in Canada
- Postdoctoral scholars are integral to furthering research and innovation, strengthening our academic communities and building future leadership and expertise

GPS Advisory and Decisioning Bodies:

Groups that partner with GPS to advise on processes, policies and other methods of governing and administering graduate and postdoctoral studies. Active advisory and decisioning bodies include:

- Graduate Leadership Advisory Committee (GLAC)
- GPS Council
- Graduate Program Support Team (GPST)
- Graduate Program Administrators’ Council (GPAC)

Advancing through Partnership and Leadership

Partnership

Achieving our purpose and mandate depends on strong partnerships across the U of A and with partners provincially, nationally and globally — including those in industry, government and community. By aligning our efforts, we can better support the success and experiences of graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, supervisors and the broader communities they impact. This means listening deeply to diverse perspectives and turning insight into action through shared goals and strategies.

We serve in the following partnership roles:


- **Wayfinder:** Serve as a central hub, providing responsive guidance on institutional resources, administrative matters and academic processes and connecting graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to relevant campus services.
- **Graduate Administrator:** Administer and hold responsibility for records relating to application, admission, program progression, course grades, awards, scholarships, financial supports, examinations, theses, international requirements and graduation.
- **Mediator:** Act as a neutral party in dispute resolution, conflict and crisis management to support student-centric decisioning on issues that impact academic program progression.
- **Developer:** Lead training and development programs that enhance career opportunities and prepare students, postdoctoral scholars, administrators and supervisors to realize our institutional vision.
- **Data-informed Strategic Partner:** Aggregate and interpret data to support strategic decisions, meet data needs and deliver relevant insights institution-wide and at the program level.

Leadership

Shaping graduate education within the institution involves advancing interdisciplinary integration, governance and innovation to create vibrant learning and research environments where practices, policies and systems evolve in step with the needs of our university and the world it serves. Through our external unit review and consultation, we heard a clear call to lead within the institution, aligning our efforts with strategy, action plans and the One University operating model.

We serve in the following leadership roles:

- **Champion:** Facilitate resource allocation and enrich opportunities to uplift the experience, research and scholarly activity of students and scholars.
- **Integrator:** Leverage data, communication and technology to integrate information and processes and facilitate strong connections across programs and faculties.
- **Policy and Process Steward:** Develop, maintain, implement, update and interpret policies and processes.
- **Quality and Equity Steward:** Maintain and enhance quality, consistency and equity in program development and delivery, policies and practices.
- **Innovator:** Initiate the creation of leading-edge methods, programs or initiatives that address current and emerging challenges and opportunities.



“Together, we aim to position graduate and postdoctoral studies at the U of A as a compelling choice for learning, teaching and personal development.”

Our Vision

We enable transformative experiences that prepare and empower our graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to confront the complex challenges of our rapidly changing world.

In partnership with our campus community, we create the conditions to challenge the boundaries of knowledge, inspire the unimaginable and fuel ambitions that shape change.

Our Guiding Principles

Principles that guide our ways of working in service of our shared priorities in graduate and postdoctoral studies as defined by SHAPE:

IMPACT

We create conditions that advance growth, connections and achievement, locally and globally, for our graduate students and postdoctoral scholars and the programs they participate in.

COLLABORATION

We generate solutions in partnership with those that will be impacted by them by connecting, engaging, listening and learning. We balance adherence to process with flexibility that accounts for evolving circumstances and life experiences.

PROFESSIONALISM

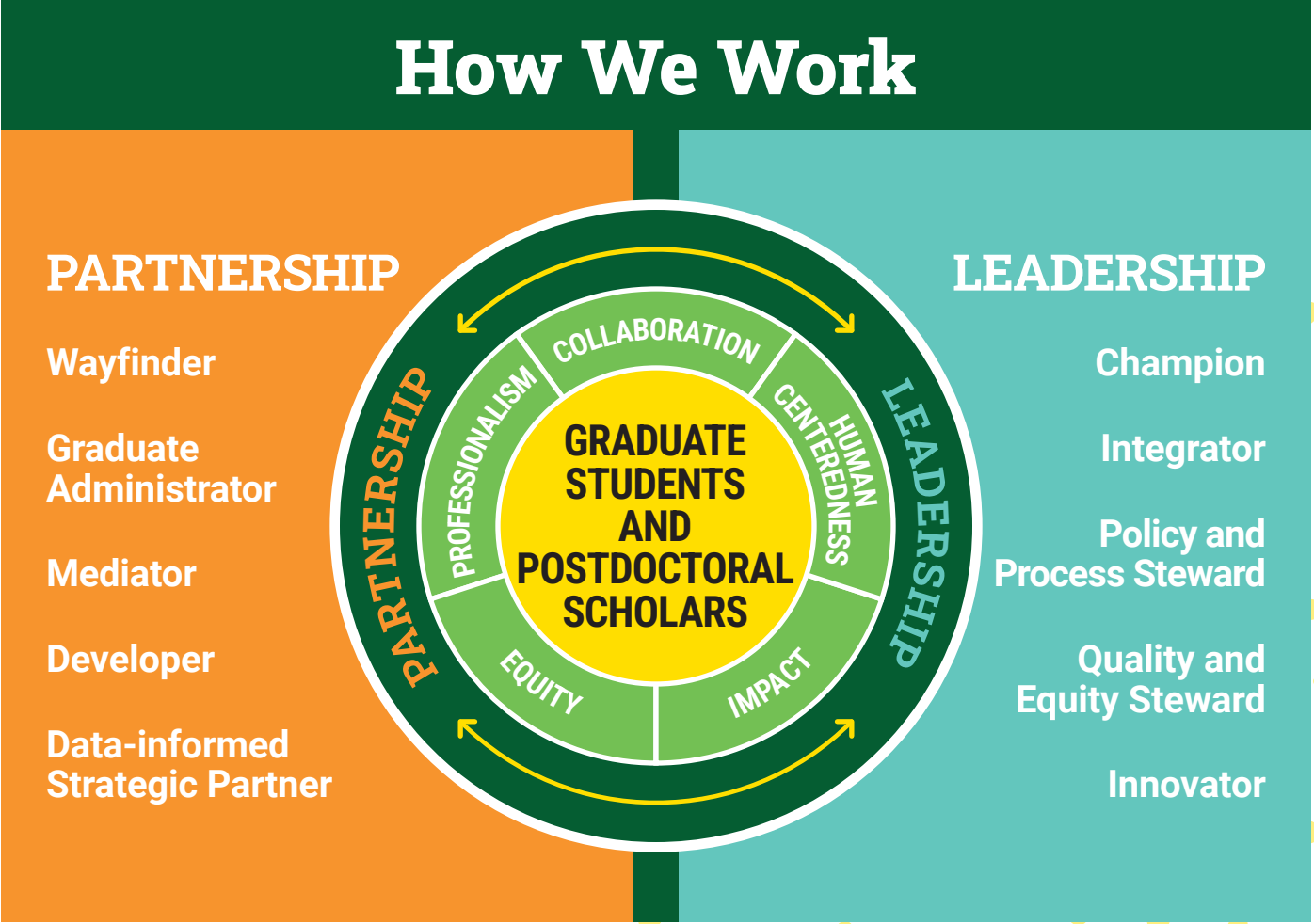
Our processes and interactions demonstrate respect and enable high standards of ethics, quality and integrity.

EQUITY

We facilitate just processes and access to opportunity, informed by continuously deepening our understanding of diverse identities and lived experiences.

HUMAN-CENTREDNESS

We engage in our relationships and interactions with empathy and compassion, and we enable the conditions for student and scholar health and well-being.



Our Four Priorities

Our work is anchored in four key priorities, each supported by targeted strategies that align with the university's broader goals. Through leadership and partnership, we will guide our efforts and resources to:

- 1

Position graduate and postdoctoral studies at the U of A as a vibrant environment and community to pursue research, education and personal growth
- 2

Facilitate consistently exceptional experiences that enrich the lives and careers of students and scholars, both on campus and beyond
- 3

Evolve graduate and postdoctoral studies to confront the complexities of a changing world
- 4

Partner, mobilize synergies and streamline processes across campus



PRIORITY 1

Position graduate and postdoctoral studies at the U of A as a vibrant environment and community to pursue research, education and personal growth

Strategies



Partner

ENACT A STRATEGY FOR ENROLMENT AND RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT

We will partner across the institution to plan for and actively manage the recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of graduate students; using data-driven approaches to marketing, financial aid, academic program design, student experience and other factors, we will support programs with aligning to market demand and societal needs, attracting students and supporting the institution's financial stability and success.

DEVELOP APPROACHES TO ATTRACT, RETAIN AND WELCOME INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Using research, program data and feedback from Indigenous graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, we will partner across the institution to plan, track and report on Indigenous student and scholar recruitment and retention practices, including enabling access to funding, highlighting available cultural supports and decolonization practices within programs and intentionally recruiting from undergraduate programs and communities.

STREAMLINE AND ENHANCE ADMISSIONS TECHNOLOGY AND PROCESSES

In partnership with Enrolment Systems & Service Innovation, we will implement and support programs with adopting a new admissions technology and process to streamline, expedite and improve the overall admissions experience for both prospective students and programs.



Leader

DEVELOP PRE-ENTRANCE SUPPORTS TO FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

Conscious that the graduate student and postdoctoral scholar experience commences upon acceptance into a program or the start of an appointment, we will equip programs with a customizable set of tools to welcome and build community among students and scholars; by building awareness of financial, career planning, accessibility and wellness supports, curricular and extracurricular activities, geographic community data and events and program peers and instructors, programs will enable improved opportunity for students and scholars to engage early and prepare for the journey ahead.

OPERATIONALIZE MINIMUM GUARANTEED FUNDING

We will develop policies, protocols and messaging to prospective students that enable the implementation of the minimum guaranteed funding operating standard for PhD students; we will facilitate consultation to explore and develop a recommendation on minimum guaranteed funding for thesis-based master's students.

PRIORITY 2

Facilitate consistently exceptional experiences that enrich the lives and careers of students and scholars, both on campus and beyond

Strategies



Partner

ENHANCE CULTURE-INFORMED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH

We will partner with campus-wide services, colleges and faculties and graduate student groups across the institution to develop integrated communications and process solutions to ensure both awareness and ease of access to culturally relevant supports for well-being and academic success.

IMPROVE THE TRANSPARENCY AND USER EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS

We will review data and gather feedback from students and scholars annually about the clarity, ease of use and effectiveness of the GPS website and communications in order to make ongoing continuous improvements; we will enable ongoing transparency of graduate student tuition, fees and funding opportunities.



Leader

ENHANCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SUPERVISORS

In service of supporting the development of, and building community among, the next generation of graduate and postdoctoral research supervisors, we will enable access to aggregated data about the state of supervision at our institution, facilitate a supervisor community of practice and provide learning and mentorship opportunities for both current and aspiring supervisors.

ENHANCE INDUSTRY NETWORKS, INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING AND REAL WORLD SKILLS APPLICATION

We will enable exposure to, and efficacy within, academic and non-academic career paths. We will partner across the institution to develop and communicate about opportunities for students to practice communicating about their research, gain exposure to and build networks within industry, government and non-government organizations, build community across disciplines and campuses and engage in career and professional development.

DEVELOP AND REVIEW ADMISSION AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS TO ENSURE CONSISTENT STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We will conduct a thorough review to identify and address opportunities to improve the clarity and consistency of the standards, policies and regulations that define expectation levels and enable exceptional experiences within graduate and postdoctoral programs at the U of A.

PRIORITY 3

Evolve graduate and postdoctoral studies to confront the complexities of a changing world

Strategies



Partner

ENABLE INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAMS, INCLUDING LEADING ADVOCACY FOR UPDATES TO BUDGET MODEL, WORK PROCESSES AND GOVERNANCE

We will partner across the institution to initiate opportunities, support the program development and approval process, and advocate for the removal of system, process and structure barriers to the development of interdisciplinary graduate and postdoctoral programs.

DEVELOP CAPABILITY AND PROTOCOLS FOR DATA-INFORMED STRATEGIC ANALYTICS AND ADVISORY SUPPORT

Leveraging the combination of data about enrolment, awards, financial support and graduate student progress, exit and placement surveys, we will provide a dashboard and strategic analysis tailored to the needs of colleges, faculties and departments to enable decision-making that supports innovative and high quality programming and student experience.



Leader

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A GRADUATE PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

We will develop a guiding framework for clear and consistent new graduate program development, including micro-credentials and laddering, that will expand accessibility to graduate studies and diversify the graduate learner population.

MONITOR AND INTEGRATE LEADING GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES BEST PRACTICES IN POST-SECONDARY

We will partner with U15 research intensive universities, monitor new research and trends within our institution, in our communities and across the globe to encourage innovation in graduate and postdoctoral studies in areas such as work integrated learning; the integration of Indigenous worldviews, histories and perspectives; the use of artificial intelligence in graduate education and research; and other emerging practices in graduate education that will foster the skills, wisdom and connections for our graduates to become the change makers for tomorrow.

PRIORITY 4

Partner, mobilize synergies and streamline processes across campus

Strategies



Partner

STREAMLINE, AUTOMATE AND MODERNIZE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

We will continue to modernize the ways data and decisions move through graduate administrative processes through methods such as digitizing forms and workflows, automating procedural tasks using artificial intelligence and implementing a new technology for applying to and adjudicating awards.

CLARIFY AND HARMONIZE ACCOUNTABILITIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR GRADUATE ADMINISTRATION, LEVERAGING A “ONE UNIVERSITY” APPROACH

In partnership with campus community partners involved in graduate and postdoctoral studies, we will harmonize efforts within, simplify and make transparent key processes for student service, program administration and institutional reporting.

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT INCREASINGLY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES WITH ALL CAMPUS PARTNERS

We will review data and gather feedback from colleges, faculties and programs annually about the clarity, ease of use and effectiveness of the GPS website and communications to make ongoing continuous improvements and enable a purpose-built GPS communications plan.

Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Scholar Journey Maps

In pursuit of a deeper understanding of student and scholar success while building this plan, GPS engaged in a journey mapping initiative with the guiding question: “What does success look like from the student and scholar perspective?”

At a retreat in Summer 2024, GPS staff engaged in a collaborative exercise to outline key transition points and experiences along the course-based master’s, thesis-based master’s, PhD and postdoctoral pathways.

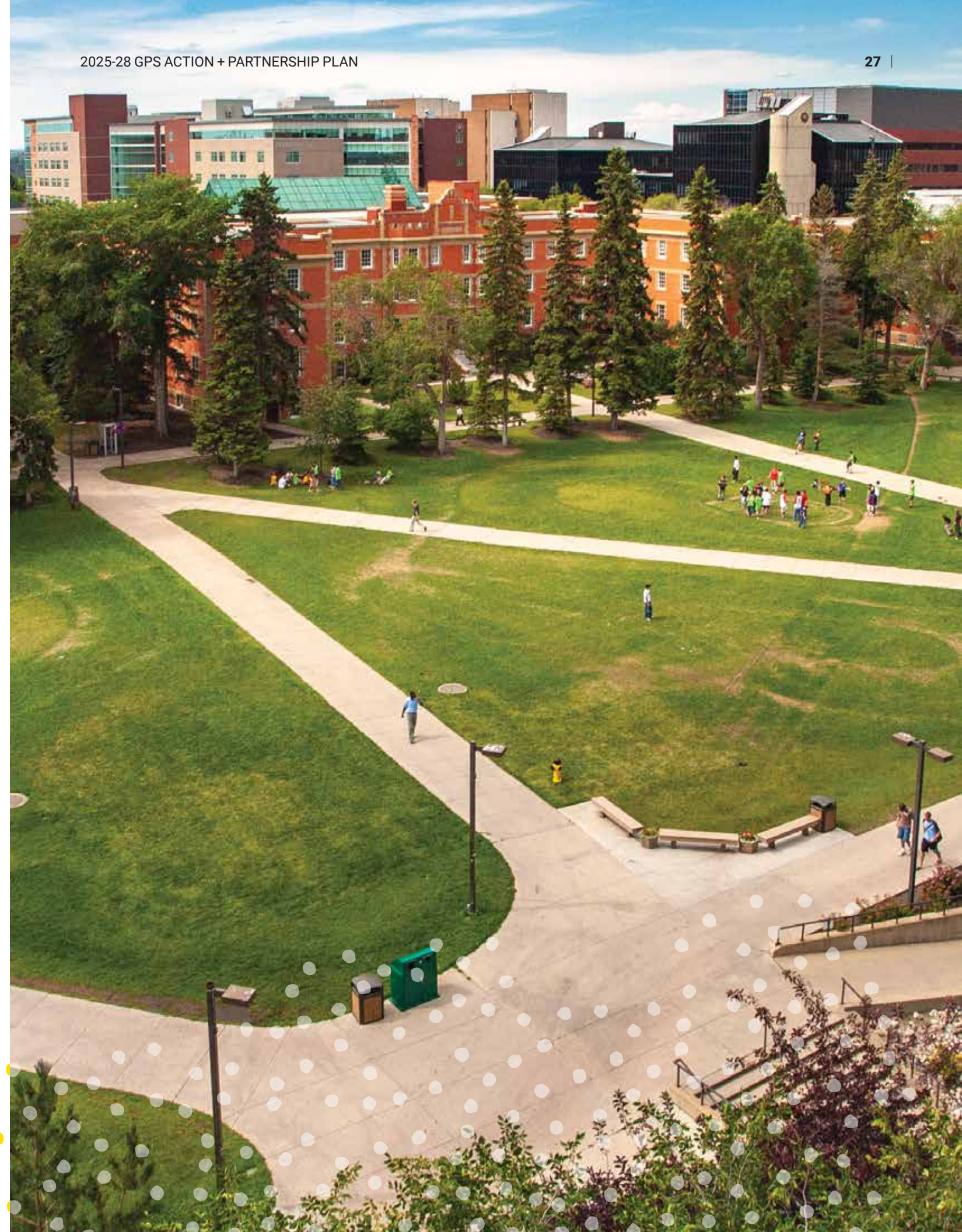
Next, we surveyed and received responses from nearly 200 graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to gain insight into their journeys at the U of A. This data was used to develop draft journey maps. We then hosted two, in-person workshops to validate and enhance them.

These maps capture key moments along the journey — recruitment, admission, supervision, program progression, professional development and program completion — while highlighting the challenges and connections encountered along the way.

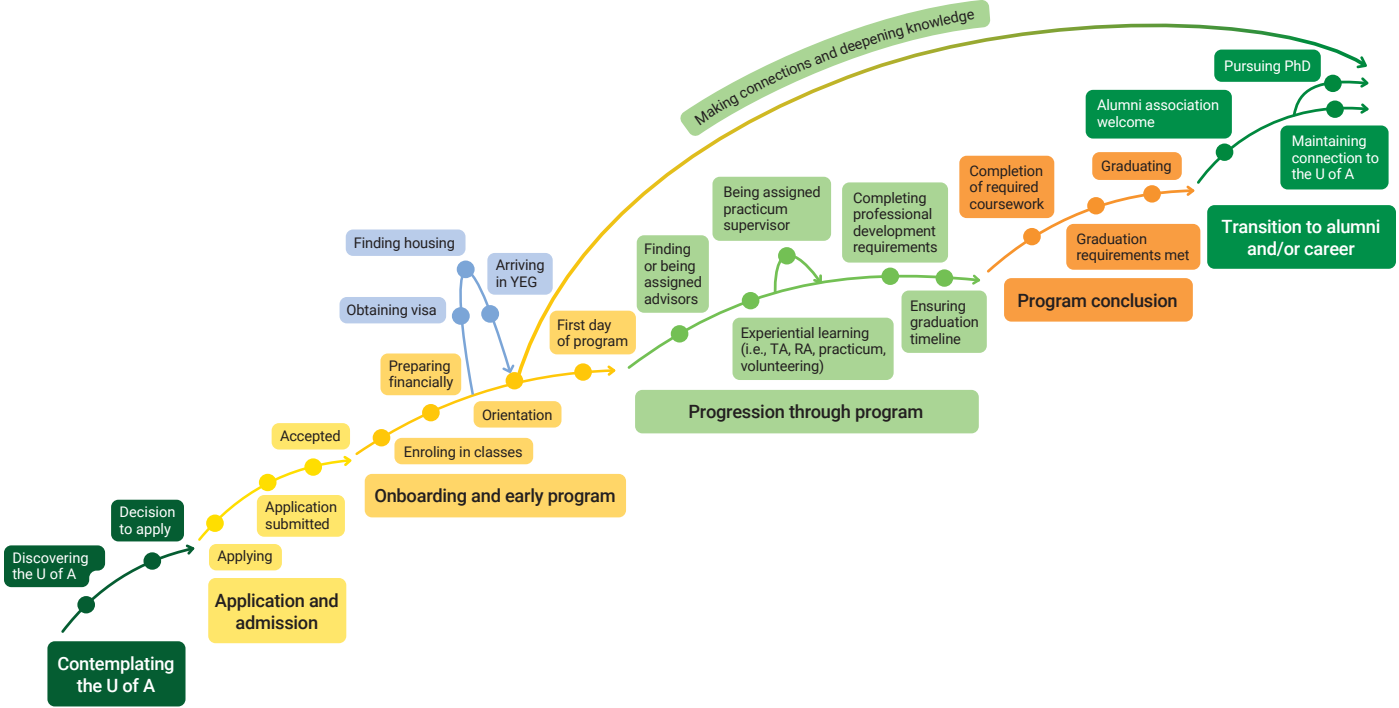
The insights shared through student and postdoctoral consultations illuminated the rich and multidimensional student and scholar experiences. While each journey is distinct and marked by transitions — new beginnings, endings and personal life changes — several common themes emerged. Here is what we heard in the workshops:

- It was affirming to see the journeys reflected in visuals, and while each experience is unique, there are common experiences shared by all.
- There was gratitude that the student and postdoctoral scholar experience will be central to GPS’s new partnership and action plan.
- A sense of community was gained by coming together as an interdisciplinary group of students and scholars to explore these journeys.

We invite you to explore the student and scholar experience through their perspective. We wish to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who shared their stories, time and energy to bring these journeys to life — both through the survey and in person.



Course-based Master's Journey Map



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Acquiring new skills and knowledge and enhancing my capabilities
- Applying my new knowledge and skills in real-world situations
- Being prepared for new work challenges and career transitions
- Accessing new employment opportunities

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO COME TO THE U OF A?

- Reputation of university and program
- Location

TOP WORDS DESCRIBING MY EXPERIENCE:

- Challenging
- Interesting
- Engaging
- Enlightening
- Expensive

KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- Career Support
- Courses (enrolment, planning)
- Writing Services
- Research and Project Support
- Administration Services (billing, personal changes, accommodations)

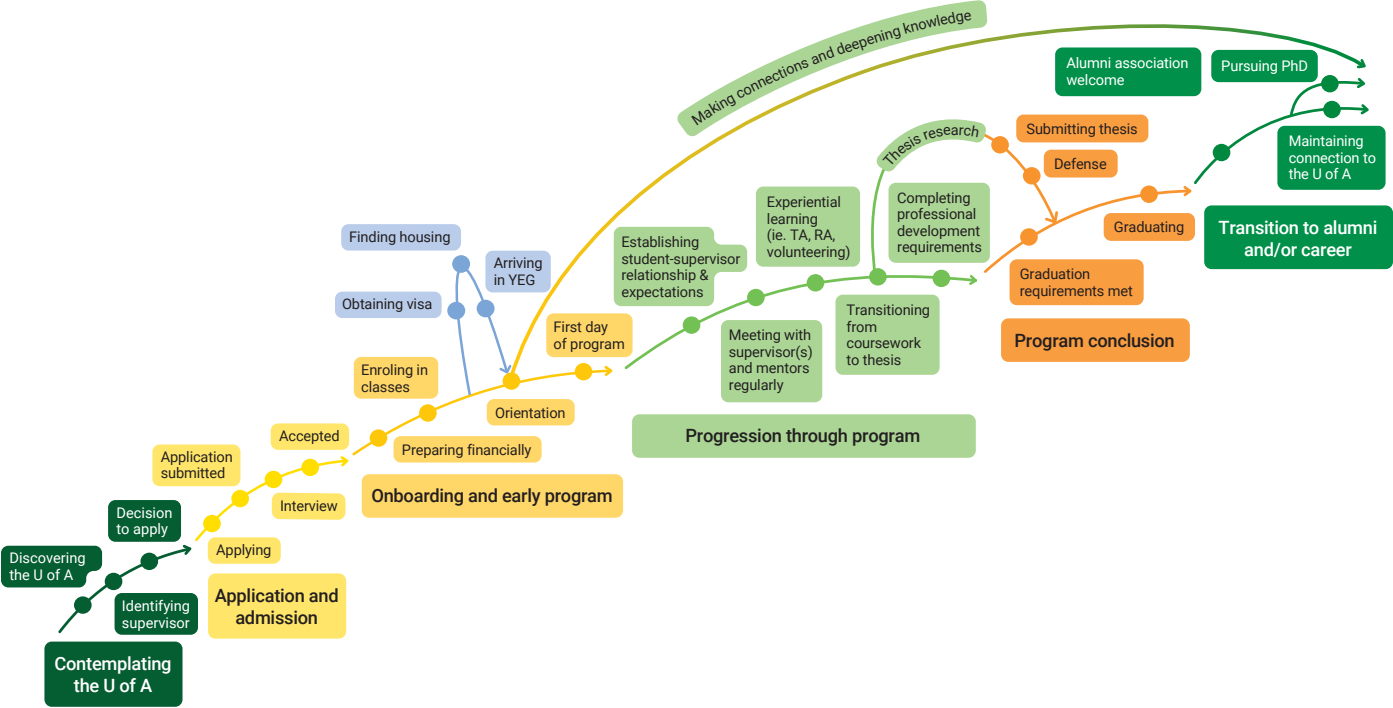
JOYFUL EXPERIENCES

- Experiencing knowledgeable professors
- Stretching beyond the edges of my knowledge and thinking
- Meeting and building relationships with others who share similar interests
- Learning and experiencing growth in something I am passionate about
- Applying my new skills and knowledge through experiential learning (e.g., clinical work, practicums, Research Assistantship work)
- Reaching milestones and seeing tangible progress in my journey

PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

- Navigating the organizational side of things — I'd like sufficient notice of changes that affect me, such as deadlines and program changes
- Wayfinding — I would like documentation, websites and procedures that are straightforward and easy to navigate
- Facing setbacks in my research or rejected grant applications
- Balancing rigorous academic demands with my personal life
- Feeling heavy financial pressure

Thesis-based Master's Journey Map



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Learning something new and developing practical skills
- Experiencing personal growth: building confidence, feeling empowered, navigating setbacks
- Maintaining work/life balance and mental health
- Feeling a sense of fulfillment in my work
- Contributing to my field of study
- Reaching my personal goals for achievement

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO COME TO THE U OF A?

- Reputation of university and program
- Faculty members
- Available funding
- Location

TOP WORDS DESCRIBING MY EXPERIENCE:

- Challenging
- Rewarding
- Stressful
- Exciting
- Fun
- Interesting
- Transformative

KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- Mental health services
- Research and project support
- Writing Services
- Career support
- Course and program support (e.g., program/course requirements, course planning, changes)
- Awards (e.g., grant applications, applying for scholarships, funding)

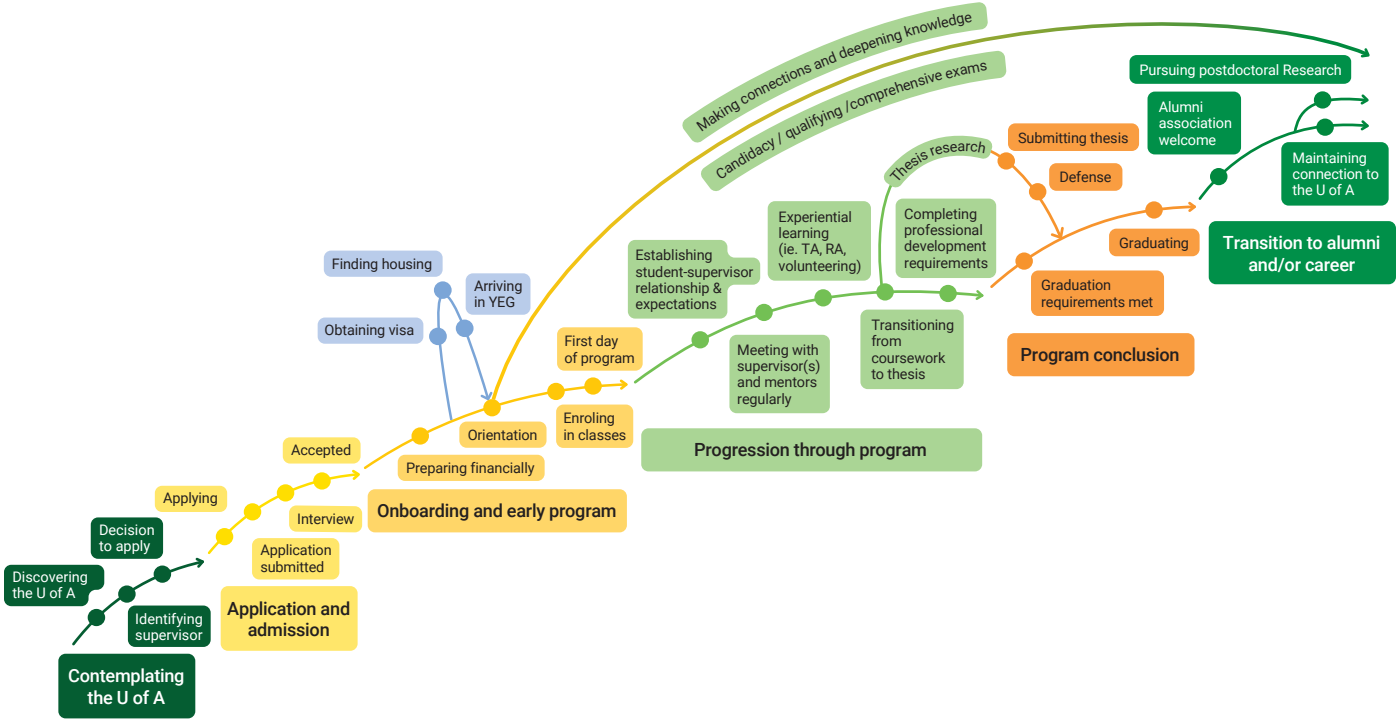
JOYFUL EXPERIENCES

- Building relationships and friendships with my peers, mentors and/or faculty
- Experiencing my hard work pay off by reaching goals, successful experiments, making a tangible impact, overcoming obstacles
- Receiving support from my supervisor, staff and/or faculty
- Being a part of the welcoming and inclusive university community
- Participating in development opportunities like conferences, TA and field work
- Participating in social events and intramurals
- Engaging in my research

PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

- Feeling isolated
- Understanding how the university and program process work and how I am being evaluated — I would like clear and consistent processes and information
- Managing a demanding workload and inflexible expectations
- Balancing academic demands with my personal life and circumstances
- Research setbacks, failed experiments and unexpected delays
- Feeling financial pressure from costs of living and tuition increases

PhD Journey Map



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Transforming my thinking, knowing and contribution to knowledge
- Completing my program within a reasonable timeframe
- Maintaining work/life balance and mental health
- Having a fulfilling experience: feeling challenged, gaining confidence, enjoying the experience
- Publishing work and/or presenting at conferences

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO COME TO THE U OF A?

- Available funding
- Faculty members
- Reputation of university and program

TOP WORDS DESCRIBING MY EXPERIENCE:

- Challenging
- Rewarding
- Stressful
- Difficult
- Lonely

KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- Mental health services
- Writing Services
- Awards (e.g., accessing funding)
- Administration (e.g., leave of absence, part-time application)
- Research support and technical skills
- Program requirements (e.g., candidacy exam prep, practicums)

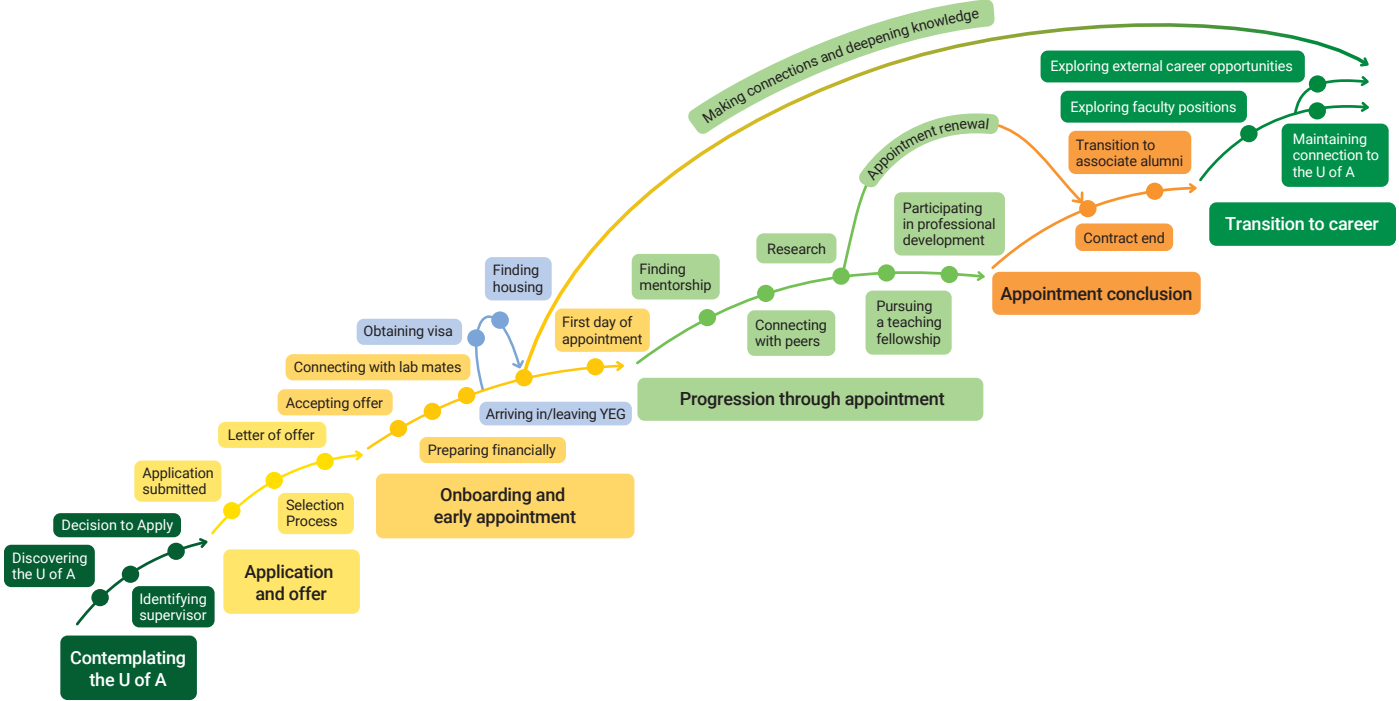
JOYFUL EXPERIENCES

- Collaborating with my colleagues and other PhD students
- Engaging in my research
- Engaging in opportunities to present my work, attend conferences, international experiences, field and on-site work
- Meeting new people and forming friendships
- Witnessing my hard work translate into meaningful progress or breakthroughs
- Receiving support from faculty and/or supervisors
- Accessing facilities (e.g., the library system, Van Vliet Complex, state-of-the-art instrumentation)
- Making a positive difference

PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

- Dealing with the stress of balancing multiple responsibilities in my life
- Waiting for repairs and the state of some spaces on campus
- Navigating research setbacks or not meeting my own expectations
- Navigating financial stress related to costs of living and tuition increases
- Feeling stuck and isolated, and maintaining mental health when dealing with poor supervision or program issues
- Finding the help I need when I need it — I would like more support, guidance and connection from my supervisor and/or peers

Postdoctoral Scholar Journey Map



WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- Enhancing my knowledge, skills, network and ability to learn
- Gaining new experiences: attending/presenting at conferences, leadership opportunities, securing funding
- Publishing work
- Seeing progress in my research on a project
- Growing personally and as a professional

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO COME TO THE U OF A?

- Available funding
- Faculty members
- Reputation of university and program

TOP WORDS DESCRIBING MY EXPERIENCE:

- Rewarding
- Challenging
- Stressful
- Enlightening
- Exciting

KEY TOUCHPOINTS

- Awards (e.g., grant applications)
- Career support
- Administration services (e.g., maternity leave, time off, OneCard, filing paperwork)
- Research/project support

JOYFUL EXPERIENCES

- Collaborating with brilliant minds on research that can make an impact
- Engaging in interesting research and new discoveries
- Learning new things about research and grants
- Growing as a person
- Experiencing my work environment and campus learning atmosphere

PAINFUL EXPERIENCES

- Feeling underpaid and undervalued for my workload and skill level
- Securing funding
- Balancing work demands with my personal life
- Navigating career and job market uncertainty
- Figuring out the postdoctoral journey and supports available

Building This Plan

To shape a shared, future-forward vision for graduate and postdoctoral studies, we asked ourselves three simple and powerful questions:

1. How can we deliver on the University of Alberta’s aspirations in a way that makes the greatest impact to graduate and postdoctoral studies?
2. Where and how do we partner to bring this vision to life?
3. What priorities will guide our efforts within the next three years?

To find meaningful answers, we partnered.

We led a series of engagements from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025 where we connected with members of our campus community — graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, faculty and staff. The goal: to put our values into action by listening, collaborating and aligning across the institution.

We connected with our campus community in different ways, through interviews, group conversations, consultations, journey mapping workshops and surveys. These exchanges gave us valuable insights into the challenges we face and the opportunities we can build on together.



SPRING 2024

- Conducted a scan of institutional priorities and U15 trends



SUMMER 2024

- Consulted with Provost’s Office regarding GPS’s mandate, consultation plans and collaboration needs across portfolios
- Engaged course-based master’s, thesis-based master’s and PhD students and postdoctoral scholars through a survey and journey mapping workshops

FALL 2024

- Engaged the Provost, Deputy Provosts, relevant Vice-Provosts and Vice-Presidents and three College Deans to explore what successful collaboration looks like in service of successful graduate student and postdoctoral scholar experiences and to react to a draft of the GPS vision, purpose, roles and guiding principles and indicators of shared success
- Engaged with the Graduate Program Administrator Council (GPAC) to share consultation findings and further explore priorities for GPS in 2025-28.

WINTER 2025

- Hosted a consultation open to all college, faculty and department academics and leaders involved in the administration or delivery of graduate or postdoctoral studies to share consultation findings and further explore priorities for GPS in 2025-28.
- Consulted with the Provost’s Office, College Deans, Deans and Chairs to share consultation findings and further refine priorities for GPS in 2025-28.



Acknowledgements

Everything we do is rooted in partnership across all corners of the university. This plan is a reflection of those connections, and we are deeply grateful for the candor, passion and shared commitment to making this plan a reality.

- Course-based master's students
- Thesis-based master's students
- PhD students
- Postdoctoral scholars (also known as postdoctoral fellows)
- Provost & Vice-President, Academic
- College Deans and General Managers
- Deputy Provost, Students & Enrolment
- Deputy Provost, Academic
- Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President International
- Vice-Provost, Programs
- Vice-President, Research & Innovation
- Vice-Provost & University Registrar
- Vice-Provost & Dean of Students
- Graduate Supervisors
- Graduate Leadership Advisory Council (GLAC, formerly GEAC)
- Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Council
- Graduate Program Administrators' Council (GPAC)
- Graduate Program Coordinators
- Graduate Student Association (GSA)
- Postdoctoral Fellows Association (PDFA)

Leading with Purpose.



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