apas

Alberta Post-Secondary Application System

ApplyAlberta

Strategic Plan

2015 - 2020

Member
Institutions

ALBERTA COLLEGE OF ART + DESIGN
ACAD

AMBROSE
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Athabasca
University

The Banff Centre
inspiring creativity

BowValley
COLLEGE

BURMAN
UNIVERSITY

CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY OF EDMONTON

GPRC

Keyano
COLLEGE

THE KING'S
UNIVERSITY
Caring community
Faithful future

Lakeland College

Lethbridge
College

MacEwan
UNIVERSITY

MEDICINE HAT
COLLEGE

MOUNT ROYAL
UNIVERSITY
1910

NAIT

NORQUEST
COLLEGE

Northern
Lakes
College

OLDS COLLEGE EST 1913

PORTAGE
COLLEGE

RDC

Sait
POLYTECHNIC

St MARY'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF
ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

University of
Lethbridge
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Table of
Contents

Message from the
Chair of the Board of Directors

Andrew W. Hakin, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

It is my privilege to present the ApplyAlberta Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. Building on the success of the application and transcript service implemented across the Campus Alberta system in 2009, this plan for future directions encompasses enhanced and expanded services to prospective learners, streamlined institutional business processes, and strengthened measures to achieve the goals of Campus Alberta.

As the post-secondary education system has been faced with a number of challenges in recent years, particularly with increasing demand for services in a time of fiscal restraint, it is more important than ever to leverage existing systems and resources. Automation of common processes allows institutional staff to focus their efforts in areas where their time and attention are most needed.

As illustrated in this plan, expanding the ApplyAlberta system to meet the needs of learners from all sectors and geographic regions will ensure the broadest possible access to educational programs at Alberta's post-secondary institutions. ApplyAlberta will continue to be an integral component in achieving the goals of the Campus Alberta system.

Message from the
Executive Director

ApplyAlberta was created through extensive collaboration between the 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions within the Campus Alberta system. The success of ApplyAlberta is continually being demonstrated by the increasing number of applications submitted and transcripts transferred. Now is the time to look to the future, to determine where we go from here.

As we have updated our shared vision, mission, and values for ApplyAlberta, so too have we updated the strategic directions for enhancing the functionality of the system. As more and more of the Canadian and international post-secondary communities make the move to digital data transfer, there are exciting opportunities to leverage ApplyAlberta to enhance the information resources available for prospective learners, to streamline institutional processes, and to ensure that Campus Alberta remains at the forefront of innovation in this arena. With the directions outlined in this Plan, we come ever closer to achieving the goal of a single window to advanced learning opportunities in Alberta.

Our Strategic Plan is a result of consultations with our stakeholder groups as well as the ongoing commitment from our member institutions to continue to meet the evolving needs of learners. With concrete directions and goals identified, together we can move forward confidently to enhance our services. I am pleased to be a part of ApplyAlberta, and would like to express my particular appreciation to the members of the Steering Committee and the Board of Directors, past and present, for their commitment, input, and guidance during the development of this Plan.

Susan L. Stein, M.A.
Executive Director

About
ApplyAlberta

In 2005, the *Access to the Future Act* was passed by the Alberta government, calling for a common application system for Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary institutions. Twenty-one universities, colleges, and technical institutes collaborated with Alberta Advanced Education and Technology (now Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education) to develop ApplyAlberta.

In July 2008, the Alberta Post-Secondary Application System was incorporated under the *Societies Act of Alberta*. Membership was subsequently expanded to include the five Independent Academic Institutions in the province, bringing the number of participating institutions to 26.

Today ApplyAlberta enables anyone anywhere to apply for programs at one or more of these member institutions.
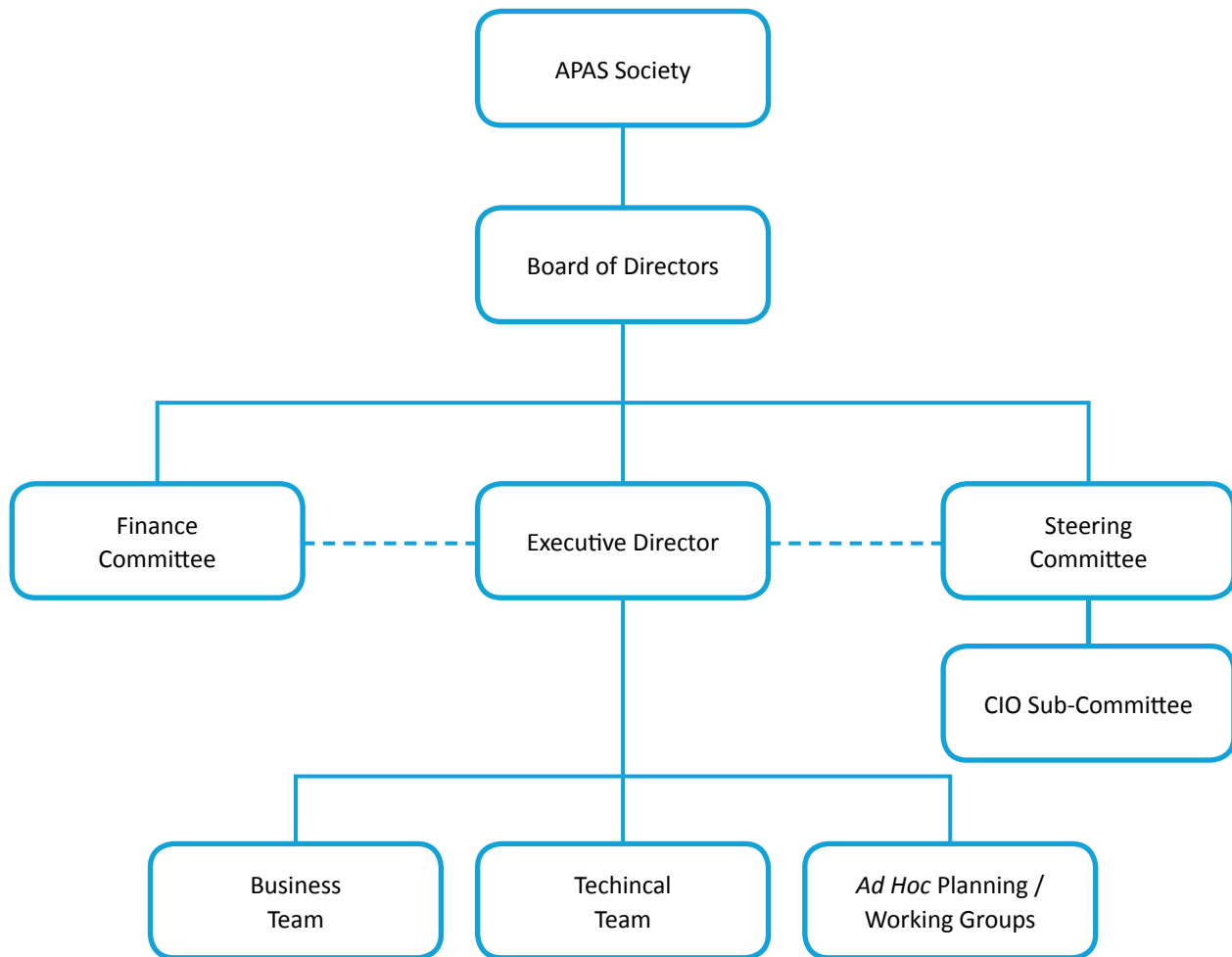
Background

The initial vision for the ApplyAlberta system was a one-window, web-based application system to Alberta's public post-secondary system to allow all potential students to apply to any of Alberta's post-secondary institutions through one 'portal'. The system would be used by Alberta's post-secondary institutions and the Government of Alberta (GOA) to determine the number of applications by potential students, the number of successful applications, and the number of turn-aways of qualified applicants. This information would allow the institutions and the GOA to plan for increasing access and student spaces in the areas and programs of need/demand. ApplyAlberta would be configured to enable a student's high school transcripts to be routed from Alberta Education to the post-secondary institution(s) to which the student is applying.

The vision also called for links to other systems including:

- Alberta's student finance system, so that individuals applying to Alberta's post-secondary institutions could readily determine the type of financial assistance that is available to them through the Alberta Government;

- the Alberta Learning Information System (ALIS), to provide potential students with a career-guidance tool to assist potential students in planning their future careers. Students would be able to search through ApplyAlberta for the types of careers that are available, the types of programs/courses that are needed to reach those careers, and where and how to obtain such programming/courses; and

- the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfers (ACAT) system to ensure the career-guidance tool operates seamlessly.

Governance

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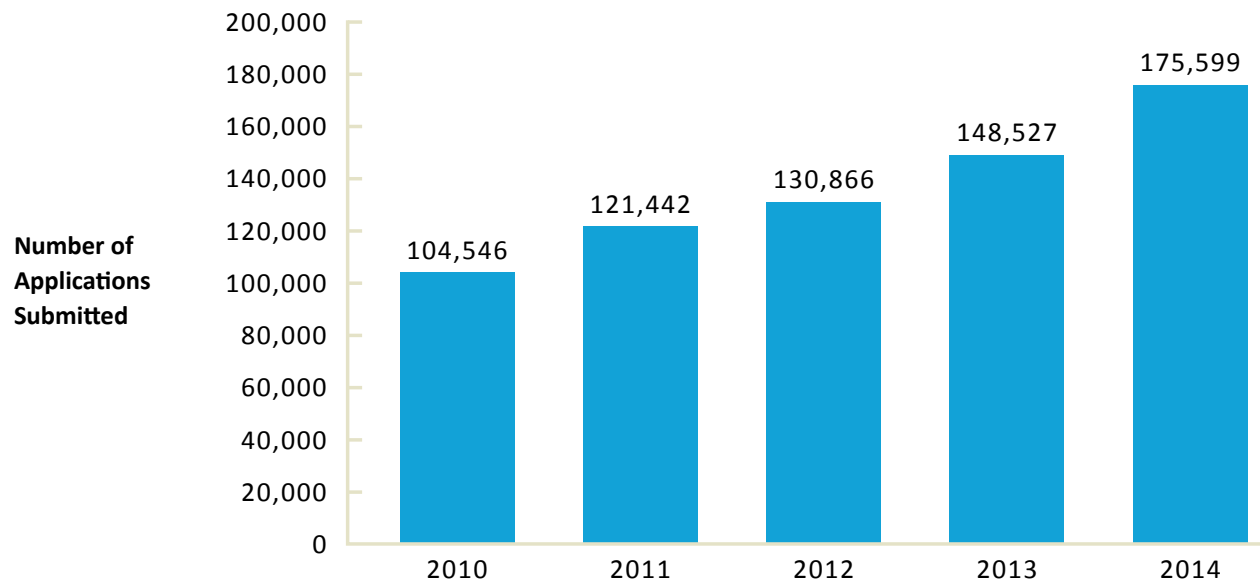University of Calgary

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St. Mary's University

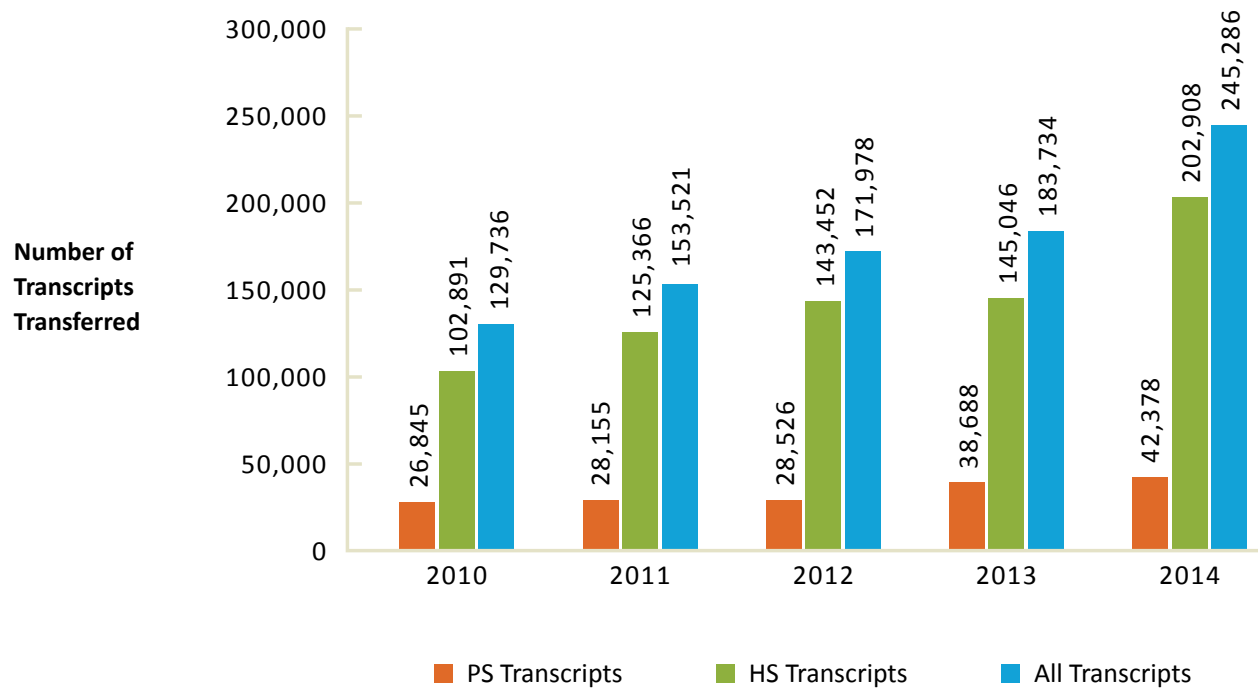**Olive Yonge**
University of Alberta

Current
State

Applications

The ApplyAlberta system has seen increasing usage in each year of its operation, with an overall increase in applications of 68% over the last 5 years; an average increase of 13.9% per year.

Number of Applications Submitted

Year	Number of Applications Submitted
2010	104,546
2011	121,442
2012	130,866
2013	148,527
2014	175,599

Transcripts

A similar increase has been observed in the total number of transcripts transferred, with an overall increase of 89% over the past five years.

Number of Transcripts Transferred

Year	PS Transcripts	HS Transcripts	All Transcripts
2010	26,845	102,891	129,736
2011	28,155	125,366	153,521
2012	28,526	143,452	171,978
2013	38,688	145,046	183,734
2014	42,378	202,908	245,286

■ PS Transcripts ■ HS Transcripts ■ All Transcripts

Vision, Mission,
and Values

Vision

ApplyAlberta will be a leader in providing innovative, robust, and comprehensive technology-based post-secondary application services within the Campus Alberta system.

Mission

ApplyAlberta will provide an applicant-centered information and application process that engages prospective learners and assists them with access to higher education programs by:

- serving as a single point of access for post-secondary education for prospective learners inside and outside of the province of Alberta;
- simplifying the application process for learners by providing a common application system for post-secondary education in Alberta;
- streamlining business processes for institutions, thereby improving efficiency, helping to meet admission targets, and planning for capacity; and
- supporting the goals of the Campus Alberta system.

Values

- ApplyAlberta will meet the evolving needs of learners in Alberta and beyond.
- ApplyAlberta will respect the autonomy, diversity, and integrity of each institution.
- ApplyAlberta will be an innovative and thriving gateway to advanced learning opportunities in Alberta.

Strategic
Directions

ApplyAlberta was established to provide learners with a common application system to access educational programs at Alberta's public post-secondary institutions. Looking forward, this plan identifies the directions that will enable APAS to achieve the original goals established for the system, and enable ApplyAlberta to assist Alberta's post-secondary institutions to attract the best and the brightest from within the Province, across the country, and around the world.

We identify three strategic directions for ApplyAlberta: assisting learners, assisting institutions, and assisting the Campus Alberta system.

Assisting learners with achieving their educational goals by simplifying the application process:

Goal 1: *Assist prospective students with program planning and selection by enhancing the ApplyAlberta website to provide access to comprehensive information on living and studying in Alberta.*

ApplyAlberta is the starting point for many learners interested in applying for post-secondary education. Expanding the capability of the site will build on the services currently provided to enable learners to: explore career opportunities, graduate outcomes, and labour market statistics; investigate advanced education options ranging from college and university programs to apprenticeship and industry training; determine program availability; investigate student financing; and explore post-secondary transfer and transfer credit information. This will achieve the single window to post-secondary education originally envisioned for the ApplyAlberta system.
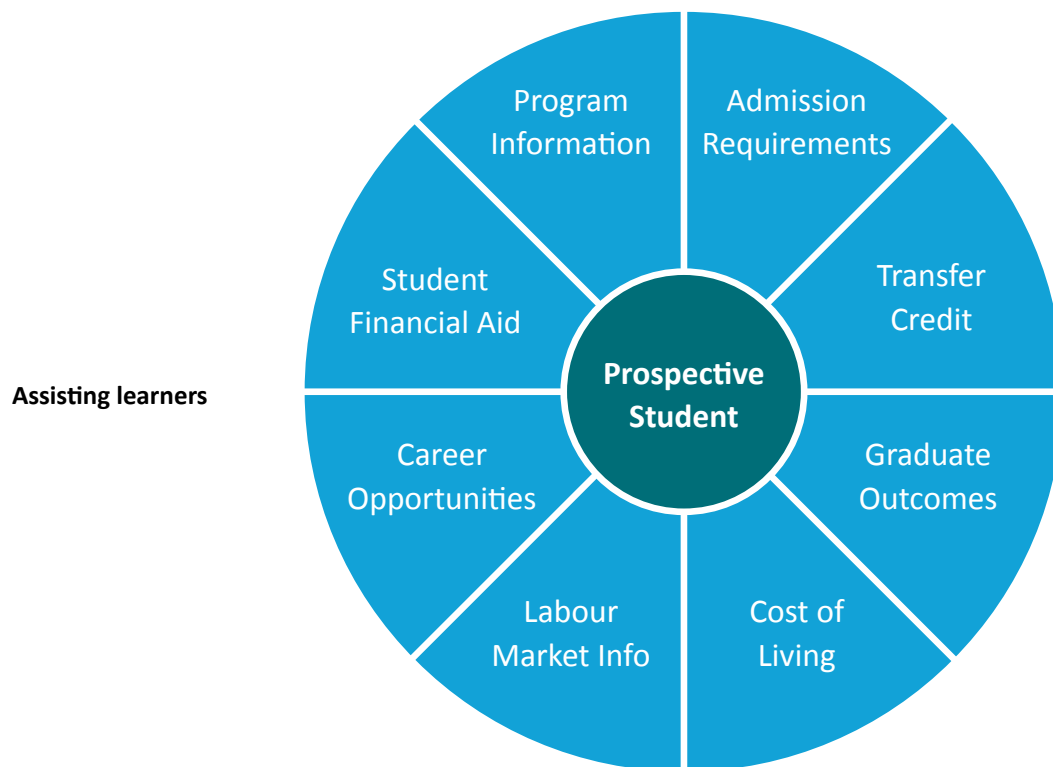
Goal 2: *Assist prospective students with access to learning opportunities by expanding application services to encompass all forms of advanced learning provided in Alberta.*

The ApplyAlberta system currently allows prospective students to apply to programs at Alberta's 26 publicly-funded post-secondary institutions. Extending the application service to include the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) colleges in Alberta will ensure that prospective students in that sector receive the same level of service in the admission process. The application service can also be expanded to encompass all other forms of advanced learning provided in Alberta, including continuing education; some graduate programs; private vocational training; professional certification and re-certification; and ESL programs.

Goal 3: *Assist prospective students with application and admission processes by participating in Canadian and international student mobility initiatives, and by developing trusted data transfer partnerships across provincial and national borders.*

APAS member institutions, including Alberta Education, are currently able to exchange transcripts in digital format; this speeds up the admissions process as transcripts are delivered within minutes, rather than the weeks, or months that may be required for print transcripts. Participation in the Canadian Transcript Exchange Network will enhance student mobility by developing standards for electronic transcript exchanges across provincial borders and establishing trusted data transfer partnerships Canada-wide.

Participation in international student mobility initiatives to establish transcript exchange programs across North America and beyond will enable prospective students from around the world to receive the same level of responsiveness to applications and admissions processes.

Assisting learners

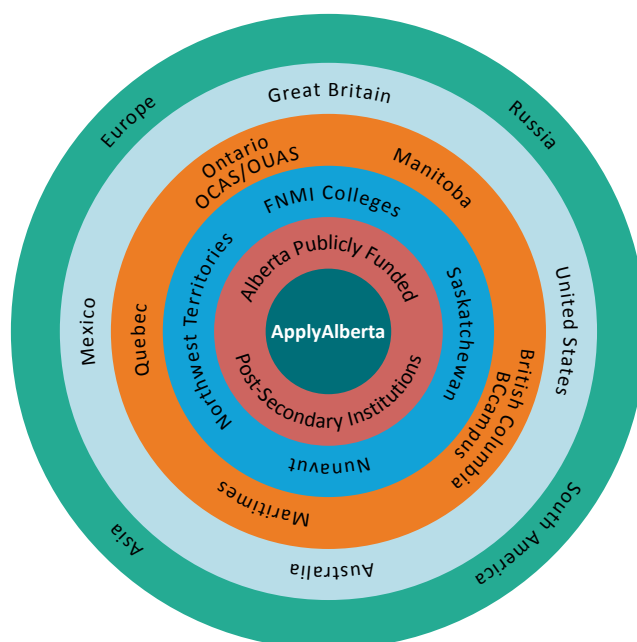## Assisting institutions by improving reporting and streamlining business processes:

Goal 1: *Assist member institutions with planning for capacity and programming needs by developing reporting systems able to provide real-time information on applicants and their applications.*

The ApplyAlberta System tracks applicant demographics and locations as part of the application process. It is already possible for the system to report application and transcript transfer statistics. By expanding the reporting system capability, it will be possible to provide data and comparisons based on student demographics and geographical information, and to report on student mobility among the member institutions.

Goal 2: *Assist member institutions with increased efficiencies in admissions processes by securing digital data transfer of necessary documents and information.*

Digital data transfer of necessary documents in support of applications (transcripts, foreign credential evaluations, and so on) increases efficiency by reducing the amount of manual labour required for acquiring and processing necessary documentation. Institutions can process and respond to applications more quickly, reduce the need for follow-up to acquire supporting documentation, and confirm acceptance to ensure that the best and brightest students are not seeking admission elsewhere due to delays in processing of applications. This can assist institutions with achieving or re-focusing admissions targets as needed when supporting documents are received within minutes, rather than days, weeks, or even months.

Expansion of Transcript Exchange Partnerships

Development of the transcript exchange network will occur in phases that are prioritized by: a) focusing on regions in Canada where the largest amount of student mobility with Alberta occurs; b) expanding to encompass all of Canada; c) broadening exchanges using a curricular focus including, but not limited to, the General Certificate of Education (GCE); and d) continuing expansion to provide a comprehensive exchange in support of worldwide digital mobility.

Assisting the Campus Alberta system by enhancing data collection and reporting, and facilitating student recruitment and conversion rates:
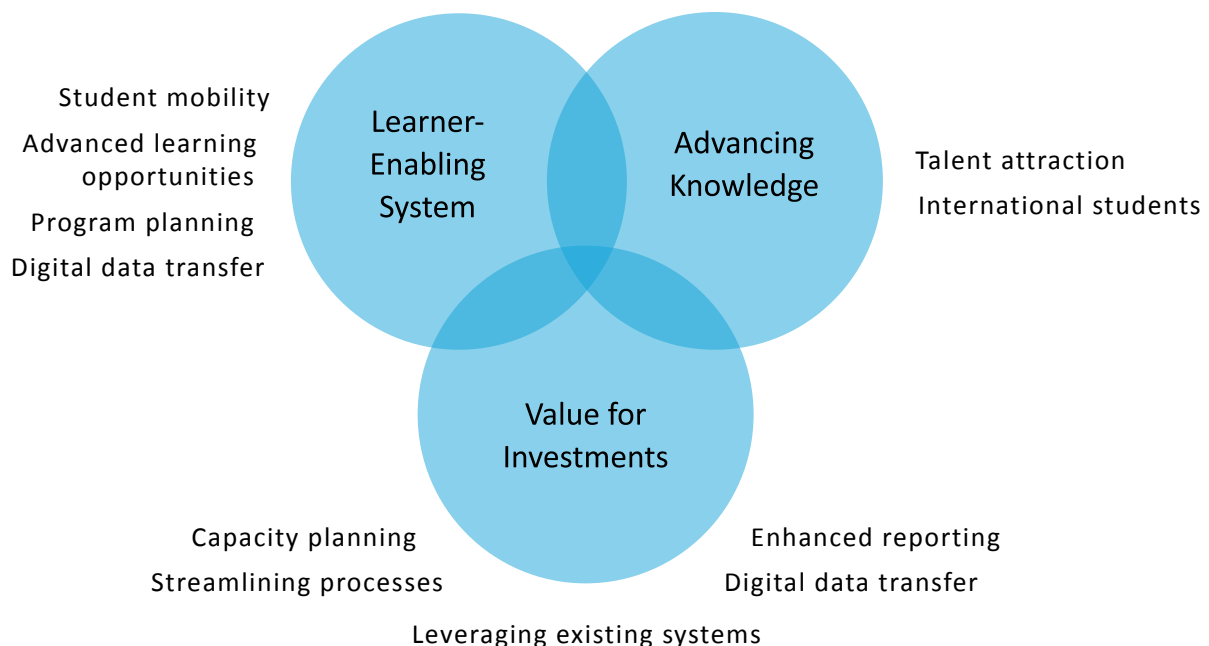
Goal 1: *Assist the Campus Alberta system by providing real-time analytics on student application behaviours within the system.*

Assist the Campus Alberta system by providing real-time analytics on student mobility within the Campus Alberta system, and conversion rates for Alberta learners completing post-secondary education within and outside of Alberta. This would increase the agility of capacity planning processes on a system-wide basis, and help to ensure adequate access to advanced education for Alberta learners.

Goal 2: *Assist the Campus Alberta system with the recruitment of international applicants.*

Assist the Campus Alberta system with recruitment and admission of the best and brightest students from around the world by supporting system-wide initiatives that reduce time-dependency barriers to the admission process.

Supporting the goals of the Campus Alberta system

Student mobility
Advanced learning opportunities
Program planning
Digital data transfer

Learner-Enabling System

Advancing Knowledge

Talent attraction
International students

Value for Investments

Capacity planning
Streamlining processes

Enhanced reporting
Digital data transfer

Leveraging existing systems

Measuring Progress

We use a set of measurements to report progress on the goals described within this Plan:

- growth in the number of applications submitted to member institutions;
- growth in the number of transcripts transferred;
- expansion of the transcript exchange service across Canada; and
- expansion of the transcript exchange service as a participant in the worldwide student mobility initiative.

These measurements will evolve over time as the ApplyAlberta system changes to meet the evolving needs of learners.

Our commitment is to our stakeholders: learners, institutions, and the Campus Alberta system, as we work to ensure that the vision for the ApplyAlberta system continues to be a achieved.