ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH PRIORITIES

2019 AND BEYOND

To Make All Learning Count

BowValley COLLEGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Bow Valley College is located in the traditional territories of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut'ina, and the Iyarhe Nakoda. We are situated on land where the Bow River meets the Elbow River, and that the traditional Blackfoot name of this place is "Mohkinstsis" which we now call the City of Calgary. The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC

Dear Friends,

Bow Valley College is embarking on a new vision and mission as articulated in the Open Doors – Open Minds Strategic Plan. Through broad consultation and college-wide input driven by the Academic and Research Committee, the Academic Division has developed our Academic and Research Priorities: **To Make All Learning Count.**

The Academic and Research Priorities set our approach to advancing initiatives identified in the Open Doors – Open Minds plan. This roadmap commits the Academic Division to exemplify strengths and continuously improve. We identified five academic and research priorities:

- Developing the whole learner
- Providing authentic learning
- Broadening our applied research agenda
- Upskilling and re-skilling through the Pivot-Ed initiative
- Enhancing program quality assurance

Let us be the entrepreneurial college that places people onto learning pathways, recognizes their abilities and prior learning, and trains them to arrive where they want to be.

We are in the business of creating opportunities for learners, and in the process, we are creating futures, building an amazing city to work and live in, and challenging the way we do things in higher education.

Join me in this exciting time. Let's shape the future of college education together.

Dr. Misheck Mwaba
Vice-President, Academic

"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."
Nelson Mandela

THIS PLAN WILL CHANGE OUR FUTURE

The Academic and Research Priorities are our commitment to setting goals, choosing initiatives, and allocating resources in ways that support our five priorities. As the core of academic and research programming at the College, the Academic Division is tasked with equipping learners with the skills and knowledge to further themselves. Bow Valley College is comprised of a diverse academic team that encompasses a variety of teaching, learning, and research activity through:

- Chiu School of Business
- School of Community Studies
- School of Creative Technologies
- School of Continuing Learning
- School of Global Access
- School of Foundational Learning
- School of Health and Wellness
- Research and Innovation
- Regional Stewardship

The Academic and Research Priorities guide the efforts of the Academic Division's planning to achieve coordinated, integrated action that advances our mandate. This work complements the College's Open Doors – Open Minds Strategic Plan and the Comprehensive Institutional Plan. The Strategic Plan communicates the vision, mission, and goals applicable to the entire organization. The Comprehensive Institutional Plan provides insight into work being done at Bow Valley College over the next three years and meets specific reporting requirements of Advanced Education.

As we make decisions, we will ask: Does this contribute to the Academic and Research Priorities?

WHO WE ARE

Bow Valley College is Alberta's largest Comprehensive Community College. We are rooted in community, and we lead the way in facilitating access and pathways to lifelong learning, employment and entrepreneurship.

Our learners are diverse and come to us with varied education, life and employment experiences. Regardless of where they are beginning, our programming scope supports learners in foundational skills development, English language learning, applied and advanced career preparedness, and other upskilling opportunities that meet their lifelong learning needs.

PRIORITIES

The following five priorities are developed during a time of immense transition and evolution at Bow Valley College. Our programs, processes, projects, and initiatives may vary over time, however, the core of why we do what we do will remain rooted in our vision.

Open doors and open minds, by creating opportunities for learners, employees, employers and communities, and by shaping the future of college education.

The Whole Learner

Learners come to Bow Valley College from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and levels of education. They join a cohort of peers in an academic journey that encompasses shared and unique learning experiences. The College facilitates the academic and personal growth of each learner through exposure to a variety of classroom and co-curricular opportunities blended with social and academic supports. We will serve our learners better by:

- Ensuring equitable opportunity to access services and supports by all learners — including online, face-to-face and from any of our locations
- Connecting learners to co-curricular and social/leadership opportunities
- Providing workplace skills and career development learning
- Offering pathways for literacy, upgrading, and post-secondary programming (credit and non-credit)
- Broadening continuing learning opportunities and developing a program mix that enables workforce participation and success
- Cultivating inclusive teaching practices and learning spaces for a global campus
- Exploring alternative credentialing and assessment

Highlights

- Pathways: We are creating better opportunities for learners by offering different pathways to success. Through our Career Program Pathways, new programming in the School of Creative Technologies, university transfer and collaborative degree initiatives, learners will get to where they want to be faster and without duplicating competencies already acquired. Internal pathways from English language learning and upgrading to diploma programs enable learners to seamlessly complete their education at Bow Valley College. New partnerships with other post-secondary institutions such as Athabasca University are making further studies an effortless possibility.

- Competency Based Education: Our teaching and learning approach will recognize prior experience and enable learners to master skills or competencies at their own pace. Bow Valley College recognizes the changing learner population, who requires flexible course scheduling and content delivery, as well as access to diverse learning devices. Competency based education bundles teaching and learning in ways that work for the 21st century learner.

- Regional Stewardship: We are making a long-term and positive difference in regional communities. By developing a sustainable model to offer a suite of programs and services, we are supporting the economic and social agendas of the communities in which our campuses are located.

Authentic Learning

Authentic learning happens at Bow Valley College when we connect learners with community and employers while delivering innovative curricular experiences through excellence in learning.

Partnerships with employers, community, professional associations and accreditation bodies deepen our understanding of workforce needs and competencies, which prepares our graduates to be successful in today's changing world of work. We facilitate learning and knowledge transfer through exemplary teaching delivered by qualified faculty, supported by technology and outstanding multi-modal course delivery. We foster authentic learning by:

- Being learner-centred and innovative in course delivery and curriculum development
- Providing flexibility in program progression through blended learning designs and modularization
- Decolonizing and indigenizing curriculum in genuine and meaningful ways
- Building competence for learners, faculty and staff that cultivate inclusive practices and support diversity

- Removing barriers and upholding universal design for learning principles
- Investing in faculty and staff development
- Linking academic programs to industry recognized certifications
- Engaging the community and creating opportunities for service learning
- Preparing the learner for a local and global workplace
- Engaging the business community in applied research and work integrated learning
- Leveraging newcomer prior experience toward viable workforce participation in Canada
- Providing basic literacy programming that leads to improved social inclusion and further academic achievement

Highlights

- **Ignite Faculty Onboarding Program:** Shaping the future of college education begins with our instructors. Ignite is our comprehensive approach to faculty orientation and development. An initial week of onboarding continues with online and cohort learning throughout the year that emphasizes high impact instruction, applied learning, and inclusive learning environments and learning-centered practices. Our program covers four themes:
  - Enhance awareness of adult learners and the learning process
  - Build intentionality in instructional practice
  - Professionalize the skilled educator
  - Transform teaching and learning at Bow Valley College

- **Integrating Virtual Reality (VR):** We are expanding the traditional classroom space through digital technology and designing virtual realities that immerse learners in rich and dynamic experiences. Our Health and Human Services learners have been using simulations to enhance their learning and problem solving in different user perspectives. VR will make its way into our health and business programming as we work with local tech talent such as ICOM.

- **Work Integrated Learning:** We are offering more work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities to learners. In the next five years, we will strive to provide at least one WIL experience to all career program learners prior to graduation. All new programs will incorporate at least one form of WIL into curriculum and we will leverage technology such as Riipen to engage employers and the community in the WIL ecosystem.

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING EXAMPLES:

- Cooperative Education
- Internships
- Mandatory Professional Practice/Clinical Placement
- Field Experience
- Applied Research Projects (or Capstone Projects developed with industry)

- Service Learning
- Entrepreneurship
- Work Experience
- Incubators and Accelerators
- Bootcamps and Hackathons

Broadening Our Applied Research Agenda

Recognizing the strengths of faculty and employees, we will expand our agenda to make research a part of the learner and employer experience at Bow Valley College. Learners benefit from applied research projects by applying their learning in the workplace environment. Our learners will help their organizations solve problems and identify efficiencies while strengthening their employment prospects.

We will continue to leverage our research strength in the areas of:

- Teaching and learning
- Newcomer advancement and global competence
- Foundational learning
- Health and wellness
- Community studies
- Childhood development
- Social innovation and social entrepreneurship

We will broaden our research agenda by:

- Making applied research a key component of our learning strategy
- Supporting learners, faculty and staff in applied research methodology and project procurement
- Engaging industry and the business community in identifying potential clients and partnerships
- Weaving applied research into curriculum and coursework
- Facilitating knowledge mobilization
- Developing interdisciplinary applied research opportunities to include learners from different program areas

Highlights

- **Including Learners in Research:** A major part of our applied research agenda is involving learners and the employer community in solving practical problems relevant to organizations. Collaborative research projects will involve a learner, faculty member, and partner organization. Applied research involving learners can be multi-faceted and will open doors to improved employment opportunities. In addition to weaving applied research into curriculum and coursework, and expanding work integrated learning opportunities, Bow Valley College has four centres of research. Our centres of research have established expertise and practices to support learner involvement in applied research:
  - Research and Innovation
  - Centre for Early Development and Applied Research (CEDAR)
  - Research and Development (School of Global Access)

- **Tri-Council Research:** Bow Valley College is successful in acquiring Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grants. We will explore opportunities with the other Tri-Council research agencies — the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). Research and training supported through the Government of Canada include three SSHRC funded projects:
  - Enhancing Wellbeing and Civic Engagement of Immigrant Women Retirees
  - Social Innovation on the Ground: Accessible and Evidence-based Tools for Social Innovators
  - Bringing Hearts and Minds Together: Co-Creating Lifelong Learning Materials for Caregivers of Indigenous Children

Pivot-Ed

The Pivot-Ed initiative combines scalable assessments and micro-credentialing for the purpose of re-skilling and upskilling individuals into new or different careers. Individuals train up through different content sources to develop required competencies. They are assessed, validated, and provided micro-credentials – digital credentials that stay with the learner and are recognized by employers, professional associations and other educational institutions.

Content is everywhere. Leveraging our academic expertise to combine content with scalable assessments and alternative credentialing paves a powerful new way for learners and job seekers to pivot into new careers and sectors. Pivot-Ed will provide training programs that are short, focused, validated, and aligned to our industry partners' needs. These courses or modules articulate to non-credit credentials or ladder to for-credit credentials, including certificates and diplomas.

Bow Valley College will explore the potential of joint diplomas/degrees in partnership with universities. The value proposition is the creation of a credible and flexible model for content consumption, skills acquisition, skill and competency assessment, and alternative credentialing that can ladder into traditional credentials.

Highlights

- **Micro-Credentials:** Beginning with the IBM Skills Academy, our latest partnership with IBM, Bow Valley College is offering short-term programs teaching beginner to advanced information technology training, from which learners earn micro-credentials. Alternative credentialing provides job seekers and learners with access to new skills or ones that enhance their current skillset over a short period of time. Micro-credentials augment existing education, experience and skills. We are proudly partnering with Credly's digital platform to create our micro-credentials.

- **Scalable Assessments:** Just-in-time and relevant assessments are critical to appraising individual skills and knowledge to determine evidence of required competencies. Working with artificial intelligence and machine learning based companies such as Ametros have enabled Bow Valley College to explore scalable assessments to meet industry demand and create safe and objective feedback solutions for learners.

- **Tech Skills to Employment:** We will be offering short-term training under the Information and Communication Technology Integrated Training Project funded by Alberta Labour. Through this initiative, 50 underemployed or unemployed Albertans will be provided 16 weeks of IT training complemented by 10 weeks of work placement in a related field. This comprehensive program combines workplace essential skills, computer proficiencies, information technology competencies, employment preparation skills, and work experience in an integrated program.

A Culture of Quality: Academic Governance and Assessment

Supporting a culture of quality and excellence, Bow Valley College academic programs adhere to multi-layered and comprehensive program quality assurance practices. We will support academic governance and assessment by:

- Following the Academic Program Development and Management Policy and Procedures
- Ensuring vigorous analysis of new program ideas and potential for market
- Complying with internal policies and procedures that govern program evaluation, credentials, curriculum, and grading
- Maintaining accreditation compliance with external agencies and governing bodies
- Adopting best practices in continuous improvement to optimize internal processes

In doing so, we are ensuring sustainability, high quality standards, and recognition of our academic credentials amongst other Canadian institutions and internationally.

Highlights

- **Quality Assurance:** Program quality and graduate outcomes are vital to the success of our learners when they invest in a program at Bow Valley College. Developing a comprehensive Program Quality Assurance Framework that encompasses program evaluation, curriculum review, and program costing models keeps our content current and learners equipped with in-demand skills. It also ensures we are being sustainable and operationally efficient. Having a means to define our excellence, as well as demonstrate and communicate the quality of our programming, means a better program for learners and a better educational partner for industry.

- **Process Improvement Through Lean Initiatives:** To grow and evolve into a complex and efficient comprehensive community college, some of the ways we have been doing business and operating will benefit from process improvements and taking a lean approach to how we do our work. Projects will include academic scheduling, space utilization, timesheets, testing for prospective and current learners, and annual planning timelines.

- **Curriculum Management System:** To support programming that reflects today's workforce needs and learning, we will explore solutions to manage and provide governance over our curriculum development, review, and management processes.

WATCH WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE

As we embark on exciting new endeavours, our entrepreneurial spirit and drive to achieve the best for our learners will help us continue to be a sought-after destination for high-achievers across the globe.

Some things will make a bigger splash than others, but know research, innovation and excellence are woven into everything we do. Let's make all learning count.