For the Public Good: Developing Signature Research and Teaching Areas

Campus Forum
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David H. Turpin, President and Vice-Chancellor
Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President (Research)
EXCEL
Objective 12:

Build a portfolio of signature research and teaching areas where the University of Alberta is or will be recognized as a global leader.
Why develop Signature Areas?

• Because we need to....

• This was one of the most frequently raised points in the consultations around *For the Public Good*
What a signature area is not:

These areas will **not** replace the broad base of fundamental and applied research, scholarship, and creative activities ongoing at the university.

Diversity and breadth in teaching and research **will remain** an essential feature of the University of Alberta—without it the development of signature research and teaching areas would be impossible now and in the future.
What a signature area is:

A signature area of research and teaching area will:

• Meet the criteria listed in Objective 12
• Build on existing and emerging excellence
• Vary in breadth and depth to reflect the uniqueness of the area
• Involve multiple faculties, departments, and disciplines and promote multi-disciplinary connection and collaboration
Criteria from *For the Public Good*

- National and international stature for excellence, relevance, and impact
- Critical mass—opportunity for broad, interdisciplinary engagement
- Grassroots leadership, participation, and support from within our university community
- Stakeholder partnerships
- Research partners (international, community, government, industry)
- Capacity to shape and align with federal and provincial research funding priorities
- Student demand
- Physical and operational capacity
- Geographic or situational relevance
What is an emerging area?

An emerging area shows potential to:

• Meet the criteria listed in Objective 12 in the future

• Develop further into a shared vision

• Allow the university to position itself as the leader by moving forward purposefully in an area with great potential
What is the *immediate value* of being a signature area?

Access to and dedication of campus resources for:

- Government advocacy at highest levels
- Priority for funding applications and philanthropic support
- Aligned hiring
- Practical support for program development
- Communications
What is the "longer-term value of signature areas?"

• Builds the U of A’s capacity to effect change for the public good by tackling the big questions and challenges

• Attracts talented students, graduate students, post-docs, and new hires and build dynamic, innovative, creative teams—people who come to the U of A to be part of something truly extraordinary

• Enables and deepens connections with the external organizations through which we can extend the reach, influence, and impact of our research

• Prepares us to apply for major, collaborative research grants—and be successful
What is the value of engaging in the process of developing a signature area?

The process is as important as the end result. Participating in conversations about signature areas will support:

Developing shared ideas - broad and active participation can drive the identification of shared approaches to important problems (ideas are bottom-up, not top-down)

Capacity building – bringing people together from multiple faculties to understand how they might work together

Identifying new research and teaching directions – an opportunity for people to seek and find new partners, and develop areas of synergy that generate new avenues of scholarly endeavour
How will we develop them?

Identify and support established and emerging areas of research and teaching distinction and distinctiveness, using the criteria listed in Objective 12:

- National and international stature for excellence, relevance, and impact
- Critical mass—opportunity for broad, interdisciplinary engagement
- Grassroots leadership, participation, and support from within our university community
- Stakeholder partnerships
- Research partners (international, community, government, industry)
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For the Public Good
Key objectives for the process

- Analyze, synthesize, connect and develop signature areas
- Develop emerging areas we can begin to nurture for the future
- Develop a process for managing the signature areas life cycle
- Identify leadership and administrative structures appropriate to each area
## The process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November-January</th>
<th>Development of submissions by individuals, groups, and Deans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 28, 2017</strong></td>
<td>Deadline for submissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Signature Areas Development Panel analyzes, synthesizes, connects and develops signature and emerging areas proposals submitted by the university community</td>
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| March- April | Release of long list to the community for consultation through:  
  - campus forum  
  - online feedback  
  - focus groups  
  - stakeholder meetings |
| April-May | Develop the short list |
| May |  
  - Finalize current signature areas and emerging areas  
  - Identify governance and oversight mechanisms for signature areas (including wind-down)  
  - Identify review cycle and process for future new areas |
| Summer | Formal announcement/launch of first area(s) |
The proposal template

• Aligned to the criteria in *For the Public Good*
• Standard headings (with instructions)
• 5-page maximum
• Deadline: January 28, 2017
• Template can be downloaded from the website: [ualberta.ca/strategic-plan](http://ualberta.ca/strategic-plan)
Signature Areas Committees

• **Signature Areas Development Panel:**
  - Responsible for digesting input, assessing institutional opportunities and resources, and making recommendations of signature areas and emerging areas
  - Co-chaired by Provost and VP(Research)

• **Deans’ Council:**
  - Responsible for long-term development of areas and design of structures to support each one

• **Steering Committee: President, Provost, VP(Research)**
  - Responsible for process oversight, project management and presenting the concept in various forums
Signature Areas Development Panel

• The panel will consider ideas from across the academy, evaluating them against the criteria in *For the Public Good* – a process of analysis, synthesis and connection of potential areas.

• The panel will recommend areas that are ready to launch immediately (signature areas) and identify those areas in need of further development (emerging areas).

• No areas have been chosen in advance – the panel will enter the process with open minds.

• The panel will recommend a process for the ongoing identification of additional signature and emerging areas.
Signature Areas Development Panel Members:

**CO-CHAIRS**
Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President (Research)
Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

**MEMBERS OF DEANS’ COUNCIL**
Chris Andersen
Fraser Forbes
Heather Zwicker
Jonathan Schaeffer
Lesley Cormack
Richard Fedorak
Robert Haennel

**MEMBERS OF CHAIRS’ COUNCIL**
Susan Gilmour
Member TBD

**FACULTY MEMBERS**
Anne Naeth
Geoffrey Rockwell
John Spence
Larry Heaman
Royston Greenwood
Sheena Wilson

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**
Fahim Rahman
Graduate Student TBD
What will success look like?

• Signature research and teaching areas are developed that demonstrate inter- or multi-disciplinary breadth of research and teaching excellence with ambitious, large-scale vision and impact.

• A process is established that has both internal and external credibility and will allow us to identify and develop new areas in the future.

• Signature areas engage enthusiastic participation and support from external stakeholders.
The process is as important as the end result.

- Areas will be identified in which we are ready to excel and people with similar interests will become aware of each other.
- This process can change how the university works together – breaking down barriers by building collaborations.
- Identifying and actively developing inter- and multi-disciplinary areas of research and teaching prepares us to address grand challenges and respond to opportunities when they arise.
Participate

• Participate in the development of ideas – across the university community
• Submit your ideas by January 28, 2017
• Participate in the long list consultation beginning in March 2017

For more information

Visit the webpage: ualberta.ca/strategic-plan
Contact us directly: signature.areas@ualberta.ca