

2025-2028  
Strategic Plan

# Deep Roots, Bold Futures



*A renewed  
commitment  
to agricultural  
education and  
leadership.*



**OLDS COLLEGE**  
OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY

## Identity

Olds College **EXISTS TO** educate and train learners to become the next generation of agricultural professionals, leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators.

## Vision

Advancing agriculture for a better world.

## Mission

Olds College creates the next generation of agriculture leaders by developing talent, advancing knowledge and championing stewardship and sustainability.



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## Oki, Tannishi, Tawâw

Olds College of Agriculture & Technology humbly acknowledges that it is located on Treaty 7 territory of the Niitsitapi, including Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations. We respectfully recognize the Nations of Tsuut'ina and Îyarhe Nakoda. This land is home to Otipemisiwak Metis Nation of Alberta, District 3.

We honour the deep histories, cultures and contributions of all peoples as we all walk together in the journey of truth and reconciliation.

### WHY IS THIS A 3-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN?

This plan acts as a blueprint for how Olds College will educate future-ready learners, drive innovation in agriculture, support our people and build strong partnerships. It isn't just a document to gather dust. Think of it as a strategic guide to keep us focused, accountable and positioned for leadership in agriculture and education. Simply put, it's time to focus. It's time to focus on three important priorities that emerged from a very extensive engagement process. These are achievable and necessary within this timeframe. This plan will establish stability and strength in order to achieve greater ambition in the years to come.

## Defining Agriculture

Agriculture is more than farming and ranching – it is a dynamic and interconnected system that sustains communities, fuels innovation and shapes the future of food, land and resource management.

It spans diverse fields, including soil science, animal health, food production, environmental sustainability, agribusiness, technology, trades and communications. Whether working in a lab, on a farm or ranch, in a processing facility or in a boardroom, agriculture connects people and industries across the entire development cycle.

At Olds College, we embrace and celebrate this diversity, ensuring every aspect of agriculture is recognized, empowered and positioned to drive a more sustainable future.



## OVERVIEW

# Strategic Priorities

## PRIORITY 1

## Purposeful Leadership in Agricultural Education

Education at Olds College is aimed at advancing agriculture and agriculturally adjacent industries. We are committed to training current and future leaders along the entire agricultural value chain. We recognize our responsibility in growing the talent pipeline. Our programming evolves through an industry perspective. By supporting best practices and innovation in the agriculture industry, we will make a notable contribution to the agricultural sector.

## PRIORITY 2

## Supporting Our Students and Our People

Thriving students, faculty and staff are the core strength of the College. We will support our people to be engaged employees who feel valued and are empowered to contribute to the College. We will support our students with leading-edge knowledge, skills and experiences to be successful. We recognize our responsibility to provide holistic support services to our faculty, staff and students to ensure their success.



## PRIORITY 3

## Strengthening Partnerships

Olds College achieves success through its relationships with community, industry, education and government partners in Alberta and abroad. We aim to create mutually beneficial relationships that enhance our effectiveness and competitiveness. As a result, collaborating with industry and educational partners helps broaden our knowledge and increases our access to leading-edge curriculum and technology.



## A Message From Our President & CEO

At our core, Olds College is a learning institution—one built on a foundation of hands-on education, applied research and a relentless drive to innovate. We are here to equip the next generation of students with the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to thrive in an ever-evolving world. Education is our purpose, and applied research is our engine—driving real solutions that shape industries, communities and lives.

And at Olds College, education and innovation are deeply rooted in agriculture. Since our founding in 1913, we have embraced the idea that the best way to prepare for the future is to build it ourselves. Our history has always been the future. From early days of teaching

practical farming techniques to pioneering smart agriculture and sustainability practices, we have always stood at the leading edge of change.

But none of this is possible without people. The strength of Olds College lies in those who teach, learn, research and support our mission every day. Our students, faculty, staff, alumni and industry partners have built this institution into what it is today. Their dedication has shaped the agricultural landscape, and their continued efforts will push it forward.

Collaboration has always been our way forward—whether with farmers and producers, researchers and scientists or businesses and industry. Strong partnerships fuel our ability to innovate, adapt and lead. Together, we will continue to redefine what's possible in agriculture, education and applied research. Because at Olds College, the future isn't something we wait for—it's something we create.

**Dr. Debbie Thompson**  
—PRESIDENT & CEO

## A Message From Our Board Chair

At Olds College, we are deeply committed to our role as a public institution, recognizing the trust and investment placed in us by the people of Alberta. Our mandate, as outlined by the Government of Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education (Mandate and Roles Document), emphasizes our dedication to providing accessible, high-quality education and applied research that directly contribute to the province's economic and social prosperity.

In alignment with Alberta's economic vision, we focus on fostering innovation and sustainability within the agricultural sector. By equipping our students with practical skills and knowledge, we prepare them to be leaders in a dynamic industry, thereby supporting the province's goals of economic diversification and growth.

We are acutely aware of our responsibility to the taxpayers of Alberta. Through prudent management and strategic initiatives, we ensure that every dollar invested in Olds College yields significant returns in the form of skilled graduates, research advancements and strengthened industry partnerships that together will advance agriculture for a better world.



As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our commitment to serving the needs of our students, the agricultural community and the broader public. Together, we will continue to drive progress and uphold the values that define both Olds College and the province of Alberta.

**Al Kemmere**  
—BOARD CHAIR



# Context Setting

## A Rich History

Established in 1913, Olds College has a storied legacy as a cornerstone of agricultural education in Canada. Initially founded to provide practical training for farmers, it has evolved into a premier institution driving innovation and new technology in agriculture. Over the decades, Olds College has introduced cutting-edge programs, pioneered sustainable farming practices and

fostered advancements in agribusiness. Its applied research initiatives have addressed real-world challenges, benefiting local and global agricultural communities. Known for bridging tradition with technology, the College has cultivated generations of leaders, empowering rural economies and enhancing the agricultural sector with its commitment to education, innovation and environmental stewardship.

## Reconnecting With Our Purpose

In recent years, Olds College explored new directions beyond its agricultural roots. While well-intentioned, this shift created confusion among stakeholders and strained our identity as a leader in agricultural education. Feedback from students, staff, industry partners and community members was clear: agriculture isn't just part of our history—it is our future. Refocusing on agriculture is not a return to the past, but

a recommitment to our greatest strength, and to the evolving needs of an industry that demands innovation, leadership and applied expertise.



## A Promising Future

The future of agriculture isn't just coming; it's being built, tested and led right here at Olds College. With deep roots in rural Alberta and a global perspective on emerging trends, our vision is to be the recognized leader in agriculture and agri-tech education, research and entrepreneurship. We are building a future where Olds College is the first name that comes to mind when the world looks for solutions in sustainable and innovative agriculture.

We are creating a launchpad for the future: a place where students grow into leaders, ideas turn into industry solutions and partnerships fuel transformation. With a world-class Smart Farm, a commitment to applied research and deep ties to industry, we are uniquely positioned to shape the next generation of agricultural breakthroughs.

The challenges ahead—climate change, food security, rapid technological change—require bold leadership. Olds College is prepared to meet those challenges head-on, equipping learners with the skills, experiences and mindset to lead a changing industry.

This is our opportunity to lead boldly, innovate relentlessly and prepare the people who will advance agriculture for a better world. And we're all in.



## Celebrating the Smart Farm

The Olds College Smart Farm encompasses over 3,000 acres dedicated to crop and forage production, integrating advanced digital agriculture technologies to enhance both crop and livestock operations. This innovative environment serves as a hub for applied research, enabling the testing and validation of emerging agricultural technologies in real-world conditions. Students benefit from hands-on learning experiences, engaging directly with cutting-edge tools and practices, thereby bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical application. By fostering collaboration among industry partners, researchers and students, the Smart Farm plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable practices and addressing global challenges in agriculture.



## The Story of Our Engagement

### WHO WE TALKED TO

Throughout our strategic planning process, Olds College engaged a broad range of stakeholders to ensure diverse perspectives were captured. Faculty, staff and administration participated through town halls, focus groups and leadership meetings, while students shared insights at engagement events designed specifically for them.

Community voices were gathered through discussions with service clubs, business associations and one-on-one interviews. Industry partners provided input via in-person interviews at AgSmart and virtual focus groups. Donors contributed through individual interviews, and government officials—including municipal and provincial leaders—told us what they envision for the future of our College.

Additionally, 209 individuals completed our online survey, further enriching our understanding of key priorities.



### WHAT THEY SAID

Our engagement process has highlighted a strong desire to reaffirm Olds College's purpose, strengthen internal culture and revitalize partnerships. Stakeholders emphasized the need to embrace our agricultural identity while responding to modern challenges.

Concerns about drifting from our roots have impacted relationships and morale, underscoring the need for stability and a clear vision. Faculty and staff seek a renewed focus on delivering high-quality applied education within a supportive environment.

There is strong interest in re-establishing Olds College as a leader in industry collaboration. By aligning purpose, people and partnerships, we can drive meaningful impact and future success.



# Strategic Priorities

**PRIORITY 1**

# Purposeful Leadership in Agricultural Education

Olds College achieves success through its relationships with community, industry, education and government partners in Alberta and abroad. We aim to create mutually beneficial relationships that enhance our effectiveness and competitiveness. As a result, collaborating with industry and educational partners helps broaden our knowledge and increases our access to leading-edge curriculum and technology.



*"We can redefine agriculture for the next generation, showing that it's not just about tractors—it's about technology, sustainability and opportunity."*



**PROPOSED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- 1** Graduate employment rate exceeds 85%

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- 2** Graduate preparedness exceeds 85%

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- 3** Maintain a minimum of \$8.5 million in applied research projects annually with sustainable growth

GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3
Provide education and applied research to support current and future leaders in agriculture and agriculturally adjacent industries.	Leverage our history and reputation to shape the future of agriculture in positive and sustainable ways.	Secure ongoing investment in Olds College to ensure financial sustainability.
STRATEGIES		
Develop leading-edge programming that equips students with industry relevant communication, problem solving, interpersonal, leadership and critical thinking skills.	Work with industry and government partners to tell the story of agriculture and its positive impacts.	Engage alumni to achieve a more symbiotic relationship to the College and enhance overall communication in order to increase their contributions.
Strengthen our leadership in emerging technologies and fields important to agriculture.	Showcase the contributions Olds College and the students at Olds College are making to the community and to the agriculture industry.	Strengthen relationships with donors and funders.
Advance the reputation of Olds College in the area of applied research.	Work with industry, community and post-secondary partners to identify and address emerging issues and opportunities in agriculture.	Further develop industry projects as an important source of non-government revenue.
Extend our provincial, national and global reach through programming and research opportunities.	Increase the impact of Olds College through collaborative relationships to inform agriculture policy in Alberta and Canada.	Further refine our value proposition for domestic and international students based on their evolving educational needs and industry demand.
		Develop a financial framework and decision-making processes that create a sustainable flow of resources to support core objectives of the College.

**PRIORITY 2**

# Supporting Our Students and Our People

Thriving students, faculty and staff are the core strength of the College. We will support our people to be engaged employees who feel valued and are empowered to contribute to the College. We will support our students with leading-edge knowledge, skills and experiences to be successful. We recognize our responsibility to provide holistic support services to our faculty, staff and students to ensure their success.

**PROPOSED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- 1** Overall student satisfaction level exceeds 80%
- 2** Overall employee satisfaction level exceeds 80%
- 3** Annual investment in employee wellness and professional development



*The people at Olds College are its greatest strength—they care deeply about students, innovation and each other.”*

GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3
<p><b>Create a supportive environment where all students can achieve academic success.</b></p>	<p><b>Foster a work environment where people feel valued and motivated.</b></p>	<p><b>Create a campus where everyone can experience belonging and community.</b></p>
STRATEGIES		
<p>Create an environment, systems and programs that support student wellness and academic success.</p>	<p>Increase communication, awareness and connectivity between faculty, staff and students.</p>	<p>Increase opportunities for social interaction, engagement and relationship-building among students, staff and faculty.</p>
<p>Develop relevant and up-to-date curriculum that evolves to meet the changing needs of our learners and the industries we serve.</p>	<p>Recognize the importance of balancing the demands of work with personal life, encourage appropriate workloads and provide support when needed.</p>	<p>Develop and implement a plan to create a welcoming and supportive environment on campus for everyone.</p>
<p>Modernize infrastructure and technologies to ensure student success.</p>	<p>Ensure our people have the right tools, information, data access and decision-making frameworks to succeed.</p>	<p>Create meaningful linkages between the on- and off-campus communities in Olds and central Alberta to promote collaboration and shared social responsibility.</p>
<p>Employ a strategic enrolment management model that supports sustainable enrolment.</p>	<p>Prioritize employee training and professional development opportunities to attract and retain high-quality talent, and further develop the skillset of all current employees to support career progression.</p>	<p>Foster an environment that promotes and celebrates volunteerism.</p>
<p>Create a learning environment that recognizes student success and showcases their achievements.</p>	<p>Highlight and celebrate the contributions of College employees.</p>	

**PRIORITY 3**

# Strengthening Partnerships

Olds College achieves success through its relationships with community, industry, education and government partners in Alberta and abroad. We aim to create mutually beneficial relationships that enhance our effectiveness and competitiveness. As a result, collaborating with industry and educational partners helps broaden our knowledge and increases our access to leading-edge curriculum and technology.



*Olds College can be the heart of our community, bringing people together to drive progress and innovation.”*



**PROPOSED MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

- 1 Maintain a minimum of \$8 million in commercial partnerships annually
- 2 3,000 people annually engaged with Olds College and the Smart Farm
- 3 Active agreements are in place with alumni and three local strategic partners

GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3
Strengthen relationships with industry, government and education partners to inform future educational programming and drive innovation.	Utilize the Smart Farm to advance education, innovation, applied research and industry engagement.	Cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with community, municipal and educational partners to create value for all.
STRATEGIES		
Consult with partners in agriculture to identify emerging trends, industry needs and opportunities.	Leverage the Smart Farm to enhance recruitment of students into agriculture.	Encourage outreach with broad communities, stakeholders and sectors to share knowledge, identify opportunities and build connections.
Collaborate with industry and educational partners to create responsive programs and curriculum that reflect market demand.	Publicly celebrate the Smart Farm successes and partnerships, while leveraging both to plan for the next frontier.	Explore opportunities to develop shared infrastructure with the local municipality.
Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for engaging and recognizing industry partners.	Utilize the Smart Farm to showcase the use of technology to support financial and environmental sustainability in agriculture.	Identify opportunities to partner with industry and neighbouring municipalities to support economic development and value-added investment.
Support our faculty and staff in leveraging their relationships to the agriculture industry.		Be a positive force in creating bridges between rural and urban communities in Alberta.
Grow partnerships and joint teaching and learning initiatives with domestic and international post-secondary institutions.		



## With our strategic priorities clearly outlined, the next step is activation.

This strategic plan is intentionally high-level and is designed to provide a destination. Department-level planning that includes priority actions, performance indicators and specific measures of success will be developed and championed by the College Leadership Team and supported by the Board of Governors, ensuring that progress is celebrated.

College leadership will work with their teams so that this internal planning is aligned with this plan's direction and can support both day-to-day decisions and long-term initiatives across the institution.

By providing this shared foundation, the plan creates space for our campus community to continue to work with all stakeholders in order to respond to opportunities, remain agile and ensure the College continues to thrive.





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