

February 28, 2020

Dr. Jolene Armstrong
President
Athabasca University Faculty Association

Dear Dr. Armstrong,

The information in this letter is provided for the purpose of disclosing information related to the upcoming round of collective bargaining between The Board of Governors of Athabasca University (the University) and the Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA).

The University has outlined a set of initiatives it is undertaking that are both being planned or currently being enacted that have a likelihood of impacting the bargaining unit over the next several years, including any changes where the full impact to any AU Team Members and the University have not been realized. The information provided is subject to change as plans are finalized, or in the event there is a change in the strategic direction of the University. For clarity, the following changes could have an impact on all members of the AUFA bargaining unit, including any vacant positions.

Many of the initiatives listed below are further to the University's *Imagine* strategic plan, the initiatives currently underway within the [University's Priority Portfolio](#), and further to communications that have already been made to the broader University community. Many were specifically addressed in the Neil's Notes sent out January 29, 2020, both by video and in writing. Where necessary, additional information and context is provided.

1. Provosts Office

Bring together AU Team Members who support the design of the online learning experience to create a OneAU service model dedicated to the curricular, program, and instructional design of the learning experience, under the leadership of the Deputy Provost. While this initiative is currently in the design phase and the potential impact on AUFA Members is not fully understood at this time, a change in reporting line, role design and deliverables may be realized. Further information will be provided as it becomes available and as required.

Centralize all Registrarial activities into a single Office of the Registrar, which will also undergo a business process review to enable scalable and responsive learner services. This project will involve people, process and technology design and as such the University anticipates this initiative may involve a change in reporting line, role function/description/classification and may include redundancies. The University will share further information as it becomes available and advise as required.

2. Faculties

The University intends to launch a review of the annual duties and responsibilities assigned to academic staff to ensure that there is a reasonable allocation of research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and service activities. The primary objective of the review is to ensure effective support for new programs, program growth and research intensity. Further specific detail are not available at this time regarding this review process, or the potential impact that this could have on the assignment of duties to academic staff. A date for the launch of this initiative has not been set, however as plans develop, more information will be shared.

3. Information Technology

Move to a OneAU service model in information technology that will bring all our information technology experts into an agile team-based organizational structure within the IT portfolio to support all functions across the University. This may include the identification of and realignment of IT roles across the University under the IT portfolio and direction. At this time this project may involve a change in reporting line, role function/description/classification and may include redundancies. We anticipate this work to commence in April.

Creation of a new Digital Learning Productions unit in IT of creative technologists who focus on the creation of software interactives, games, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and other emerging technologies as well as digital filming and editing for enhanced learning experiences. This new Digital Learning Productions unit may include resources from across the university and its work focus will be defined by the curricular, program and instructional design team that is under the leadership of the Deputy Provost.

4. University Relations

Create a OneAU approach to marketing, communications and recruitment under the leadership of University Relations. This may include the identification and realignment of marketing communications and recruitment roles across the University under the University Relations portfolio and direction. At this time this project may also involve a change in reporting line, role function/description/classification and may include redundancies. We anticipate this work to commence in April.

5. Finance and Administration

Redesign our financial and administrative services and develop a OneAU service model for financial planning and analysis services. This may included the identification and realignment of Finance and Administration roles across the University under the F & A portfolio and direction. At this time this project may also involve a change in reporting line, role function/description/classification and may include redundancies. We anticipate this work to commence in May.

6. Policy

In January 2019 the University approved a policy and procedure review of the approximately 286 University policies and related procedures. Much of that policy work is under way, and the University will continue to undertake this review process which will include the rescinding, revamping, renewing and/or complete rewriting of the University's policies and procedures in alignment and support of strategic plans, and legislative and regulatory changes. This initiative will be conducted in accordance with the University's Policy Framework and the University anticipates this work to be completed by December 2021. The University will advise as required of any changes to policies and procedures, insofar as they may impact members of the AUFA bargaining unit.

As you are aware, the University is currently consulting with our union partners to finalize the language in the draft 'Designation as Academic' policy. Once the policy is finalized, the University may seek to apply the policy to assess the designation of employees or groups of employees. There are no specific plans to do so at this time. To the extent this proceeds, it will involve consultation with AUFA and any other affected union partners, and will involve a consideration of any potential impacts to AU Team Members. The University will advise as required.

7. Human Resources

The University is currently assessing whether it would expand its current use of a 3rd party specialist to include the adjudication of all General Illness Leaves in order to streamline the administration of such leaves. This initiative is in the exploratory design phase; therefore, no specific information is available as to the impacts this may have on AUFA members. The University will share further information as it becomes available and advise as required.

The University intends on revamping the Performance Assessment Program across all employee groups and bargaining units. This review will be conducted with consideration to respective collective agreement language. The University will provide further information as it becomes available, however the University does not anticipate this initiative to commence until August 2020.

The University wishes to provide formal notice that the University will be closed on Thursday December 24, 2020 and reopen on Monday, January 4, 2021 in recognition of the annual holiday season break. We are providing notice of same at this time, as we understand that in the past, AUFA has objected to the University closing on December 24th.

8. Other initiatives in the conceptual/design phase

As these projects are under the concept phase only at this time, specific details are not available. As plans are developed, more specific details including potential workforce impacts will be shared at that time:

- Create a OneAU single, university-wide, responsive and scalable academic support model in the Provost's portfolio dedicated to our learners' success and engagement throughout the learning journey. This initiative will include engagement with key stakeholders and involves technology implications (i.e., Integrated Learning Environment) and process engineering initiatives designed to enhance the learner experience.
- Create a OneAU service model dedicated to student navigation and services that will ultimately come together within the University Relations portfolio.
- Create a University Data Governance Framework that will create an overarching umbrella for the many data collection, storage, security, and usage environments at AU.

Additionally, it is also anticipated that through the exploration, design and implementation of the above initiatives and/or other emergent initiatives in support of the *Imagine* strategic plan, the University's scalability and sustainability or the enhancement of the learner experience, the University will be reviewing future potential options that meet organizational needs which may include changes to people, processes and technology. These potential changes, although unknown, may result in possible changes to reporting structures, unit reorganization, role function/description/classification and may include redundancies, if applicable. As plans are developed, detailed information will be shared and disclosed as per the University's obligations under any applicable collective agreements.

The above programs and changes are aligned to and in support of the University's *Imagine* Plan which is publicly available. The strategic plan in its entirety, including progress, accountability and accompanying documents can be accessed at <http://imagine.athabascau.ca/>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Charlene Polege, CPHR, MA, CEC
Chief Human Resources Officer
Athabasca University