

# STRATEGY 2025

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH KNOWLEDGE,  
SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES

REVISED 2023 - 2024





# A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

The Portage College Board of Governors and the Executive Committee are proud to release Strategy 2025. We have aligned our vision, goals and objectives with the provincial government's strategic plan titled "Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs" and will now begin implementing its flagship initiatives.

Within Portage College's unique mandate, we will better serve students, employers and the communities in our stewardship region while stretching to meet the targets established for us in our mandate and Investment Management Agreement.

All members of the Portage community are very proud of our history and our students. We look forward to portaging more of them to success by connecting them with knowledge, skills and opportunities so they can transform their lives, and make a difference for their employers, and in their communities.

# ARRIVING AT OUR NEW VISION

---

## OUR JOURNEY



In 2019, the Board of Governors undertook a review of the history of Portage College and its unique purpose in the post-secondary system of Alberta. Portage's student demographics are different than most other post-secondary institutions. Our students tend to be older, more likely to be married or single parents and first-generation learners. In addition, more than 50% of our credit and noncredit students are First Nations, Métis or Inuit.

Our College is very successful at helping students achieve their goals within our stewardship region. More than 70% of our graduates are employed in the region, and employers are nearly 100% satisfied with our grads.



**Students served by Portage College are unique in terms of their needs. We are able to serve these students well.**

---



**All students, regardless of socioeconomic stature or mobility issues, need access to post-secondary learning in order to contribute positively to Alberta. 85% of students apply to Portage College as their first choice.**

---



**Continued support from the Government of Alberta is critical. We are aligned with Alberta 2030 Goals.**

---

# ALIGNING OPPORTUNITIES

---

# OUR STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS ARE UNIQUE

PORTAGE COLLEGE

BENCHMARK\*

Average age	28 years	26 years
Married	35%	25%
With children	43%	22%
Indigenous students (credit programs only)	44%	11%
Direct from high school	3%	28%
First generation post-secondary	28%	23%

\*All benchmark data is from University/College Application Study – Comprehensive College data. Released January 2021 by Apply Alberta.

A decorative dotted line in shades of teal and purple starts at the top left and curves down to the right, ending at the first header.

## **OUR PURPOSE**

**Portaging Students to Success**

A decorative dotted line in shades of teal and purple starts at the bottom of the first text block and curves down to the right, ending at the second header.

## **OUR MISSION**

**Connecting People with Knowledge, Skills and Opportunities**

A decorative dotted line in shades of teal and purple starts at the bottom of the second text block and curves down to the right, ending at the third header.

## **OUR VISION**

**Learners are Empowered to Transform and Make a Difference**

A decorative dotted line in shades of teal and purple starts at the bottom of the third text block and curves down to the right, ending at the bottom of the page.

# OUR VALUES

---



**Collaboration**



**Inclusion**



**Success**



**Accountability**

At Portage College, we are committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in our workplace, classrooms, services and research.

# VOYAGING TOGETHER

---

Portage College was originally formed as Alberta NewStart in 1968, a federal government initiative to research basic adult education. In 1970 the federal government ended funding for NewStart Programs in Canada. In response, a group of Indigenous leaders then staged a 26-day sit-in. The group was successful and funding was restored. Subsequently the funding was assumed by the Province of Alberta. It was then that the Indigenous leaders involved gave a new Cree name to the College: Pe-Ta-Pun, meaning New Dawn.

It is from this humble beginning that the College nurtured and has been blessed with Wahkohtowin, a spirit of collaboration and partnership with the First Nation and Métis people in our region. The Cree word Wahkohtowin reminds us of the Indigenous world view of the interconnected nature of relationships, communities and natural systems.

The College values have always included the elements of respect and inclusion, and our mission has always included an implied obligation to support and build relations with the first peoples in our region. More than 50% of our credit and noncredit students and 11% of our employees are First Nation, Métis or Inuit. We must continue and be more transparent about the work we do if we are to support reconciliation, improve relationships and empower our students.



In 2017 the President's Indigenous Advisory Committee was formed. We realized that by working together we can amplify the voices of our Indigenous partners and celebrate the gifts their ways of knowing and culture bring to our College. The committee created a plan titled "Our Voyage of Togetherness" which includes advocacy throughout the College for incorporating the following efforts:

**AWARENESS AND  
TRUTH TELLING**

**DECOLONIZATION  
OF CURRICULUM  
AND SERVICES**

**APPRECIATION OF  
INDIGENOUS CULTURE  
AND LANGUAGE  
THROUGH  
PROGRAMMING, ARTS  
AND CEREMONY**

**PROVIDING  
PERSONALIZED  
SUPPORTS FOR  
STUDENTS**

**PARTNERING  
WITH INDIGENOUS  
ELDERS AND  
KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS,  
COMMUNITIES,  
INDUSTRIES AND  
AGENCIES**



# **GOALS, STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

---



## STRATEGY 2025

With a solid grounding of who we are and how we uniquely serve our region, the Board of Governors began working on creating a new vision. Working with a new government and new directions from Advanced Education, it was clear that we needed to adjust our focus. In 2020, the Board renewed the College's strategic vision, mission and values. This was achieved through a full review of historic data and trends in higher education in Canada, as well as collecting input from our communities, employees and students.

As a Comprehensive Community College with a long-standing history of providing foundational learning and job preparation, we recognize that retention and success rates are important to meet government-mandated performance measures. Success rates are also critical indicators of students' ability to transform and create ripple effects in the communities where they live. To align the needs of our regional community, the operation of the College and the government's vision as we understand it, we have identified three strategic goals in our plan:

- 1. Improving Graduate Success**
- 2. Increasing Operational Efficiency**
- 3. Increasing Partnerships**

# GOAL: IMPROVING GRADUATE SUCCESS

---

Portage College has always been proud of the wrap around services that our students receive along with their high-quality education. Our instructors care about the success of their students. They often give much of their free time assisting students to not only absorb the knowledge provided in the classroom, but also to develop holistically.

We have budgeted to increase student services during the next three years including partnering to add more Indigenous student services, experiential learning and employment services. Our plan is focused on economic recovery and sustainability by supporting the Alberta employers and workforce.

Higher level of employer engagement will open doors for increased work integrated learning and graduate employment. Increased employer engagement also ensures existing curricula and new micro-credentials are relevant.

## ***Aligns with Alberta 2030 Goals:***

*"Improve Access and Student Experience"*

*"Develop Skills for Jobs"*

*"Support Innovation and Commercialization"*

# STRATEGIES RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2025

## Maintaining and improving student satisfaction and retention

– 90% average satisfaction of graduates



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

– Student portal available for application, marks and credential badging

– 20% improvement in retention rates

**REVISED** - Overall student retention rate of 90%

– 15% of rooms converted to flexible learning options for students

## Increasing experiential learning

– 80% of credit programs have work-integrated learning

– 15% of students participating in service learning

## Meeting labour market needs in our region

– 80% employment rate in a related job



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

– At least five micro-credentials will be developed and delivered



**ACHIEVED**

– Majority of College programs aimed at areas identified in labour market studies

## Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing in programs and services

– Protocols for engagement completed



**ACHIEVED**

– Quality assurance processes help track progress



**ACHIEVED**

– All programs and services incorporate listening circles and other restorative practices

**REVISED** - All programs and services incorporate Indigenous Ways of Knowing

– Increased ceremony, services and use of traditional languages to raise appreciation for First Nation, Métis and Inuit history and culture



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained



# GOAL: INCREASING EFFICIENCY

---

Portage College has always placed a priority on operational efficiency. Alberta 2030 includes a priority to reduce reliance on government funding. Therefore, the three-year strategic plan calls for the College to focus on increasing revenue through filling vacant seats in its existing programs as well as reducing costs through redesigning services.

Filling seats in programs will require a combination of marketing initiatives, flexible delivery and improved retention efforts. In particular, the College is aiming to increase the numbers of Indigenous and international learners. We will continue to bring learning to the First Nations and Métis communities we serve, and we are combining efforts with our Community Adult Learning Programs and other training providers.

Administrative work is our top priority for innovation and automation. To reduce our administrative expense ratio, we will work with the government's flagship initiative for shared services in areas such as finance and human resources. To reduce overall costs and therefore grant dependency, we are exploring partnerships and considering reduced service levels in areas such as information technology and infrastructure management. Finally, the College has created a matrix of programs and is strategically targeting those with high direct costs for revision and improvement.

## ***Aligns with Alberta 2030 Goals:***

*"Strengthen Internationalization"*

*"Improve Sustainability and Affordability"*

*"Strengthen System Governance"*

# STRATEGIES RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2025

## Leveraging shared services

– Reduce non-academic service costs by 5%



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

– 100% of internal control framework implemented



**ACHIEVED**

## Establishing priorities for capital and project investments

– Strategic “friendraising” and fundraising plan in place and operational

– The College has a balanced budget and contributes 1% per year into reserves



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

## Maximizing student enrolment in existing programs

– 75% fill rate

– 950 credit FLEs



**ACHIEVED** - *New target:* sustain 1500 annually

– 60% Indigenous enrolment

**REVISED** - Increase Indigenous enrolment by 10% annually

– 15% increase in international enrolment FLE



**ACHIEVED** - Create a sustainable enrolment of international students at our campuses

– New brand platform approved in 2021-22



**ACHIEVED**

– Strategic marketing plan launched in 2023-24

## Automating manual high touch processes

– 20% improvement in costs when a process is automated

– Continue to have a red tape reduction process

**REVISED** - Improve at least one process per year through automation or efficiency

## Increasing earned revenue

– 10% improvement in earned revenue

– The College has at least one sponsored research program per year



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

## Reduce administrative costs

– Less than 12% of budget spent on administration



**ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained

# GOAL: INCREASING PARTNERSHIPS

---

Increasing partnerships brings value to the College and supports our Wahkohtowin journey. The College is aware that we cannot do everything for all students, communities and employers on our own and that we provide 1 in 40 jobs in our region. This is why strategic partnerships are integral to our plan.

This plan calls for actively inviting other post-secondaries into our stewardship region to meet demand in programs we currently do not offer. The College already has agreements to partner with Northern Lakes College to share program delivery in business, culinary arts and other areas. In addition, along with Norquest, Bow Valley College and Northern Lakes College, Portage is examining opportunities to increase work-integrated learning and success rates in foundational learning.

Portage is also partnering on curriculum development for personal support worker programming and the development and delivery of micro-credentials. Beyond post-secondary connections, this plan also calls for partnering with employers to develop programming, support applied research and support economic development initiatives.

## ***Aligns with Alberta 2030 Goals:***

*“Improve Sustainability and Affordability”*

*“Strengthen System Governance”*



# STRATEGIES RESULTS TO BE ACHIEVED BY 2025

## Shared program development delivery as a priority choice for all new programs

- At least three new shared program development and delivery projects completed

✓ **ACHIEVED**

## Partner with communities to open doors to our facilities, showcase College expertise and garner support for communities, partners and College initiatives

- 100% student work-integrated learning activities have an employer partner
- 50% of all work-integrated learning costs covered externally
- 75% of scholarships and bursaries externally funded
- 50% of the Indigenous Service Centre externally funded
- 20% increase from 2020-21 levels in engagement events by the President and Community Relations
- Every program has at least one YouTube video providing free teaching
- Stakeholder plan is created and updated annually, with key messages and actions

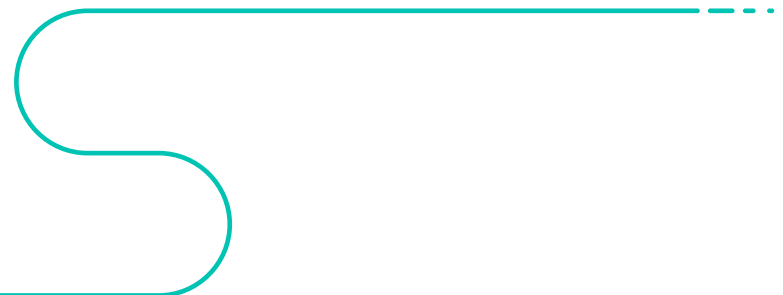
✓ **ACHIEVED**

**REVISED** - 75% of scholarships and bursaries externally funded or internally endowment backed

**REVISED** - 50% of the Indigenous Cultural Services externally funded

✓ **ACHIEVED**

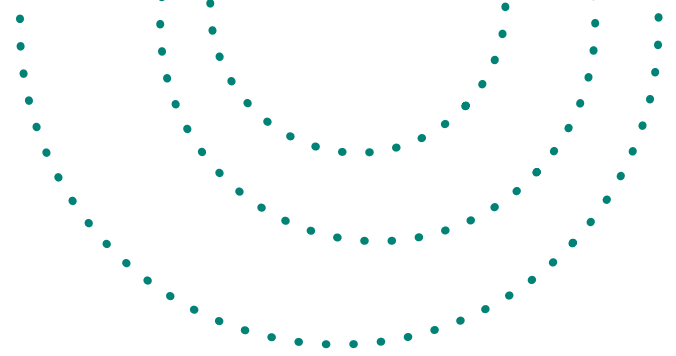
✓ **ACHIEVED** - Needs to be sustained





**THANK YOU**





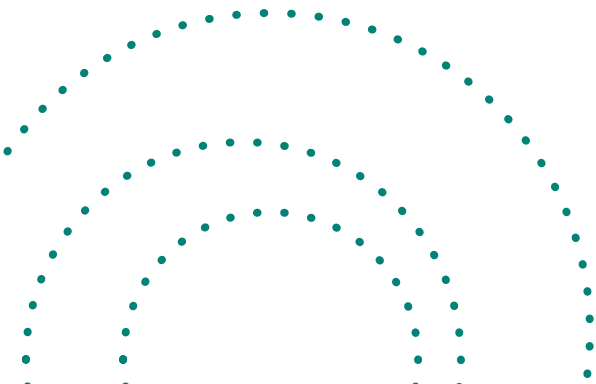
The creation of Strategy 2025 was a very inclusive process with several people who support Portage College. The development of the strategy began with a reflection on our history and included a grounding of who we are, who our students are and what makes us unique.

Our longstanding success is because of the people who choose us for their post-secondary journeys, who work at the College, who are members of our Board of Governors and who participate on our many Advisory Committees. It is also attributable to wonderful partnerships with the people we serve in communities, industries and governments. In 50+ years of service to our students and communities, we have made a difference!

Thank you to everyone who has supported the College all these years and to those who directly and indirectly assisted in the formulation of this plan.



Nancy Broadbent, President and CEO





1-888-623-5551

[portagecollege.ca/about](http://portagecollege.ca/about)

@portagecollege

