



**Athabasca
University**

www.athabascau.ca

OPPORTUNITY PROFILE | **Director, Financial Services**

THE ORGANIZATION ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1970 as North America's first online university, Athabasca University is a public, board-governed, open and distance education university which serves students throughout Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. With their unparalleled capacity to elevate the social good through inclusive education and open scholarship, Athabasca University's open and flexible environment is built on leveraging technology to enable learning and remove barriers to education.

Athabasca University is a Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution with some of Canada's finest professors, operating under the authority of the Alberta Post-secondary Learning Act as well as working as a partner within Campus Alberta. Athabasca University is committed to collaborating with other key stakeholders to ensure a seamless and responsive advanced education system that provides high-quality learning opportunities in support of lifelong learning.

Athabasca is reimagining its founding spirit with new investments in digital education and will never stop striving to perfect it.

- AU serves over 40,000 students (over 7,800 full-load equivalents).
- AU offers over 850 courses in more than 55 undergraduate and graduate programs in a range of arts, science and professional disciplines.
- AU has a \$160 million annual operating budget.
- AU employs over 1,000 team members across our administrative locations in Athabasca, Edmonton and Calgary.
- AU maintains over 350 collaborative agreements with other Canadian and international post-secondary institutions, with professional associations and employer groups and with First Nations institutions and communities.

Our Vision

Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities

Our Mission

Athabasca University, Canada's Open University, is dedicated to the removal of barriers that restrict access to and success in university-level study and to increasing equality of educational opportunity for adult learners worldwide.

We are committed to excellence in teaching, research and scholarship and to being of service to the general public

Our Values

The students and staff of Athabasca University hold a set of complementary values that are fundamental to Athabasca University's identity and functioning.

Integrity— We are guided by ethics, honesty, and fairness in all our actions, engendering trust within our University community

Community—We are one University. We achieve more together. We embrace collaboration, and connectivity among our diverse individual community members and their team's

Adaptability—We are flexible. We respond to the changing needs of our University and its learners with courage and continuous improvement.

Respect— We foster respect by contributing to an environment in which every individual is valued.

Excellence— We ask bold questions, provoke new ways of thinking, and focus on those things at which we can excel to enhance the quality of all that we do.

THE OPPORTUNITY

With a passion for change and transformation, the Director, Financial Services drives improvements in the design and efficiency of business processes that support financial services, finding optimal solutions and creating processes to deliver ongoing value. As Athabasca University (AU) continues to implement its strategic plan *Imagine: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities*, across all aspects of the University, the Director, Financial Services will perform an essential role in enabling this transformation.

Working from Edmonton, Athabasca, or Calgary and reporting to the Vice President, Finance and Administration, the Director, Financial Services (Director) is a member of the Senior Financial and Administration Management Team. The Director is responsible for the effective leadership and management of all Financial Services functions in the areas of financial planning, budgeting, operations, reporting and financial systems management. The Director provides critical financial advice and information to the University community including the executives, management, employees and students. In addition to managing the daily operation of the Financial Services Department, the Director is responsible for leading the development, implementation, and monitoring of financial policies and procedures in alignment with applicable regulations, legislation, public-sector accounting standards, best practices, and industry trends. They are instrumental in the development of financial plans and financial strategies that support the University's strategic goals and mandate.

KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Strategic Leadership

- With input from the Executive Team and in consultation with the Vice President, Finance and Administration, the Director develops effective financial planning and financial management strategies for the University that are in alignment with the University's strategic goals and mandate, including strategic sourcing capabilities, financial systems and services, and operational efficiencies.
- Leads the development and execution of the Department's operational business plan, ensuring objectives align with the University's overall goals and mandate, critical success factors, and that performance metrics are implemented to assess its effectiveness.
- Provides strategic leadership in the execution of the Department's strategic direction and operations in the areas of financial planning, budgeting, financial reporting and financial operations.
- Provides advice to the Executive Team, and Administrative Council in relation to the development and operationalization of initiatives that support the University's financial sustainability, effectiveness, and operational efficiency.
- Provides early warnings and advice to the Vice President, Finance and Administration on finance-related risks, and develops appropriate risk mitigation strategies.
- Ensures continual review, research, development, and implementation of new and emerging trends and legislative requirements related to financial management including: planning, strategies, operations, and financial and management reporting.
- Oversees the research of best practices in financial planning and advises the Executive Team, informing their decisions regarding planning, development, and implementation of a financial oversight and stewardship strategy for long-term sustainability.
- Balances potentially conflicting needs of multiple stakeholders when making recommendations.
- Works collaboratively with the Director, Strategic Services and Initiatives on enterprise-wide initiatives.

Management

- Provides effective financial stewardship for the University.

- Effectively manages Financial Services programs and operations at all levels, and ensures services are provided in a positive, proactive, effective and timely manner.
- Align financial services and processes with a focus on service, streamlined process, accountability, organizational performance management and data-driver decision-making.
- Responsible for the management of the University's financial systems and information, and ensures proper internal controls and processes are in place to safeguard information and University assets.
- Monitors and ensures compliance of all institutional and Financial Services related policies, procedures, processes and related internal controls.
- Facilitates the resolution of complex or sensitive financial and reporting issues.
- Ensures effective communication within Financial Services units, as well as between Financial Services and key stakeholder groups and divisions that Financial Services works with on a regular basis.
- Works collaboratively with other University divisions in particular Procurement and Contract Services, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Vice President Academic/Provost Office, to ensure financial systems, services and related information is managed and maintained effectively.
- Actively participates in applicable University committees and teams.
- Manages special assignments and projects, as well as amassing recommendations related to opportunities to implement changes to systems, services, procedures, and processes under management by Financial Services.

Financial Planning and Budgeting

- Together with the Vice President, Finance and Administration and the Provost, serves in a leadership role, in working collaboratively with stakeholders, including the AU executives, in relation to the development and implementation of multi-year financial plans, budgeting and forecasting for all financial, capital and human resources of the University as part of an integrated planning cycle.
- Oversees the coordination and formulation of annual operating and capital budgets, the multi-year operating plan and the annual Summary Capital and ICT Infrastructure Plan.
- Leads the development of effective budget development and planning strategies, budget forecasts, and variance and trend analysis.
- Provides the AU executives and upper management with timely advice and information to help resolve important financial matters or to mitigate risks.
- Enhances financial oversight, fiscal prudence and systemic business planning by providing accurate, timely and timely financial information and analytical services.

Operations

- Oversees all accounting functions of the University, ensuring that financial transactions are carried out in a timely and efficient manner, financial records are reliable, accurate, and secure and that data integrity is maintained.
- Ensures appropriate financial policies, procedures, and internal controls exist, remain up-to-date, and are operating effectively.
- Oversees all University banking and cash management.
- As a key financial signing officer exercises authority and responsibility for the approval of disbursements pursuant to the University's banking resolutions.

Financial Reporting

- Liaises with stakeholders to identify their information needs and ensures that financial management reports fulfill these requirements and are complete and accurate.
- Provides the necessary financial information to facilitate strategic managerial decision-making.
- Oversees the preparation of annual financial statements and preparing for and facilitating the year-end audit under tight timelines. Maintains strong relationships with the external auditors to ensure operational effectiveness and positive audit-management relations. Ensures year-end audits are coordinated effectively and that all issues raised by the auditors are appropriately responded to in an effective and timely manner.
- Attends all formal meetings with the External Auditors.
- Advises the Vice President, Finance and Administration of any concerns or complications that may arise or be identified in internal and external audits.
- Ensures preparation of timely and accurate financial statements/reports, including reports through the Vice President, Finance and Administration to the Board of Governors and its Standing Committees, and answers information requests/enquiries as required.
- Monitors financial reporting obligations and ensures that reporting deadlines are met.
- Ensures compliance with financial accounting standards, reporting and filing requirements, statutory legislation, and related business practices.

Risk Management

- Integrally involved in the ongoing identification and rating of financial risks, develops mitigation strategies, monitors these risks, and executes tactics and alerts the Director of Strategic Initiatives and Services and the Vice President, Finance and Administration when new risks emerge or the status of a known risk changes.

FIRST-YEAR GOALS

- Must be able to assess and analyze opportunity; envision and create change and execute on it;
- Create a team culture that reflects the elements of performance excellence, including focus on service; accountability; streamlined processes; performance management and data-driven decision-making;
- Develop and implement an accountability framework that reflects the needs of Athabasca University and supports the *Imagine* strategic plan while maintaining appropriate internal financial controls; and
- Build trust with senior leadership, the Board and its Committees, through accurate and timely reporting; attention to detail; and the provision of credible strategic advice and input while operating in a fast paced and dynamic environment.

THE PERSON

QUALIFICATIONS & EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Certified Professional Accounting designation (CPA), undergraduate degree in management, commerce, accounting, or related field plus ten years related experience, with at least five years at a senior management level. Master's Degree in Business Administration an asset. Experience managing within a post-secondary and unionized environment an asset.

Knowledge of financial services practices in all areas is required, with the proven ability to apply that knowledge to meet the needs and challenges of the University. Strong business acumen with demonstrated experience in technical financial concepts, best practice financial processes and financial information systems, financial and managerial accounting, financial planning and budgeting and financial reporting is required. Change management experience is essential. Experience working with, and/or implementing, an Activity-based Cost Model considered an asset.

An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES

The ideal candidate must be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

Innovative: Able to think outside the box or propose new ideas or suggestions; thrives in an environment that encourages open dialogue, respect, and values everyone's opinion; challenges status quo, ensuring that the organization continues to improve and sustain a competitive advantage.

Committed to Personal Development: Seeks ways to stay current and committed to learning. Self-motivated and self-directed and able to work independently with a proactive approach.

Entrepreneur: Knows how to make things happen. Is a self-starter and can anticipate what is required and execute accordingly.

Visionary: Understands and interprets financial trends and addresses issues and challenges with clarity, energy and confidence. Has the ability to adapt to new and changing situations through the adoption of "best practices".

Professional: Acts as both a leader and an integral member of several teams. Possesses high ethical standards, maintains trustworthy relationships including an honest, open, and consistent approach to working with colleagues, staff members, Executives, student representatives and external stakeholders.

Leadership: Acts as a leader, coach, mentor and positive role model with the ability to initiate, influence, motivate and delegate. Builds trust through demonstrated objectivity and consistency. Gains commitment of staff through a high standard of integrity.

Personal Management Skills: Demonstrate self-confidence and interpersonal flexibility, resiliency, perseverance and integrity. Extremely well organized and an effective time manager with the ability to manage multiple, competing priorities simultaneously and with minimal direction. Uses abstract reasoning skills to resolve issues and navigate ambiguity.

Service Orientated: Exhibits an engaging personal style that builds a service-orientated, value-added financial management culture. Understands the structure and influences in not-for-profit, and in particular, public sector organizations.

Pragmatic Decision Maker: Recognizes priorities and changing approaches. Shows common sense and intuitive judgment. Able to make, implement and act upon operational decisions and follow through on outcomes. A proven professional judgment skill set is essential along with established problem solving skills and strong analytical abilities.

Interpersonal Relationships—Open, honest and consistent approach to working with others toward a common goal. Recognizes the value of developing and fostering both internal and external relationships while encouraging opportunities for collaboration.

Communication Able to communicate ideas persuasively and confidently. Exhibits strong written, verbal presentation, facilitation and negotiation skills and is an active listener. Excellent interpersonal skills are required to exercise tact and diplomacy regarding sensitive and confidential issues. Well versed in drafting communications to Board of Directors.

LOCATION

Athabasca University shapes and enables mutually supportive communities, regardless of where those communities exist. One of the strategic themes under AU's Strategic plan IMAGINE: Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities (<http://imagine.athabascau.ca/>) is Moving Beyond Place. Therefore, as AU is a semi-virtual organization anchored by three administration hubs across Alberta, this role has the option of being located in Athabasca, Calgary or Edmonton. Where applicants have equal skills, abilities, and experience, candidates who are willing to relocate within the County of Athabasca will be given preference.

FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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