

Recruiting Leaders

POSITION PROFILE

Manager, Financial
Planning and Budgets



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the **vogel** group

Manager, Financial Planning and Budgets Athabasca University

Athabasca University (“AU”) is looking for an inspired leader in Financial Planning and Budgeting to help them evolve both the role and its function within their Financial Services department. The **Manager, Financial Planning and Budgets** will lead significant change through the planning and budgeting unit. This is an exciting opportunity to work with an innovative and progressive, cause-driven organization during a time of significant transformation. It is also an opportunity to join a group of highly engaged leaders charged with being agents of change within the University.

If you have significant experience in change management, are inspired by continuous improvement, process automation and enjoy guiding your team and colleagues through transformation, this may be the ideal opportunity for you.

▼ **COMPANY OVERVIEW**

Athabasca University (“AU”) is a global leader in online and distributed learning serving more than 40,000 students in every province and territory in Canada and in over 90 countries around the world. Offering more than 850 courses in over 55 undergraduate degree, graduate degree, diploma and certificate programs, AU is committed to dismantling barriers to learning, encouraging inclusion and enabling access to advanced education in a format and on a timeline that enables students to tailor their learning goals to fit their lives.

As Canada’s only digital-first learning university, created by Alberta Innovators, Athabasca University’s classrooms, collaboration spaces, and student hubs are not bricks and mortar, but Cloud and Code. AU’s main campus is located in the Town of Athabasca, with administrative locations in in both Edmonton and Calgary.

Athabasca University provides learning for life. Through the achievements of its students, faculty and staff, AU stands out as a provider of high quality post-secondary education.

- 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.

AU's IMAGINE Strategic Plan

Athabasca University's 5-year strategic plan "*Imagine*" is in year two of operation. It is focused around 4 key strategic themes and 5 key values at their foundation:

- Moving Beyond Place: Transforming communities through belonging and relationships.
- Moving Beyond Open: Bridging open and inclusion.
- Moving Beyond the Now: Supporting transformative and incremental change through agility and adaptability.
- Moving Beyond the Norm: Adopting innovative ideas, taking calculated risks.

AU's "I-Care" Values

- 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 teams.
- 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 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, Edmonton or Calgary. Where applicants have equal skills, abilities, and experience, candidates who are willing to relocate within the County of Athabasca will be given preference.

For more information on AU, please visit www.athabascau.ca

▼ THE ROLE

Reporting to the Director, Financial Services, the **Manager, Financial Planning and Budgets** is integrally involved in strategic and operational planning and monitoring of the financial resources of the University.

The Manager is a member of the Integrated Resource Planning Working Group and is responsible for supporting the coordination of the annual operating and capital budgets, and the financial components of the Comprehensive Institutional Plan, as well as the development of effective resource stewardship strategies. With two direct reports along with project staff, the position will provide leadership to the provision of decision-making support, including regular variance monitoring and reporting, as well as the development and provision of business analytics to our various client groups and business units. Furthermore, this position supports the Director in the implementation of AU's accountability framework.

This position works closely with budget holders, including executive members, deans, directors, department managers and other faculty and staff, with respect to developing, monitoring, analyzing, forecasting and reporting in relation to the University's operating and capital budgets. Liaising with external parties such as Alberta Advanced Education or research funding agencies is periodically required. The incumbent also communicates with other key financial managers in post-secondary institutions throughout Alberta. This position is privy to highly confidential and sensitive budget and strategic planning information.

Key Responsibilities

Financial Planning and Decision Support

- Coordinate financial planning for programs, services and projects to ensure both departmental needs and the needs of the University as a whole are met within the framework of the University's strategic plan, its Comprehensive Institutional Plan and other approved University plans.
- Support executive, deans, directors, department managers and others throughout the University to foster effective planning, analysis and forecasting.
- Manage the variance analysis and forecasting process to monitor the financial results of operations on a regular basis.
- Work closely with budget holders in analysing the reported variances to ensure the reasonableness of departmental variance reports, and identify the operational and strategic drivers, implications and options that should be given consideration.
- Advise the Director, Financial Services on all important budget and financial planning matters, in a very timely manner.
- Prepare variance analysis and year-end revenue and expenditure forecast reports, for presentation to the Board, on a quarterly basis. Coordinate the quarterly monitoring process and support the peer monitoring and review meetings.
- Prepare quarterly reporting for the Executive Team with regard to considerations arising from the variance and forecasting analysis and propose potential strategies for either corrective action or consideration of opportunities identified.

- Continually enhance the quality, efficiency and scale of financial information produced, through financial models, process improvements, financial tools and automation.
- Participate in intermediate and long-range financial planning strategy development.
- Develop and implement data-driven approaches for the purpose of generating strategic and operational insights through data analytics and information visualization in order to make data driven decisions in a proactive manner.
- Support the Director in closely monitoring Board of Governors, General Faculties Council, Finance and Property Committee and other key University initiatives to ensure related financial impacts are incorporated in financial plans, budgets and forecasts.
- Research and recommend budgeting alternatives for the University.

Business Plans and Budget Administration

- As a key member of the Integrated Resource Plan Working Group, work closely with others within the Finance and Administration Division and the Office of the Provost/Vice President Academic to:
 - ▶ Develop guidelines, instructions and templates that budget holders require in order to prepare submissions as part of the annual Integrated Resource Plan development process.
 - ▶ Provide input into timelines as part of the integrated planning cycle and monitor adherence to ensure the timely development of the annual Integrated Resource Plan (operating budget) and the Summary Capital and Infrastructure Plan, such that it can be presented to the Board for approval.
 - ▶ Prepare and provide budget holders with financial data in support of the development of the University's Integrated Resource Plan (operating budget), three- year Comprehensive Institutional Plan and five-year Summary Capital and Infrastructure Plan.
 - ▶ Prepare summary reports for analysis in support of the development of the University's Integrated Resource Plan (operating budget), three-year Comprehensive Institutional Plan and five-year Summary Capital and Infrastructure Plan.
 - ▶ Analyze submissions into the Integrated Resource Plan for reasonableness and provide feedback to both budget holders and the Integrated Resource Planning Working Group.
 - ▶ Coordinate preparation of multi-departmental, divisional and special project business plans, budgets and forecasts.
- Assist in preparing the University's Comprehensive Institutional Plan for submission to government.

- Further development and maintenance of the capital planning process that is integrated with developing the operating budget.
- Integrally involved in administering an effective budget stewardship strategy to enhance financial awareness throughout the University, through:
 - ▶ Analyzing proposed budgets for capital and other projects, and major new initiatives, to ensure the financial impacts are fully recognized in advance of commencement of the project or initiative.
 - ▶ Working closely with the Human Resources and Employee Relations Department to ensure support position management.
 - ▶ Ensuring all budgets are reconciled and balanced and include commitments for all approved staff positions and collective agreement obligations.
 - ▶ Regularly providing budget information and analytical support to deans, directors, department managers and other stakeholders.

Budgeting and Planning Systems

- Manage and coordinate all budgeting and planning processes and systems.
- Analyse and recommend improvements in all budgeting and planning methods, systems and procedures used by the University.
- Initiate enhancements and innovations using state-of-the-art planning and costing techniques.
- Develop appropriate costing models.
- Develop and implement forecasting systems to accurately predict financial results.
- Develop and continually refine appropriate modelling techniques to facilitate medium and long-term financial forecasting.
- Work closely with Institutional Data Analysis (IDA) to analyse the effect of enrolment trends and other key performance indicators on the University's financial results of operations.

Projects and Administration

- Provide leadership and/or support to operational and strategic initiatives in the area of integrated resource planning as required.
- Assist budget owners to help ensure alignment with: University policies with a financial impact, generally accepted accounting principles, Alberta Advanced Education guidelines and Auditor General practices.

▼ THE CANDIDATE

Financial Services is leading significant change within the University as their fundamental philosophy and approach shifts from transactional to analytical, and a focus on support for data driven decision-making. The Manager will therefore need to be a proven change agent, inspiring and leading their team and other stakeholders through that change and into uncharted territory. The Manager will also work closely with a variety of stakeholders with varying financial expertise and will therefore need to have exceptional interpersonal and communication skills.

Core Competencies

- A professional accounting designation.
- A post-secondary under-graduate degree in accounting, commerce or a related field or the equivalence in working experience.
- A minimum of five years of relevant work experience, including two years of in-depth budget and variance and forecasting experience, is required.
- Demonstrated proficiency in contemporary budgeting, forecasting techniques and modeling is fundamental, as is advanced proficiency in analyzing financial statements, management reports and business plans.
- Comprehensive knowledge of current accounting principles is essential. Experience in financial planning and budgeting in the public sector is an asset.
- Intermediate to advanced proficiency in computer applications (planning software, database analysis, and spreadsheet skills). Experience with an integrated budget, payroll and financial planning system is required, and knowledge of Cognos TM1 Enterprise Planning is an asset.

The ideal candidate will also have experience with:

- Activity-Based Costing models.
- Moderate to complex analytics and modelling involving financial and activity-based data.
- Continuous improvement and process automation.
- Change management tools.

Personal Characteristics

- **Inspiring:** Through your words and your actions you consistently communicate a compelling vision and can inspire others to perform their best, bridge territories, unify agendas and embrace change. You are able to lead change in a “challenge-positive” way.

- **Courageous:** You have a successful track record of driving transformation and continuous improvement. You understand that change can sometimes be slow and not always linear. You are respectful of “the way it’s been” but willing to patiently usher in appropriate changes. You are comfortable confronting issues with people and working through conflicts. You feel energized by tough challenges and you aren’t afraid to challenge the status quo.
- **Communicative:** You enjoy leading robust, critical but respectful discussions and know how to adjust your message to suit the audience at hand. You listen carefully to discover the underlying messages. You are direct, diplomatic and truthful.
- **Leadership:** You influence, propose and lead strategy to advance evidence-based decision making. You are a self-confident leader, able to hold your colleagues accountable and motivate staff with vision and innovative thinking. You build and foster successful relationships and you enjoy managing differing perspectives and opinions. You support staff and foster a healthy work environment.
- **Strategy, Foresight and Managing Competing Priorities:** You have a keen ability to understand, plan and adapt to change; challenges invigorate you and you would love to be part of a growing, agile organization.
- **Adaptable:** You are responsive to feedback and can adapt to numerous different solutions and outcomes. You don’t travel ‘my way or the highway’ but can see several different routes to the same destination. You are as happy to lead or to implement another’s vision.

We understand and appreciate our clients’ ever-increasing desire for candidates to reflect the communities in which they work and live. The Vogel Group is committed to inclusivity and diversity as we search for outstanding leadership talent for our clients.

▼ **For more information or to apply, please contact:**

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The Vogel Group is a boutique executive search firm conducting national searches for a wide range of clients. We work with like-minded organizations that value a partnership based on integrity, authenticity and an unwavering commitment to excellence.