

# Recruiting Leaders

POSITION PROFILE

Vice President, Finance  
& Administration and  
CFO



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## VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

### ▼ UNIVERSITY 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.

AU is Canada’s first distributed university that operates as a Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution under the authority of the Alberta Post-Secondary Learning Act. Established in 1970, AU is publicly accredited and board governed. As Canada’s only Open University, AU has enabled learners to access quality university learning regardless of age, gender, educational background, career and family obligations, cultural heritage or geographic location. AU’s main campus is located in the Town of Athabasca, with additional campuses in both Edmonton and Calgary.

AU has developed an exciting, innovative and progressive strategic plan aptly named “*IMAGINE.*” For more information, please visit <http://imagine.athabascau.ca>.

We encourage you to learn more about AU at [www.athabascau.ca](http://www.athabascau.ca).

### ▼ ABOUT THE TOWN OF ATHABASCA

Nestled on the banks of the Athabasca River 145km north of Edmonton, the Town of Athabasca is a welcoming rural community with an incredibly rich history. A great community in which to live, work and play, Athabasca offers residents a wide range of amenities and facilities including sports and recreation facilities, a picturesque golf course, hospital, library and a performing arts centre. The Muskeg Creek trail system provides year round enjoyment with more than 17 kilometers of accessible paths to enjoy the natural beauty of the area.

Serving as the major hub of Athabasca County, the town serves as the gateway to Northern Alberta for numerous industries, public services and companies fro small to large. Entrepreneurial in nature, Athabasca is focused on a future of strength.

For more information on the Town of Athabasca, please visit [www.athabasca.ca](http://www.athabasca.ca).

## ▼ THE ROLE

The Vice-President, Finance and Administration (“VPFA”) is an Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer at AU. The VPFA leads a diverse portfolio that includes financial services, capital projects & facilities operations, records management & archives, risk management & internal audit services as well as procurement and contract development. With the mandate to enable, lead, and advance the financial and operational health of AU, the VPFA is accountable for the overall quality of services, meeting internal and external reporting requirements within portfolio areas, enabling the effective deployment of financial and tangible resources, and planning improvements that enhance AU’s ability to carry out its academic mission and strategic plan. Given a continuous improvement environment, the VPFA is able to demonstrate and lead a nuanced balance of innovation and effectiveness within a regulated environment.

### Duties and Responsibilities

#### Leadership and Governance

- The VPFA is a member of the Executive Team and collaborates with the President, the Provost and Vice-President, Academic, the Vice-President, University Relations, the Vice President, Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, the Chief Human Resources Officer, the University Secretary, and various other members of the AU leadership team in the planning and implementation of core initiatives in support of the academic mission and strategic direction of AU.
- In collaboration with the President, the VPFA supports and provides advice to the Board of Governors and General Faculties Council, including the respective standing and ad-hoc sub-committees of the two governing bodies.

#### External Relationships

- The VPFA is a strong advocate internally, provincially, nationally and internationally for open, distributed and online education. The VPFA maintains ongoing liaisons with Regional, Provincial and National peers as well as frequent connection with Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Infrastructure among other ministries as well as various consultants and outside stakeholders.

#### Financial Services

- Through the Director of Financial Services, the VPFA ensures that financial operations, materials management, banking, investment management, and financial reporting, are in compliance with all laws and regulations and enable AU in achieving its mission and fulfilling its IMAGINE plan. Moreover, the VPFA has oversight of the streamlining of procedures, processes, and effective data-integration to create proactive, innovative, and person-centric financial services and supports to the AU community.

#### Enterprise Risk Management & Internal Audit

- Internal audit and risk management are complementary in that their principle focus is to identify, evaluate and control/minimize a broad range of risks to which AU is exposed, whether strategic, financial, physical, operational, legal, or otherwise. The VPFA oversees the alignment and integration of these two portfolios in support of AU.

- Through the Director of Strategic Initiatives and Services, the VPFA ensures that AU has effective emergency planning, policies, and implementation of procedures for all staff and faculty for emergency planning preparedness and management. Further through the Director, the VPFA ensures the AU's enterprise risk management and administrative internal audit practices, policies, and reporting structures are in compliance with all laws and regulations and enables AU in achieving its mission and fulfilling its strategic plan.
- The Chief Internal Auditor, in fulfilling the role of internal audit, has unfettered access to the chair of the Audit Committee of Athabasca University Board of Governors, to which the role of the VPFA is one of support and mentorship.

### Procurement and Contract Services

- Through the Director, Strategic Initiatives and Services, the VPFA has responsibility and accountability over the full lifecycle of third party contracts and procurement agreements. As part of the Executive Team, the VPFA office also supports Collaboration and Partnership discussions to enhance the outcomes of the negotiation and the contracting process. The VPFA through the support of the Contract Coordinator and the Director, Financial Services, provides advice to the President and other senior internal stakeholders in the process of development of contracts to protect AU from undue risk, liabilities, consistency of the relationship objectives with strategic objectives.

### Facilities, Services and Capital Project Management

- Through the Director of Strategic Initiatives and Services and/or the Capital Project manager(s), the VPFA ensures that AU's physical facilities, grounds and capital construction projects, support achieving the University's IMAGINE Plan are in compliance with all laws and regulations.

## ▼ THE CANDIDATE

### Educational Achievements

- An Undergraduate degree or equivalent in an accounting or finance discipline. A Master's degree or equivalent in a relevant discipline is an asset.
- A professional Canadian accounting or finance designation is required.

### Core Experiences

- Significant and demonstrated experience in a senior strategic and leadership finance role, preferably within a post-secondary institution or public sector organization. Experience with online education would be an asset.
- A proven track record of successful visionary leadership, planning and change management execution to explore innovative approaches and solutions to achieve success.
- Strong IT knowledge and understanding of enterprise systems.
- Demonstrated experience in supporting a Board.
- Experience in a unionized environment.

## Personal Characteristics

### Communication

You enjoy leading robust, critical, and respectful discussions. You are able to present your message to a variety of audiences in a rapidly evolving digital and social media environment. You write clearly and persuasively and can inspire people with your vision. You listen carefully to discover the underlying messages. You are direct, diplomatic and truthful. You “get” that the quality of relationships you develop throughout the organization is inextricably connected to the quality and style of your communication methods.

You enjoy bringing innovation and creative thinking to every problem, and you are able to communicate your ideas persuasively and confidently in order to capture the imagination of your team as well as other departments in the organization. You are able to build and improve on channels of communication in a distributed environment.

You cultivate and encourage honesty and transparency when interacting with staff, colleagues and stakeholders including (but not limited to) government representatives, the Office of the Auditor General, with members of the Board of Governors, General Faculty Council, Dean;s Council, and their representative subcommittees, and other agencies related to areas of responsibility.

### Leadership

You are a self-confident strategic 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 and mentor staff and teams to create and foster a healthy work environment.

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 by developing trusting and meaningful relationships with partners inside and outside AU.

You have understanding of building and leading highly functional teams in complex and rapidly evolving environments as well as through changing financial modes. You foster and enable business and financial acumen in leaders throughout the organization through formal and informal relationships.

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 guide through appropriate changes. You are willing to push through setbacks, show an uncanny ability to think creatively and improvise with a steadfast commitment to moving forward in the face of adversity.

### Vision, Planning and Drive

You have a compelling organizational vision that reflects the complexities and challenges of an ever-changing landscape. You have the drive, knowledge and dedication to shape, prepare and lead an organization into the future. You have a successful track record of driving organizational performance, transformation and continuous improvement. You have experience in converting organizational strategy into measured action and results.

You have a proven track record developing and implementing institutional long-range planning while still being able to accomplish short term goals.

You have a keen ability to understand, plan and adapt to change. Challenges invigorate you and you would thrive in being part of a growing, agile organization.

You are an effective strategist full of ideas and possibilities; you add your personal wisdom and experience to come to the best solution; you can both create and bring exciting ideas to market and most importantly, you are comfortable considering alternative futures without having all the data at your fingertips.

### **Work Ethic and Style**

You lead by example through your commitment to hard work and accountability and a commitment to sustainable work-life balance. You hold yourself to the same level of expectation and accountability as you do for all those around you. In everything you do, you demonstrate high ethical standards and a steadfast moral compass.

### **Decision Making and Problem Solving**

You are grounded, have common sense and are a practical data-informed decision-maker. You are a systems thinker and are able to glean meaning from whatever information is available, add personal wisdom and experience to come to the best conclusion and solution. You have multiple problem-solving techniques in your toolkit and can make informed decisions quickly, without hesitation. You have strong negotiation skills including conflict resolution.

**Athabasca University is committed to employment equity, and encourage applications from women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities.**

### **▼ FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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