

# Gateway Student Journalism Society Five Year Strategic Plan 2025–2030

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Written: April 2025 by Lee Craig, Omar Habibzai, Leah Hennig, Lily Polenchuk, Stephanie Swensrude, and Katie Teeling. With special thanks to *Taproot*, *The Ubysey*, *The Gauntlet*, *The Nugget*, Emily Williams, and Ping Lam Ip.

## Introduction

*The Gateway* has been publishing student-centred, student-driven journalism since 1910 and continues to publish those stories today, but it has faced many challenges along the way. One challenge was losing its dedicated fee unit (DFU) in 2021. As a result, *The Gateway* was forced to make difficult decisions to cut its staff and discontinue programs like the physical printing of the magazine. Through a U of A Students' Union election campaign, the GSJS successfully re-established its DFU in 2024, ushering in a new era where *The Gateway* has the opportunity to grow and prosper, better serving students in its mission to provide stories for students, by students. In light of these new opportunities for *The Gateway*, the GSJS Board of Directors struck a Five Year Strategic Planning Committee to provide direction for future years.

It is important to recognize that the landscape of student journalism is ever-changing — how people choose to engage with journalism is shifting constantly. This plan is not meant to bind *The Gateway* to goals and ideas that may become outdated but to provide guidance year-to-year for *The Gateway*'s long-term success. That being said, this document should not be neglected, even in the face of changes to the media landscape. The Five Year Strategic Planning Committee is expected to meet and prepare to report to the Board of Directors on *The Gateway*'s progress with the plan once in both the fall and winter semesters. It's important to recognize that progress and success is not linear, and some of these goals and initiatives will be easier to achieve than others in different time frames.

## Executive Summary

This plan was produced by the Five Year Strategic Planning Committee over the 2024–25 year. Members of the committee conducted interviews with other publications, both student and non-student, to understand how others approach strategic and long-term planning. Additionally, materials like the annual readership survey provided guidance for what students feel we are doing successfully and where we need to improve.

The committee identified four key areas: editorial, financial, outreach, and dedicated fee unit preparation. For each area, subsections were decided each with goals, and initiatives to achieve those goals. Some also include metrics of success, whereas others do not. The success of financial and outreach plans are easier to track through numbers than editorial and DFU preparation plans are. Many of these goals overlap or intersect with each other, as all are meant to serve *The Gateway*'s core mission of journalism for students, by students.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the GSJS is to support *The Gateway* in achieving its core objectives:

- To sponsor advancement of education of University of Alberta students through the various practices of journalism and the publication of *The Gateway*.
- To provide a fair, reliable, and clear source of information, focused mainly, but not exclusively, on issues which directly affect students and the University of Alberta community, whether they are local, national, or international.

## Overarching Goals

The individual goals in each section of this strategic plan work together to support the following overarching goals:

- Improve the future sustainability of *The Gateway*.
- Increase readership of *The Gateway*.
- Increase direct engagement with *The Gateway* by University of Alberta students.
- Enhance the quality of *The Gateway* as a journalistic publication.

## Editorial

Our editorial standards and the content we publish is central to everything we do. Maintaining high standards and expanding our coverage where we can are key parts of this plan. This cannot be done without our staff and volunteers, who must in turn receive high standards of training.

## Content

### Goals

- Maintain a high quality of content as well as a consistent amount of content being published.
- Increase visibility of coverage.
- Ensure *The Gateway* is serving the full diversity of the student population.

### Initiatives

- Maintain a post count of at least two articles a day, but ideally three during the weekdays of Fall and Winter semester (not including holidays). During the summer months, editorial staff should aim to publish daily when possible.
- Create a plan to serve demographics that are underserved in our coverage, such as French-speaking students, graduate students, and Indigenous students.
- Consider ways to make our coverage more visible, such as exploring opportunities for SUTVs to display recent articles, physical print editions, and getting our articles on services like Apple News.

## Online Publication

### Goals

- Ensure the long-term sustainability of our online publication and website.

### Initiatives

- Explore ways to manage current storage for our website or options for greater storage.
- Consider options for an online archive to preserve articles published online.
  - Talk to other outlets about how they backup their online articles. Aim for completion by April 2027.
- Explore long-term website solutions to mitigate website crashes and to ensure ease of access for readers.

## Staffing and Volunteers

### Goals

- Explore ways to expand our staff and volunteer base to enable greater coverage.
- Ensure high standards of training are maintained.

### Initiative

- Consider ways to increase the efficiency and bandwidth for campus coverage. This may be done through hiring more reporters (if the budget allows) and expanding deputy positions.

- Expand the volunteer base of visuals contributors through greater outreach and promotions of opportunities. These opportunities can include illustrations, photos, and possibly comics for *The Gateway*.
- Create standardized training for incoming staff as well as volunteers. This should include safety and sensitivity training. This can be done internally or with the help of organizations like Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ).
- Modernize and maintain a high standard of editorial tests and training materials used during the hiring and onboarding process.

## Equipment and Space

### Goal

- Ensure *The Gateway* has an office space and equipment that meets our needs.

### Initiatives

- Figure out the lease for our current space. Consider the other leasing options available to us if we have to move, either in the next few years or further down the line.
  - The Gateway staff have had repeated conversations with SU management about taking over our lease and giving our rental space to another group — repeated conversations have done nothing to deter that sentiment. Having conversations with The Landing about our space, why it is important to us, why it may not be a good fit for them, and the work it would take to make it functional for them would be an ideal next step. Developing relationships with other tenants in the building, in addition to The Landing should also be untaken.
- Create a system to keep track of the amount, condition, and age of our equipment.

# Financial

Maintaining responsible and sustainable finances is key to ensuring *The Gateway*'s long-term viability and success.

## Diversifying Revenue

### Goal

- Diversify revenue streams.

### Initiatives

- Increase website advertising revenue by 2% annually, while maintaining the ad to content ratio of no more than 40% ads.
  - Note: In 2025, advertising revenue makes up 6% of the annual revenue.
- Explore more grant opportunities and develop a calendar to keep track of grant application deadlines.
- Develop a donation stream through alumni and possibly University of Alberta staff, including groups like AASUA and NASA.
  - Aim to increase fundraising revenue to \$1,000, increasing the goal by 10% annually.
    - Note: Previous annual donation amounts have reached or surpassed \$1,000.
- Explore the viability of hosting events for an entry fee, possibly different rates for students and non-students.
  - Events can vary and should be catered to specific demographics, based on our fundraising goals for said events. For example, alumni events can be more about fundraising and reunions, while events for students should be targeted towards outreach, education, and journalistic affairs, such as conferences, celebrations, galas, and lectures, and less about profit.

### Metrics of success

- Increase in revenue independent of our DFU.

## Reserve Fund

### Goal

- Increase financial sustainability.

### Initiatives

- Establish a reserve fund.
- Budget for regular contributions to the reserve fund, and update the Finance Committee regularly on the status of the reserve fund.
  - Suggestion: Annual contributions to the reserve fund should be 5% of The Gateway's overall revenue, or about 1.66% of each DFU cheque.

### Metrics of success

- Reserve fund assets.
  - Note: By 2029, the reserve fund should contain at least \$40,000.

## Strategic Budgeting

### Goal

- Budget for more strategic spending.

### Initiatives

- The Executive Director shall establish a schedule for regular reviews of recurring expenses (e.g., office lease, subscriptions) to prevent unnecessary expenditures, and to ensure that expenses remain competitively priced.
- The Executive Director, in conjunction with the Editor-in-Chief and the Managing Editor, shall plan for and budget equipment replacements based on the condition and age of inventory.
  - Suggestion: This should be done in June each year, ahead of the creation of the annual budget, with staff members maintaining an ongoing log of potential future replacements thereafter.

### Metrics of success

- Consistency of actual vs budgeted expenses.



# Outreach

Outreach is an essential part of *The Gateway*'s strategic plan so we can make sure people are actually reading the work that we produce. Our objective is that a majority of University of Alberta students and staff are aware of *The Gateway* and regularly read both online and physical content.

## Online Presence

### Goal

- Increasing readership and awareness of *The Gateway* on campus.

### Initiatives

- The Marketing and Outreach Coordinator shall draft a plan in August of each year that encompasses which social media platforms *The Gateway* plans to use, how often they will post, and what type of content they will pursue. This should be done in conjunction with the Editor-in-Chief and Executive Director.
- Suggestion: This plan should be presented to and approved by the board ahead of being implemented.
- Explore posting more consistently on Reddit.
- Explore creating short-form video content, and consider where that responsibility falls within our staff.
- Create and follow an annual plan with each new marketing and outreach coordinator.
- Consider rebranding, a new logo, and giving the website an updated look.

### Metrics of success

- Follower count should increase by 50% annually.
- Referrals from social media increases.

## Newsletters

### Goal

- Increase subscription to *The Gateway*'s newsletter.

### Initiatives

- Ask the university and Students' Union to include *The Gateway* on websites and student informational packages and in the various newsletters for University of Alberta students and staff.
- Explore "more aggressive" pop-up encouraging people to sign up for the newsletter on the website. Look to other publications, like the St. Albert Gazette and Edmonton Journal for example.
- Suggestion: This should be achieved by April 2026.
- Explore adding a newsletter sign-up to new BearsDen account or page when we have access to it.

### Metrics of success

- New newsletter sign-ups should increase by 500 subscribers annually.
  - Suggestion: If easily achieved or surpassed, the sign-up goal should be amended in order to ensure substantial growth and avoid passive growth.

## Community and Physical Outreach

### Goals

- Maintaining a physical presence, as it remains a top way that people learn about *The Gateway*.

### Initiatives

- Maintain physical condition and appearance of newsstands.
  - Suggestion: Decals should be updated to emphasize the online publication schedule.
- Through monthly tracking, the Marketing and Outreach Coordinator and the Editor-in-Chief will keep track of pick-up rates at each newsstand and consider relocating stands with lower visibility and pick-up.
  - Suggestion: Stands in the office currently used for decoration can be moved to high-pick up spots on campus, such as University Commons.
  - Suggestion: Tracking should be done on a regular interval, ideally a day and week after distribution.
- Consistently poster around campus.
- Attend community events, possibly joint events or workshops, and table at community events.
- Build on the success of Gateway to Cinema and explore other community events that we can organize.
- Explore how to get *The Gateway* included in the Week of Welcome, whether that's a stop during campus tours, Intro to Gateway student orientation, making sure we're always in the annual student handbook.

## Dedicated Fee Unit Preparation

Creating a plan to run a successful DFU campaign will be key in ensuring *The Gateway* has stable, reliable funding in the future. Having run these campaigns before, it's important to consider [what worked and what didn't](#) to guide future campaigns.

### Undergraduate DFU

#### Goals

- Prepare *The Gateway* for the next DFU campaign to ensure a smooth and successful campaign.

#### Initiatives

- Start planning and preparing two years ahead of renewing our DFU (2026-27 year).
- Build up presence and name recognition on campus through tabling ahead of the campaign year, canvassing, and outreach in the months leading up to the campaign.
- Create a campaign outline and plan to work off of, at minimum a year in advance of the campaign start date.
- Prepare more consistent brand imaging for posters, social media, etc..
- Get in touch with Students' Union councillors and executives ahead of our DFU presentation to Students' Council.
  - Note: In 2024, the presentation to Students' Council was mandatory in order to run a DFU campaign. Members of the campaign presented to Students' Council in November.
- Building a volunteer base to help with the DFU campaign earlier in the year, make volunteers aware of the DFU a year or two in advance.
- Including campaign roles and responsibilities in the descriptions of Business Unit job postings and training in the years leading up to the DFU campaign.
- Tap into and revitalize the alumni network for support.
  - Suggestion: Strike an alumni committee, and commit to hosting at least one alumni event annually.
- Having a clear plan of attack for video creation, branding, ad material, and having a timeline of when and who we will ask for help.
- Allocate more spending for campaign materials than we did for the 2024 campaign.

### Graduate DFU

#### Goals

- Increase outreach and engagement with graduate students to gain a better understanding of what they would like to see from *The Gateway*.
- Create a plan to run a successful DFU campaign at the graduate level to increase the consistency of *The Gateway's* coverage on graduate student issues.

#### Initiatives

- Conduct a survey among graduate students to gain an understanding of what their understanding of *The Gateway* is, what they would like to see from *The Gateway*, and interest in a DFU.

- Increase outreach efforts, including circulation of the annual readership survey, explainers of what *The Gateway* is, and promotion of our events and coverage to graduate students.
- Have early conversations with Graduate Students' Association executives and councillors.
- Review the 2024 graduate DFU campaign and identify what worked and what didn't.
- If found feasible through surveying graduate students and conversations with the GSA, The Gateway should plan to run the Graduate DFU campaign ahead of the undergraduate DFU to give a buffer between campaigns.
  - Suggestion: A Graduate DFU campaign should run in 2028, a year ahead of the Undergraduate DFU campaign. This campaign should be a joint effort between the Business Unit, the Editor-in-Chief, the GSJS Board of Directors, a team of volunteers, and a Graduate Student volunteer.
- Consider and tap into connections with graduate student volunteers and readers to build support.
- Reporting on graduate students' issues where possible to prove the value of *The Gateway's* reporting to graduate students.