

The Undergraduate Learner's Experience in a Research University

What Does It Mean To Attend a Research University?

All colleges and universities share a teaching function – the passing on of knowledge to our students. But the unique feature of a research university is the additional element of discovery – to produce new knowledge in the full range of disciplines we offer through our teaching and research programs. A research university exposes students to the latest developments in their fields of study and to scholars who work at the leading edge of their disciplines. Research universities sharpen a set of fundamental skills, which mark the foundation for scholarship:

- Inquiry
- Clear and critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Effective communication.

The Conference Board of Canada has identified a set of critical employability skills deemed necessary to participate and progress successfully in the modern world of work. These are the abilities to manage information, think and solve problems, use numbers and communicate effectively – all attributes associated with the skills and competencies cultivated at a research university such as the University of Calgary.

The University of Calgary has made the decision to emphasize the educational experience for students in a research university as part of its Academic Plan, "Raising our Sights".

So What's the Quality of Learning?

There's more than one way to solve a complex problem, so it's valuable to develop an understanding of different perspectives and methodologies as well as the ability to effectively communicate them. Each degree program at U of C offers students a core set of enhanced features and competencies which instill exceptional abilities in problem solving, posing critical questions, relating theory and practice, developing abstract reasoning and engaging meaningfully with those from other cultural and linguistic communities. We do this by creating opportunity for our students in these key areas of learning:

- **Inquiry** – Learning through inquiry is an interactive and rigorous experience. Your professors aren't simply disseminating information in a content-driven format, they're guiding you through a process where you ask the questions and search for the answers. Taught in small classes, these problem-based courses encourage discussion, curiosity and development of academic skills such as critical thinking and research. The U of C is broadening opportunities for students to take inquiry-based courses at the first year level, which will prepare you for the challenges of higher level learning later on in your degree.
- **Research** –