Capacity and Preparatory Review Report

American University of Armenia

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Foreword

In approaching the Capacity and Preparatory Review, the American University of Armenia (AUA) followed the model suggested on page 43 of the *WASC 2001 Handbook of Accreditation:* to arrange the exhibits by the four Commission Standards. Reflective essays are included which discuss the exhibits associated with each Standard. The brief WASC document, *Applying the Standards of Accreditation: One Set of Standards; Two Reviews/Two Lenses*, was used as a guide.

Given AUA's unique situation, the novelty for WASC in reviewing a non-traditional institution outside the United States, and the limited familiarity of some team members with AUA, it is important for AUA to provide the visiting team additional context and orientation to the University, its history, and its environment. The Introduction provides this context, which the exhibits support.

The Introduction is followed by a standard-by-standard presentation of AUA and its capacities. The principles embodied within each WASC standard and section are applied to AUA and explicated through one or more brief reflective essays. The referenced exhibits, as well as others, document the assertions made in this report. Several reflective essays are presented under each standard. Exhibits that are linked to the various sections of this report can be found in the Institutional Portfolio.[1]

Institutional responses to the Candidacy visit report were included in the Letter of Intent and are summarized, but not reproduced, in this document.

While the Steering Committee has taken the lead in prioritizing efforts and in preparing this report, the content reflects the work and engagement of the entire institution. This report incorporates suggestions provided by internal and external colleagues, stakeholders, and friends of the University.

AUA believes that the WASC visiting team will recognize the unique attributes of this young, evolving institution and offer constructive guidance for its continued maturation.

AUA/WASC Steering Committee
July 2005

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[1] NOTE: The links have been removed, but a hard copy of the Capacity and Preparatory Review Report is available in the Papazian Library. The Institutional Portfolio is available in the Office of Institutional Research and Accreditation.

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Executive Summary

The American University of Armenia (AUA), established in 1991, has been buffeted by post-Soviet economic and political developments as well as by national and international attempts to support Armenia during the transition period. The development of AUA was a reaction to a number of forces. Local Armenians had limited access to funding for education; potential students sensed an opportunity to experience an educational program different from their prior Soviet-era studies; potential financial donors were aware of the risk in their investment but saw opportunity for significant impact; and potential faculty saw an opportunity similar to that of the donors, even though it meant that the rewards would be mainly intrinsic. The early years demonstrated the logic of turning a challenge into an opportunity. This was an important message to the first students, and the same message continues to be communicated to students today.

In order to attract capable students and excellent instructors, in an organization that was in its formative stages without the promise of continued funding, the primary issues were: how to achieve excellence in academic and research programs; how to achieve fiscal strength and sustainability; and, how to lead and manage both academic management and operational exigencies. Of course, AUA persists in reexamining these same issues today. And, like other institutions of higher education everywhere also continues to add new areas of focus.

This Review examines the key ingredients of an educational institution: how it defines its purposes and establishes appropriate educational objectives in line with its purposes and character, (Standard 1); how it translates its core functions of teaching, learning, scholarship, creative activity and support for student learning into a coordinated, supportive approach, (Standard 2); how it utilizes its human, physical, fiscal and information resources in enhancing decision making structures, (Standard 3); and how it creates a learning organization by utilizing a knowledge base derived from ongoing information systems, both quantitative and qualitative (Standard 4). Within the Review, text linked to additional issues or explanatory detail within each standard is highlighted.

The Review concludes that while AUA responded to pressures related to academic and operational administration, University governance, and funding perturbations to transform itself into an organization entering a period of sustainability, it is still grappling with issues of uncertainty regarding outcomes, distant geography, and care and inclusion of its human capital. Most of the recommendations included in the report are outgrowths of these persistent themes and are summarized below:

- Development of a comprehensive faculty recruitment and retention program including support for scholarly activities.
- Development of a comprehensive student recruitment program including support for diversification and regional recruiting.
- Development and modification of the governance structure that encourages increased Yerevan decision-making, faculty governance, and student involvement.
- Development and refinement of a formalized system that assesses program and University objectives and outcomes and focuses on continuous quality improvement.

Introduction

The American University of Armenia (AUA) was established in 1991, in the aftermath of the country's devastating earthquake of 1988. The earthquake claimed approximately 25,000 lives, including faculty and students of a branch of the State Engineering University located near the quake's epicenter in Gyumri. The visionary idea of replacing what had been destroyed with an American-style higher education institution in the then Soviet Republic of Armenia arose during discussions between local faculty and two Armenian-American members of a team sent by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences to work on reconstruction and earthquake safety programs. Those discussions quickly evolved into a plan to develop AUA in Yerevan.

Three U.S. academics emerged as champions for this idea: Armen Der Kiureghian, Professor of Civil Engineering at the University of California at Berkeley; Mihran Agbabian, Professor of Earthquake Engineering, University of Southern California; and Stepan Karamardian, Professor of Business, University of California at Riverside. Louise Simone, who committed both personal and Armenian General Benevolent Union resources, joined them in championing the cause. This coalition then gained critical support from the University of California and the Armenian Government, ensuring the vision of an American University in Armenia would be transformed into reality.

The American University of Armenia Corporation, a U.S. registered 501(c)3 organization was created on June 18 1991, to administer the University. The Armenian Government, through the Ministry of Education and Science, provided the Baghramian Building and the U.S. Government, through several capital projects, provided financial support.

The new University opened its doors on September 21, 1991, in the building that was up to that time the Communist Party's training and conference center. That same day, Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

The vision of AUA was to bring Western ideals, values, and methods embodied in the American approach to graduate education to Armenia and the region, and through this engagement to facilitate the transformation and integration of the region into the world's democratic governments and free market economies. Priority was given to complementing the existing strengths of the Armenian education system by providing professional training in areas most critical to the economic transformation of the country. The first three programs offered were business administration, industrial engineering, and earthquake engineering. Over the past 14 years, AUA has evolved to offer eight masters programs and several certificate programs through six academic divisions. Each academic program targets a specific need in a rapidly evolving marketplace.

AUA introduced choice, quality, technology and entrepreneurship. Education became transparent, objective, visionary, and goal oriented.

As articulated by AUA's second president, Haroutune K. Armenian, AUA represents the values of transparency and integrity in all it does while embodying four key elements: quality, choice, technology, and entrepreneurship. AUA's commitment to this accreditation process is but one example. AUA began the self-study with the conviction that the activity would

provide the structure to systematically examine its methods of program evaluation and operations, that is, to document what is being done, to critically reassess what is being done in light of current and projected future needs, and to determine institutional best practices from the diverse approaches observed in the academic divisions. AUA realizes it is on a trajectory from the start-up focus on structure to a maturing focus on processes and outcomes. The time has come to consciously implement the culture of continuous quality improvement that had implicitly guided the University to this point.

AUA is constantly evolving and changing. The increased self-understanding that has resulted from this process has helped AUA become more intentional about its efforts and more aware of areas needing further attention while building human and technical capacity and strengthening the culture of continuous quality improvement and shared vision of AUA's future.

Institutional Capacity and Preparatory Review Highlights

AUA is a different yet remarkably effective and nimble organization, able to develop alongside – and in support of – its host country. Its strength is based on core values and an institutional commitment to develop the capacity to maintain and promote those values while providing outreach and public service programs.

Those values are maintained by a dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to the mission of the University and who persevere under difficult and unique circumstances. Equally important and critical to AUA's success is the continuous generosity of donors and U.S. governmental agencies that provide resources. At AUA, the sense of purpose, commitment, vision, and shared ideals is unlike any comparable U.S.-based institution.

Because of its geographically dispersed structure, spanning 12 time zones from California to Yerevan, AUA has maximized its use of technology for both operational efficiency and operational effectiveness. AUA has been a driving force in the development and utilization of Internet technologies in Armenia. Recent efforts such as wireless networking and "sharepoint" collaboration services are facilitating the next steps in the evolution of AUA's governance structures.

> *The University's success as an institution has depended heavily on technology to overcome the challenges of a dispersed administrative structure, to efficiently run an American-style educational institution, to gain access to a wealth of knowledge through its library systems and Internet, and to equip its personnel and students with the computing skills necessary to compete in a market-based society. Those characteristics are the norm for well-developed American-based institutions but represent a clear departure for Armenia as it seeks to integrate itself into the world community. It is clear that AUA places a high value on technology when one walks through its doors and perceives its capacity to create, process, transmit and exchange information in order to meet its mission.*

Beyond the strength of its formal educational programs and its contribution to each student's pursuit of knowledge and practical skills, the University's open approach to improving society serves as a role model for other institutions as they aspire to meet international standards and practices. Examples of AUA's approach are: an open stacks library accessible to the general public; research centers that collaborate with local institutions; extension and continuing education classes; and technical support to governmental, non-governmental, and corporate agencies.

Through AUA's academic programs and institutional environment, students learn to critically assess and analyze information, formulate responses, and to communicate and defend their reasoning. AUA is not only a center for disseminating knowledge, but also a locus for innovation and service: AUA's graduates become Armenia's change agents and entrepreneurs for development. An analysis of the impact of AUA on Armenia is in progress and will be included in the Educational Effectiveness Review Report.

Unique at AUA is an institution-wide environmental conservation and management requirement. AUA requires students in all its degree programs to enroll in ESC 295: Environmental Science and Conservation. This requirement addresses an urgent regional need for environmental awareness. AUA students have the option of enrolling in additional ESC courses and earning the Certificate in Environmental Science and Conservation.

AUA's regional presence and impact is growing through participation in the Black Sea Universities Association, leadership in creating a regional library network for the Trans-Caucasus, involvement in professional associations and hosting regional and international conferences.

Curricular coordination and development were once the sole purview of the program deans, who at the time were the only faculty with a long-term institutional commitment. With deliberate increases in full-time resident faculty and commitment to on-site academic leadership, AUA is slowly evolving toward a governance model in which faculty plays an increasingly critical role. The dean-centered model was extremely useful in the early stages of each program's development, providing flexibility and efficiency. Now, emphasis is shifting to sustainable continuity. Each academic unit has recently engaged in a strategic assessment of its offerings and mission, paralleling and supporting the institution-wide process (see AUA Strategic Plan, pp. 20-29). Academic planning now requires broad institutional input and more structured, evidence-based processes in guiding revisions.

> *Each academic unit created its own strategic plan to align itself with the University-wide plan.*

In parallel with the evolution of academic management, there has been pressure on the financial systems to evolve. AUA has always faced the challenge of coordinating a financial operation that is recorded in part under U.S. accounting standards and in part under Armenian accounting standards in order to generate reports that can guide timely, effective, and evidence-based decisions. The general market downturn of the past few years directly affected portfolios supporting AUA's revenue stream. (This will be discussed further under Standard 3.) Concomitant budget reductions required the institution to find ways to sustain each academic

program while ensuring the overall quality of the classroom experience. The result was increased demand for greater information sharing and the development of more inclusive, transparent, and timely budget planning procedures. The budgetary decline also resulted in greater involvement by the Finance Committee of the AUAC Board of Trustees to ensure sufficient financial oversight of the University's operations.

AUA's pursuit of accreditation and the institutional self-study process has focused and prioritized AUA's development of institutional capacity, especially in the areas of faculty governance (policies and procedures), institutional management, academic assessment (students, programs, faculty), and internal communication. Illustrative recommendations appear in each Standard in the text. The AUA Strategic Plan identifies further issues that will require present and future attention.

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

AUA has clearly defined its purposes and articulates them, both internally and externally. These purposes serve as the organizing and prioritizing principles for the University and its various programs and activities. The stated educational and operational objectives of programs and projects are linked to and are supportive of institutional goals and objectives (see AUA Strategic Plan, pp. 11-12).

Central to AUA's mission is its role as an implementer of Western values and approaches to education and manner of operation. Chief among these values are integrity and the related values of transparency and equity. In a climate where corruption and favoritism are the expected norm, the institution not only teaches the core value of integrity, but also demonstrates it on a daily basis as proof that dishonest practices are not needed for an organization or an individual to succeed in this country.

1a. Institutional Purposes

AUA has as founding principles and remains firmly committed to academic excellence, academic freedom, and educational effectiveness. The University's mission statement, that appears in the University Catalog and serves as the introductory material for most public presentations and student orientations at AUA, affirms that:

> *"...The American University of Armenia provides teaching, research, and service programs that prepare students to address the needs of Armenia and the surrounding region for sustainable development, in a setting that values and develops academic excellence, free inquiry, scholarship, leadership, and service to society."*

This commitment is further reflected in AUA's current Strategic Plan, where the first Strategic Goal is "Excellence in AUA's Academic and Research Programs" and in the current University Catalog in which the introductory message from President Armenian states, "The University provides an environment that encourages academic excellence, freedom of inquiry, personal

integrity, and a concern for societal issues." It is also reflected in the opening paragraph of the University's Handbook of Administrative Policies, which states, "…the University as a whole has evolved a common institutional ethos based upon the fusion of the principles and norms of modern Western universities and the traditional concern of Armenian culture with excellence and commitment to education."

Freedom of inquiry drives the educational process.

While the University's commitment to its mission was reaffirmed during the candidacy review process, each academic program underwent a rigorous self-assessment in preparation for the upcoming educational effectiveness review. Two years ago, AUA's WASC Steering Committee developed a resource manual on educational effectiveness that was disseminated to each academic program along with a process overview and timeline for programs to critically assess themselves and to develop an academic strategic plan in keeping with that assessment, the University's Strategic Plan, and the program's own mission. Over the past two years, academic programs have conducted these strategic assessments (Phase I and Phase II reports). The standing Academic Standards Committee (soon to be succeeded by a comparable committee(s) of the newly constituted Faculty Senate) critiqued these assessments. Those assessments will serve as the basis/evaluation criteria for the initial round of internal educational effectiveness assessments.

With the formation of the Faculty Senate and its standing committees, the institution is formally transferring the operational locus for curricular assessment and accountability to the faculty, partially to the academic programs and partially to the Faculty Senate. This model ensures the sustainability and suitability of the program beyond any one individual and builds shared understanding and commitment as well as common values and norms across disparate disciplines. The Faculty Senate begins its first round of assessments in Fall 2005. That process is discussed in Reflective Essay 3c, below.

AUA's committees form the backbone of policy development, review, and, increasingly, implementation. This expanded role has strengthened policy analysis/synthesis and increased faculty commitment to institutional change.

Reflective essay 1a. Continuously reinventing AUA: Operating in a transitional economy

From day one, AUA was unique: not only was it exporting the American model of graduate education (a rare, but increasingly common occurrence), but also its mode of operation was more humanitarian than materialistic. Its students were initially exempt from any tuition, and today still only pay an average of less than 20 percent of the full tuition. Initially the country had only enough electric power for two to three hours per day and heating was limited. The Internet and other technologies were novelties. Its students, for the most part, had only recently learned English, often as a third or fourth language. And its graduates faced an uncertain future in an economy recovering from near-total financial collapse following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

In this context, AUA was constantly evolving as the country itself evolved. Programs were rapidly developed and implemented with limited input from a few dedicated senior faculty, many

of whom were based in the U.S. and adapted curricula from their own programs. The teaching faculty was predominantly short-term visiting faculty, many Diasporan Armenian, and many coming from premiere U.S. institutions. Naturally, emphasis was on developing the systems and procedures needed to breathe life into the institution, with minimal formal attention paid to outcomes and impacts. Often as the only long-term committed faculty member, the dean made most operational and academic decisions. Quickly, the viability of this model beyond a start-up period was recognized as limited. U.S. faculty have the expectation of shared decision-making, and the U.S. model for this long-standing tradition of shared government was exported and remains an implicit goal. In 1997, the University's first strategic planning effort committed the institution to expand and stabilize resident faculty with the stated goal of a minimum of two full-time resident faculty members per college. Resources were allocated and the goal was substantially met within eighteen months.

The increased number of resident faculty and subsequent shifting of most operational decisions to Yerevan, along with the maturation of the institution and the academic programs, specifically, a growing cadre of graduates, naturally led to increased attention on curricular reassessment and student outcomes. Over time, this evolved into

- regular reviews by each program of its curriculum and teaching;
- formal course evaluations;
- development of faculty and multiparty committees and working groups;
- establishment of a Student Council and inclusion of its input into University governance;
- development of program advisory boards which bring alumni and employers together to provide strategic direction to programs;
- a formalized process for internal and external reviews through the Faculty Senate.

This natural evolution, guided by the institution's commitment to excellence, has spawned a self-sustaining culture of evidence-based continuous quality improvement. It is only now that many of these practices are documented and systematized. Given the new faculty governance structures, which foster effective communication across programs, the academic programs are learning methods from one another and developing a compendium of best practices in terms of methods and procedures. Building these broad-based capacities in policy development and critical assessment is fundamental to sustaining these systems, while ensuring that the unexpected departure of a key member can no longer cripple the process. AUA wants not only to teach critical assessment, but also to practice it.

As AUA President Haroutune Armenian comments to each entering class, "the programs you enter today are markedly different from the programs your predecessors entered even last year and next year's will differ markedly from yours." AUA is continuously improving and refining what it offers and, concomitantly, the standards and expectations of its students.

1b. Integrity

AUA is an institution founded on the principles of integrity and transparency. AUA's hard fought reputation for integrity and merit-based decisions is crucial to its success in an environment where corruption and nepotism were the norm. This commitment to integrity is

reflected in all AUA policies and practices, from its mission statement to its admission policies, to its scholarship and financial aid practices, to its Catalog and related student manuals, and to its staff and personnel procedures (hiring, performance evaluation, etc.).

Academic Operations

> *Academic Freedom guides the faculty, the students, administration and employees. While not always fully understood or appreciated by the various stakeholders, transparency prevails at every level.*

Legally, AUA exists as two entities: the AUA Corporation, its U.S. registered 501(c)3 legal entity, and the AUA Fund, its Armenian registered entity. For all practical purposes, however, AUA is collectively known and operates as AUA. Nominally, AUA represents a partnership between the Armenian government, the University of California system, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union, but the University has maintained its independent status as a private university, accountable not to the government or political parties in its operations, but to the ideals of providing high quality, Western-style graduate education to facilitate the economic and social development of the region. Academic freedom and transparency of operation embody all that AUA teaches and how it operates.

Many policies pertaining to academic freedom are currently being implemented, reflecting the two years of work recently completed by the standing Faculty Affairs Committee and endorsed by the new Faculty Senate. While much work remains in this area, the new policies reflect the institution's commitment to developing the contractual and practical nature of its relationship with its faculty. Similarly, grievance policies and procedures are undergoing evolution. In the past, student appeals were handled on an ad-hoc basis through committees and working groups, or were handled directly by the respective dean. With the advent of the Faculty Senate, these functions are now being assumed by standing committees of the faculty. Similarly for faculty concerns, the dean handled most matters. The new faculty policies, developed by the standing Faculty Affairs Committee, institutionalize many of these practices. Staff procedures were updated in Spring 2005 to reflect changes in the Armenian labor code.

AUA has taken the lead and is providing an example (and support) for local institutions in the development of standards and practices regarding research ethics. AUA now has two U.S. NIH/OHRP registered institutional review boards (IRBs). The first, established in 2001, addresses non-invasive research and has been extensively used by the College of Health Sciences and the School for Political Science and International Affairs. Recently, a second IRB was added in response to local partner interest to review applications for invasive studies (e.g., clinical trials). In parallel to the IRBs, members of the various research centers provide training and orientation of responsible research. Research ethics is included in the curriculum of some academic programs and an on-line IRB tutorial program (English, Russian, Armenian), comparable to those required in U.S. institutions, is under development.

Diversity

During its initial development, AUA focused on preparing Armenians for professional roles in Armenian society. A decade later, diversity in the student body is not only desirable, but critical. Diversity of cultural backgrounds is needed to enrich the learning experience and the academic milieu. This is a role that can no longer be borne solely by the visiting faculty.

The University is committed to equal opportunity for all qualified applicants. The President has further committed the institution to ensuring that financial need is not a barrier to study at AUA through subsidies, merit scholarships, loan programs (a novelty in Armenia), and other similar efforts. The University is also attempting to develop an objective need-based financial aid system to replace its blanket subsidy of Armenian nationals, but progress is slow in an environment where few objective measures of need exist and can be documented. AUA is also one of the few facilities in Yerevan that is reasonably accessible to the disabled, even co-hosting a conference on the topic in the hopes of changing prevailing practices that cloister the disabled away from public view.

To increase diversity, recruitment efforts include an emphasis on both students from beyond Armenia's borders and those from Armenia's outlying regions (see AUA Strategic Plan, pp. 5, 13-15). Two challenges to these efforts are financial need and the perception among those in other NIS countries that only Moscow could possibly offer something better than their home country. The U.S. Embassy in Armenia has provided a grant of $51,300 to plan and develop a regional student recruitment program over a two-year period. Secondly, a new Turpanjian Scholarship Program has been initiated to provide scholarship support for "…students who are at an economic disadvantage" to pursue undergraduate study in Armenia and graduate study at AUA, targeting orphans and those affected by the 1988 earthquake.

Over the years, students from 10 countries, including Georgia, Lebanon, Syria, India, and Iran have enrolled, but they were predominantly from the Diaspora. Presently, AUA has four non-Armenian MPH students (three from Moldova and one from Mongolia) who were funded by the Open Society Institute after the AUA program received critical praise from the European Regional Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPHER). At least one U.S. citizen (non-Armenian) has applied for admission in 2006. AUA is slowly evolving into the regional institution it aspires to be.

Reflective essay 1b. Transparency and equity: A beacon and a role model

"AUA has aspired to be a beacon and a role model of integrity from day one," proudly states Anahit Ordyan, PhD, Director of AUA Administration and a graduate of AUA's first MBA class in 1993. "Students and employees of AUA take pride in their achievements and in their affiliation with an institution whose high standards in an environment of honest competition are recognized by all."
Everyone at AUA – and most outside - knows that calls from ministers or other officials or offers of "informal payments" cannot secure higher grades or preferential treatment. AUA faculty and administrators frequently rebuff attempts by influential persons to buy favor for one purpose or another. Similarly, offers of reduced tax and other payments on the part of government officials

in exchange for "gratuities" are uniformly rebuffed. Fortunately, as AUA's reputation has grown, these solicitations have diminished.

Prospective staff members are pleasantly surprised to learn of AUA's personnel policies and practices, and to learn that these policies are actually implemented. Practices like objective performance evaluations, pay classification plans, merit-based performance adjustments, and the like, are novel concepts in Armenia. Established and transparent policies in other areas of financial operations such as procurement and budgeting also lend credibility to AUA's assertions of fairness and objectivity.

Because of its reputation for integrity and quality, AUA often finds itself the recipient of requests to engage in projects only tangentially related to its core academic mission, but relevant to its broader social and development mission. Several donors wishing to better Armenia, but fearful of unscrupulous practices, have brought their ideas to AUA where they have confidence their trust will not be violated. Thus, projects like the Digital Library, the Meghrigian Institute for Preventive Ophthalmology, and the Birds of Armenia have found a home within AUA.

As AUA graduates have entered the workforce, they have begun to implement and demand similar levels of integrity and responsibility in their workplaces. Slowly, a new cultural norm is emerging where AUA will no longer be a lone beacon, but one of similar points of light.

Recommendations for Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

1.1   AUA, through a strategic assessment by its senior academic leadership, will assess opportunities for engagement through research, education, and training programs and technical support of IT and other areas identified as high priority for the development of Armenia and the region.

1.2   The senior AUA academic leadership will prepare a plan of action, including the development of a Community of Scholars in Armenia, for evolving AUA's academic and research offerings to meet the needs identified in 1.1.

1.3   The AUA governing body (Administrations, Board of Trustees) will prioritize efforts and develop a plan of action to ensure adequate financial and infrastructure resources are identified to implement 1.2.

1.4   The AUA administration will support the further development and evolution of faculty governed systems of educational assessment and assurance.

1.5   The AUA administration will strengthen the role and utilization of the office of institutional research and its linkages with the evolving university MIS system.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

AUA's academic programs ascribe to the same standards found at peer U.S. institutions, including admission standards, curriculum content, faculty oversight, assessment of student performance, and assurance of graduates' acquisition of basic competence. Each academic program has a stated mission and clearly articulated goals and objectives, as set forth in the Phase I and Phase II reports. The curriculum is designed to ensure that those objectives are achieved throughout the program and assimilated through a capstone experience (thesis project and/or practicum). Methods of student assessment correspond in format and standards to the course and program learning objectives. An adequate number of appropriately trained faculty deliver these programs and govern their operation.

Increasingly, scholarship has become a University priority, with expectations for scholarly work explicit in contracts for longer-term resident faculty. Expectations for the type of scholarship are also increasing, shifting from such work as applied research reports for development projects to peer-reviewed publications. Faculty evaluations for promotion, again part of a recently developed package of faculty policies, now define criteria for appointment and promotion, valuing a balance of teaching, service, and research consistent with the faculty member's role within the institution.

The University is developing its co-curricular teaching and student services in response to changes in the external environment. The Academic Preparatory Program (APP), once the only gateway to the University, is now one of two gateways (direct application being the other [see Section 2a, below]), and will soon become the minor pathway. This is necessitating changes in the APP, as well as complementary changes in the services and support provided to degree students, ranging from increased academic writing and acculturation support (e.g., exposure to different teaching styles, expectations regarding academic honesty) to increased Internet access to shared datasets and e-services.

2a. Teaching and Learning

AUA awards graduate degrees in seven disciplines and certificates in three. It also provides an Academic Preparatory Program (intensive English and computing skills) to qualified aspiring applicants. Each academic program meets the standards and expectations of comparable degrees/certificates at peer U.S. institutions (Appendix II). Credit hours vary as follows:

- Master of Engineering; M. Eng. IESM: 72 credit hours including a Master Thesis;
- Master of Science in Computer and Information Science; MS CIS: 72 credit hours including a Master Thesis;
- Master of Business Administration: MBA; 98 credit hours including internship;
- Master of Political Science and International Affairs; MSPIA: 80 credit hours including a Master's Essay or a Policy Internship Project;
- Master of Public Health; MPH: 95 credit hours including a Master's Thesis Project; Certificate in Public Health: one year;

- Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language; MATEFL: 32-36 credit hours including a Master's Thesis; Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language; CTEFL: 32 credit hours;
- Master of Laws; (LLM): 48 law course credits including Legal Writing Program /Master's Essay; Master of Comparative Legal Studies; MCLS: 48 law course credits including Legal Writing Program /Master's Essay;
- Certificate in Environmental Science and Conservation: 10 credit hours; for qualified students among current degree candidates.

The University has published admission criteria and processes which are promulgated through its Catalog, website, and other means. In addition, each academic program establishes policies, criteria, and procedures that are consonant with stated University policies and are appropriate to the specific goals and objectives of the program. Consequently, the academic programs' standards may be more stringent, but not less stringent, than University minimums. Each academic program has an admissions committee consisting of faculty and, in some cases, alumni. These committees make recommendations on admission to the Local (University-wide) Admissions Committee (LAC), which ensures decisions are consistent with University and program specific policies and are applied fairly. In cases where the college admissions committee disagrees with the LAC, the Board of Deans makes the final decision. These standards and processes are consistent with those of peer U.S. institutions.

During the past two years, the number of applications for admission to the Academic Preparatory Program (APP) has declined. Data for those two years indicate that ITOEFL scores of admitted students have increased, suggesting that there may be some self-selection among applicants. Anecdotal evidence points to an increase in the portion of tuition assessed to local students as a factor in the decreased number of applications. However, the introduction in 2004 of a student loan program makes that argument questionable. Other possible reasons for the decline in number of applications to the APP may be: 1) the increase in the number of "direct" applicants, i.e., those who submit a TOEFL and GRE/GMAT score at the same time as their application and bypass the APP; 2) competition from the increasing number of graduate programs in areas similar to those offered at AUA, mainly business and computer science; 3) perceived value of the AUA degree to prospective employers. Student applications and enrollment will be tracked carefully and will be addressed in the developing recruitment plan.

> *AUA pursues excellence among its students, faculty, and staff. Coursework is rigorous and performance is evaluated objectively. 'Educational democracy' involves transparency, integrity, and achievement.*

Each academic program represents a coherent, rational curriculum designed to equip graduates with a minimum defined set of skills, competencies, and experiences. As noted previously, since the Candidacy visit, the University has undertaken a comprehensive review of its academic programs at the College faculty level. This evaluation, implemented by the faculty of each academic unit with the participation of various stakeholders (employers, alumni, experts, etc.) and under the oversight of the standing Academic Standards Committee examined the curriculum, educational objectives, learning outcomes, the appropriateness of objectives and outcomes for career and employment requirements, research opportunities and how those are linked to learning outcomes. In addition, the University

examined the level of institutional resources dedicated to each program. External assessments by experts complemented this effort in some cases. While not fully responsive in every instance, the resulting documents form the basis of the effectiveness assessments currently in process and mark a significant step forward in faculty governance and ownership of the academic programs.

Both the Industrial Engineering and Systems Management and Law programs have taken action upon their own separately to fully review curricula, consider carefully the recruitment bases, implement student recruitment plans and revise emphases in the former toward engineering management, in the latter, toward the practice of law. These efforts have shown positive progress toward strengthening student enrollments, and in the case of Engineering, added diversity to the classroom, particularly from Iran. These alignments of curriculum with the Armenian professional community resulted from concentrated exchanges with students, faculty, alumni and Armenian employers. These efforts reinforce the link between challenge and opportunity.

Further assessment information is gleaned from the continuously updated alumni database. AUA has been able to keep track of over 95% of its 1,200+ graduates. Tracking its alumni helps the University to assess the impact of AUA graduates on the development of Armenia. The database and related surveys of alumni and their employers allow AUA to chart the career progression of its graduates, their changing assessment of the value of their AUA experience, and suggestions for improving the University. AUA graduates hold important positions throughout Armenia, the region, and the world. Currently, 29 AUA graduates are pursuing their Ph.D. study in well-known Western Universities. Although the concept of giving back to a university is novel to Armenia, AUA alumni are now beginning to give back to AUA not only in terms of time, but also in money. Recently, the 1993 graduating class raised funds for the library air conditioning.

The University Catalog, supplemented in many cases by program specific publications (e.g. student manuals, style guides, program summaries, research manuals), defines the purpose and organization of the curriculum, standards and practice for each academic program, the advising system, policies for access to and use of University resources such as libraries and Internet, and clear expectations of the requirements for graduation. The University maintains one of the largest computer networks in Armenia, featuring a wireless backbone that connects the entire building and faculty living in the

> *AUA graduates take initiative, are open-minded and work remarkably smoothly as a team. All of these attributes taken together explain why I continue to hire a large percentage of my management in Armenia from among the ranks of AUA graduates.*
> James Tufenkian,
> President, Tufenkian Import/Export
> Ventures, Inc.

nearby community. Likewise, AUA's Papazian Library, the only open-stacks library in the region with over 10,000 registered patrons, serves far more than the AUA community.

New procedures are being implemented to standardize the process of course development and modification and to ensure appropriate curricular oversight is maintained while safeguarding the flexibility and responsiveness needed at AUA. These procedures parallel at an operational level what the new program assessment procedures and external assessment opportunities provide at the curricular and programmatic level.

Reflective essay 2a. Programmatic Continuous Quality Improvement: The College of Health Sciences experience

The College of Health Sciences, established in 1995 following a year of planning and preparation, offers a Master of Public Health program. From its start, the program benefited from an affiliation with the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, providing access to academics in public health who are tasked with maintaining the curriculum of the U.S.'s top school of public health. This unique partnership ensured the firm grounding of the AUA MPH curriculum in what was needed to meet U.S. standards for MPH programs. The partnership also led to development of a 'faculty of the whole' annual retreat to review and reflect on the program and its directions, both short and long-term.

Avedis Donabedian, the "godfather" of hospital quality assurance, and a contributor to the planning of the AUA MPH program, instilled the culture of continuous quality assurance in the program's design. Within the framework of the program's overarching goals and objectives, the faculty developed a matrix of competencies from which an organizing principle (core functions) and an organizing paradigm (professional problem solving) emerged. *{Note: Many of these principles and ideas and the AUA experience with them were fed back into the Johns Hopkins University planning process at the same time, benefiting both institutions.}* This conceptual framework then became the metric against which the curriculum was organized, the conceptual roadmap of the program conveyed to students, and the various assessment tools developed.

As the program developed, an expert was asked to informally conduct an independent assessment of the program and comment on its effectiveness. This favorable review led to aspirations for wider European integration and eventually a formal external review, the current European equivalent of a professional accreditation for schools of public health, a "PEER" review by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European region (ASPHER). The ASPHER review dovetailed with ongoing WASC preparations and resulted in an in-depth assessment of the College of Health Sciences from both the programmatic and institutional levels. The results of these assessments provided additional guidance and insight into the on-going needs and challenges for the MPH program.

> *The [AUA] MPH provides experienced health professionals with a thorough grounding in population-based approaches to health sector problem identification, investigation, analysis, and managed response.*
> -ASPHER PEER Report Oct 2002

Consequently, the AUA MPH program has gained a regional reputation for quality and performance. It serves as one of two recipient programs for MPH students from the Eurasia/NIS region supported by the Open Society Institute (OSI)/Soros (the other program is in Israel). It hosted a 2003 OSI workshop on faculty development in public health. It will host the 2005 ASPHER annual conference. MPH faculty and staff are regularly invited to serve as expert presenters and external evaluators within the region. Furthermore, the College is currently under consideration by the World Health Organization for designation as a cooperating center of excellence. For the College of Health Sciences, continuous quality improvement is more than a unit taught in a course on evaluation: it is the culture of the college.

2b. Scholarship and Creative Activity

Until recently, scholarship at AUA had primarily focused on the quality of teaching, especially student master's theses, and the various reports and publications generated by its centers for research and development. With increasing numbers of full-time resident faculty and the maturation of these centers, emphasis is expanding to include greater emphasis on peer-reviewed publications. The addition of a second U.S. NIH registered IRB dedicated to clinical/invasive studies to complement the existing social science/non-invasive IRB and the appointment of a Vice President for Research and Development bring additional institutional resources and expectations to this area. This change in culture is reflected in the new language found in full-time faculty contracts, which indicate that a balance of teaching, service, and research is expected, and in recent policies on appointment and promotion which reflect this value shift as well.

> *As primarily a graduate University, AUA is involved not only in imparting knowledge but also in developing new knowledge through research. The University is a direct participant in the sustainable long-term development of Armenia and its regions. Our Research Centers provide a venue through which students and faculty participate in that development.*
>
> Haroutune Armenian
> 2004-2006 University Catalog

Emphasis on faculty scholarship is not confined to publications. As noted in the Faculty Handbook, "AUA degree programs must demonstrate that they have developed plans for evidence-based long term curricular designs that will serve to meet the WASC guidelines for institutional capacity and educational effectiveness and faculty are expected to be fully engaged in these processes." Furthermore, faculty and staff are often called upon to share their expertise and experience through public presentations and impromptu consultations with local organizations seeking to emulate some aspect of AUA's operations. A great deal of energy has been spent to support the nascent accreditation effort within Armenia's Ministry of Education and Science by keeping Ministry personnel abreast of AUA's activities and how this experience can be translated into the broader Armenian context. Such sharing of knowledge is not only in keeping with AUA's mission of contributing to the sustained development of Armenia and the region, but it also demonstrates the impact that AUA is having locally.

Reflective essay 2b. Applied learning and scholarship: The TCPA (Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis) experience

The School of Political Science and International Affairs established the Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis (TCPA) 10 years ago with the central mission of promoting knowledge and understanding through objective and independent research and policy analysis employing the latest methodologies. TCPA offers students and graduates opportunities to participate in multidisciplinary applied research in a broad spectrum of contemporary social, political, and legal fields concerning Armenia. The Center's long-term objective matches that of the School -- to contribute directly to Armenia's transition to a democratic state.

TCPA provides hands-on research experiences that permit the School's best students and graduates to apply concepts and skills learned in the classroom directly in development projects.

In addition to four staff members, all of whom are graduates of the School, the Center provided paid research assistantships for 18 students and 3 graduates in 2004.

The researchers of the Center have a strong commitment to development projects. The Center's recent work has focused on research in the areas of democratic systems and local governance, housing policy in the earthquake zone, legislative processes at the national level, human and women's rights, the development of non-governmental organizations, and tobacco control.

TCPA has produced dozens of project reports analyzing original data collected through surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, and content analyses. TCPA researchers have used the skills they have developed in their studies to present their work in journals and at international conferences.

Many of the Center's projects are long term and have provided research opportunities for several student cohorts. For example, TCPA just completed its seventh and final year of participation in housing projects as a subcontractor to the Urban Institute in the Earthquake Zone Recovery Program funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The Earthquake Zone Recovery Program was the largest single endeavor of USAID/Armenia in the Mission's twelve years of rendering humanitarian and technical assistance to Armenia benefiting about 30,000 individuals and reclaiming over 120 municipal sites through urban renewal in five cities. Since 1998, TCPA researchers have participated in a wide variety of monitoring and evaluation activities with all stakeholders in and outside government for the program culminating in the Center's organization of a conference, "From Recovery to Development: 2000-2005."

Many graduates of the program go on to positions in development programs funded by major donors such as the United States Agency for International Development, the European Union, and the United Nations. For example, four former TCPA research assistants were hired to work full-time by the Urban Institute on the Earthquake Zone Recovery Program.

TCPA has become an academic meeting place that provides unique opportunities for the development of young researchers, both in and outside of Armenia, committed to making contributions to Armenian policy-making processes. Last year, TCPA provided mentoring and office space to two visiting research scholars, a Ph.D. candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University researching new information technologies in the development of democracy in post-Communist states, and a master's candidate in the Department of International Development Studies at Dalhousie University in Canada.

TCPA embodies the multidisciplinary, collegial approach to scholarship through applied learning, which AUA values.

2c. Support for Student Learning

As noted earlier in this section, AUA's primary mode of student entry is through its Academic Preparatory Program. This program ensures that aspiring academically qualified applicants have the requisite language (writing, speaking, comprehension) and computer (MS Office applications) skills necessary for success in graduate programs and expected of entering students

at U.S. institutions. This program continues to modify its structure and emphasis in response to the shifting applicant profile of needs. As the number of direct applicants increases, applicant needs are shifting from pre-program assistance to during-program assistance.

In addition to this major effort, the various administrative support units provide on-going training and technical assistance for users as needed. Such activities include library staff orienting new students and providing training on reference management software; computer services and instructional computing staff providing tutorials, handouts, technical support for e-mail, and basic software. The Administration conducts periodic student satisfaction surveys of these services, the most recent of which was administered via the web. This information is used to guide improvements and to identify problem areas for further investigation.

The Papazian Library

The Papazian Library and its satellite libraries found in most colleges, supports AUA's instructional and research programs. The Educational Effectiveness Report will examine student library use within the academic programs. The Papazian Library employs eight research librarians, and services include reference and research assistance, library instruction, access to the collections, computers and electronic resources, instructional technology support, interlibrary loans and document delivery, and reserve reading. The library holds nearly 30,000 volumes and subscribes to 70 journals in the English language. Over 1,500 online periodical indexes, newspapers, electronic journals, and electronic books are available via the University network. Full-text journal articles are available through an interlibrary loan arrangement with the Wimberly Library at Florida Atlantic University. The Papazian Library is the first and only open-stack library in the region and also the only library that is fully automated. In 2005, the Library became a member of AMICAL (The American International Consortium of Academic Libraries), the consortium of librarians and information technology specialists from independent American colleges and universities in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Computer and Network Services

AUA has one of the largest computing facilities in the region. It includes some 400 computers connected (hardwire and wireless) to the local area network and Internet. Further, it includes several special laboratories for specific program needs:

- General computing;
- Computer Aided Design – Computer Aided Manufacturing;
- Computer and Information Science;
- English language skills improvement;
- Engineering research;
- Multimedia center (located within the Papazian Library).

Recently, the University added a virtual collaborative work site to increase effective decision-making and management (see AUA Strategic Plan, p. 12, goal 3.6.3). This MS Sharepoint site provides a secure, user-limited virtual space for variety services, irrespective of time zone, including collaborative editing, discussion boards, and polling/voting. While still in its early

implementation phase, the site is already streamlining a number of processes, especially administrative document processing, between the Oakland and Yerevan offices and as a virtual forum for the Faculty Senate whose members and contributors are dispersed globally.

Reflective essay 2c1. Student Council: an evolving partnership.

During the past several years, the Student Council has evolved from an embryo stage toward a participative role. This role is now concentrating on student interests while, at the same time, engaging in consultative and collaborative approaches to policy matters of university-wide interest. Thus, the Student Council participates in important policy discussions affecting consideration and development of AUA administrative policies. Further, the Council is involved in community outreach, an important contribution to the University's mission.

> *The Student Council remains an effective advocate for students, but more importantly now contributes to the informed discussion of University policies, which ultimately impact its students.*
>
> Gevorg Antonyan
> Student Council President

A permanent faculty advisor was named three years ago, and the student body's new spirit of partnership has manifested itself most visibly through its substantive participation in the work of the Academic Standards Committee. The President of the Student Council is an invited guest to Faculty Senate meetings, and the Student Council also participates in the Tuition Loan and Technology Committees. By reaching out to the student body, the University has helped to empower the students, so that they will not be silent observers in the administration of the University and in the planning and fulfillment of their education.

The Council also advocates student interests through its service as a member of the Armenian National Student Association and through its coordination of the Turpanjian Family Foundation Scholarship-funded big brother/big sister program. The Turpanjian Scholarship Program supports orphaned and economically disadvantaged Armenian undergraduates, and will continue to support such students if they attend AUA. The big brother/big sister program will pair an AUA student with an undergraduate Turpanjian Scholarship recipient. The goal of the program is to encourage the undergraduate student to develop a sense of responsibility toward education and subsequent working environments. AUA students and alumni have made a commitment to assist these young scholars in building a solid personal foundation for success.

Beyond administrative collaboration and policy-making, the Student Council has begun to find its voice as a leader in semi-curricular matters, as well. The Council recently collaborated with the Law Department to host two public lectures about the international law known as the Genocide Convention and it has also participated in the organization of the annual Young Professionals Conference. Further similar events are being planned.

Reflective essay 2c2. The evolving Academic Preparatory Program

The Academic Preparatory Program (APP), in existence since the opening of the University in 1991, consists of two components: the Intensive English Program (IEP) and the Intensive Computing Program (ICP). The program prepares academically qualified applicants to AUA's

degree program to prepare for standardized tests (TOEFL and GRE/GMAT) while developing the academic skills and sense of western classroom culture needed to excel in AUA's degree programs.

IEP

The Intensive English Program (IEP), offered by the Department of English Programs (DEP) assists students in acquiring the linguistic and the academic skills needed for success in AUA's degree programs. In particular, the IEP is designed to encourage students to take personal responsibility for their learning. This is achieved by student-centered activities which develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. In addition, the IEP is designed to encourage group cooperation, effective time management, and academic integrity.

Until recently, it was possible to combine the language needs of the institution and of the IEP students through a common curriculum, i.e. one syllabus covering English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and Academic Writing and Speaking (AW/S). Since 1998, when the Institutional TOEFL and Essay tests were first introduced, English language proficiency has steadily increased, from an average TOEFL of 489.34 and Essay of 11.15/20 in 1998 to 519.76 and 11.48/20. Based on these trends and input from the DEP/IEP faculty, the DEP has developed a new, ability-level based syllabus, which is being implemented as of June 2005. This shift allows instructors to be more responsive to a given group of students' specific needs.

ICP

The Intensive Computing Program (ICP) is part of the Academic Preparatory Program. It equips students with computational and problem-solving skills necessary for full participation and efficient performance in AUA degree programs. The Instructional Computing unit anticipates demands for new co-curricular training, inclusion of new software as part of core training and electives, and the development of autonomous or self-paced tutorials and assessment packages.

Until recently, this training was under the direction of the Computer Services unit. In May 2005, this function was transferred to a newly created instructional computing unit within the College of Engineering to provide a more formal academic home for the program. The curriculum has evolved over time as the basic level of computational competence among applicants increased. Initially, the training focused on operating system functions and the MS Office suite of programs to ensure basic academic computing competence. This general-purpose course was transformed into a multi-level modular program which ensures basic competence while providing additional training in software packages specific to academic program needs (e.g., MS Project for MBA applicants and SPSS for MPH applicants).

This computer training initially followed the Intensive English component of the preparatory program. However, because preparatory students were required to complete simple tasks (check e-mail, access the Internet, etc) during the IEP, a computer skills component was moved to the middle section of the IEP. Recently, the skills component was moved to the beginning of the IEP, before any English language instruction. The demand for increased computer competence earlier in the cycle increased when ETS moved to computer-based administration of the GRE

and GMAT. For Armenia, this meant only a small number of students could take the test on a given day, spreading out testing over the latter half of the IEP.

Recommendations for Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

2.1   The AUA administration, in partnership with the Faculty Senate, will develop a comprehensive plan for the recruitment, selection, maintenance, and retention of all faculty members, including articulation of explicit expectations of scholarly work and/or professional practice for full-time faculty.

2.2   The University will commit itself to increasing the proportion of faculty hired on a full-time basis and, among them, hired on a salaried basis to support scholarly and professional activities.

2.3   The University will endeavor to develop a formalized system of support for research and faculty professional development.

See also Recommendations 1.4, 1.5

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

The humanitarian origins of AUA as well as on-going fiscal realities have imbued AUA faculty and staff with a sense of purpose and mission not often found in other institutions, creating of necessity an ethic for efficiency and economy. The core faculty, both full time and recurrent, are committed to the institution. The nature of AUA's curriculum planning requires that faculty be selected to fill specific niches/needs. The workload and compensation assigned to faculty varies by their level of commitment (full-time, recurrent, part-time), administrative duties, and productivity as well as area of specialization/market forces. Faculty is reviewed for appointment and promotion using standard criteria, among them student course evaluations.

AUA's fiscal and physical resources are effectively and efficiently allocated to accomplish its educational mission. The University's financial records meet U.S. and Armenian audit standards while increasingly providing decision-makers data in timely, user-friendly formats. The physical plant, while operating at near capacity, is in the process of rapid expansion, marked by the recent completion of AUA Business Center Phase II, the acquisition of the Hye Business Suites as a residential property, and the start of construction on the new state of the art education and teaching facility, the Paramaz Avedisian Building.

The University's governance, while clear to those familiar with the institution, can somewhat seem confusing when described. AUA is a hybrid legal entity, an amalgam of both U.S. and Armenian registered entities that operate as one institution, but must relate to the outside world as either/or for a given situation. The Board of Trustees oversees both institutions, eliminating the potential for conflicting directions from one body versus the other.

The University's governance model continues to evolve with increased faculty participation and periodic reorganization of administrative functions to reflect changing demands. The University's mission, its strategic plans, and the subordinate plans guide short- and long-term decision making and facilitate decentralized decision making. The major challenge within AUA remains one of communication and information overload. AUA is a vibrant, flexible organization committed to its mission.

3a. Faculty and Staff

Faculty

AUA's six colleges offer Master and Certificates programs as summarized in Standard 2. A dean holding a Ph.D. or other equivalent terminal degree appropriate for the discipline leads each college. The number of faculty members differs among departments based upon a degree program's student enrollment, curricular needs, and research activity.

The current Catalog and the University website list all full and part-time faculty by program including the highest degree held. As many faculty members hold appointments in U.S. or similar institutions abroad, commitment to AUA is reflected by the modifier used in the AUA title: visiting for someone temporarily with AUA, adjunct for someone with an extended commitment, but not full-time, and no modifier for those with a full-time commitment or otherwise deemed core faculty to the program (in other contexts, faculty are distinguished as either resident [living full-time in Armenia], recurrent [coming repeatedly for short-term appointments] or visiting [with AUA for less than one academic year]. Full-time resident faculty has served for an average in excess of five years, ranging from one year to 11 years.

The Catalog reflects the following breakdown of faculty by degree as of January 2004:

Department	Total	Doctorate/ Terminal	Masters	Other
Business	15	13	1	1-FCCA (UK)
Engineering	21	18	3	
Political Science	13	10	3	
Health Sciences	18	15	3	
Law	17	17		
English	15	3	9	2- C-TEFL, 1 BA
Environmental Science	1	1		
Total:	100*	77	19	4

Includes the number of faculty members that have appointments in more than one academic program.

The Faculty Handbook specifies the requirements for faculty hiring, retention, promotion and titles. The policies address obligations of AUA to its faculty and of the faculty to the University; criteria for appointment and promotion; faculty recruitment; titles for faculty and non-faculty teaching positions; initial appointments, reappointments and promotion to a higher rank.

Though AUA does not have a tenure system, the procedure for (re)appointments closely resembles a tenure track system. The recommendation is forwarded to the President, who makes the final decision. Criteria for appointment and advancement will include "…creative scholarship…excellence in teaching…active and effective participation in various administrative, advisory, and other responsibilities in the University, and, excellence in discharging professional service responsibilities in the community." Student evaluations are integral to both programmatic and individual reviews. Student comments are a significant component of effectiveness assessments and they have influenced decisions not to renew appointments and to initiate curricular changes.

As a faculty benefit, all non-resident faculty members do receive one round-trip ticket to their home of record each year. But, given budgetary limitations, formal professional development opportunities may be limited. Faculty, however, have proven resourceful in securing grants and awards to present and participate in regional and international conferences. Deans are quite liberal in allowing travel for such opportunities even during the academic term, provided responsibilities can be covered. Development funds such as a second annual trip abroad or partial support for conference attendance are slowly being added for long-term faculty where funds permit.

Staff

The academic support staff consists of about 165 full- and part-time employees in Yerevan. In addition, the research centers employ a variable staff from 10 to 60 depending on project

demands. The support staff's role is to facilitate the educational process and support the operational activities of AUA and all its facilities. The Handbook of Administrative Policies governs the staff. The staff has participated in the accreditation process through its organizational structures and is represented on the WASC Steering Committee by the Director of Administration.

The staff personnel system is based on merit principles and was a pioneering effort in Armenia that remains a model for many local organizations. The system follows typical Western practices including performance evaluations, periodic adjustments to pay scales, classifications following market surveys, staff appraisal, and development programs. Nevertheless, it must conform to the Armenian Labor Code, which differs substantially in many areas from its Western counterpart. Among the staff, 23% has been employed for more than ten years, 17% from five to ten years, and 60% for less than five years.

The University, whose major funding is in USD, is struggling to mitigate the effects of a recent 20% loss in value against the Armenian dram, coming on the heels of 4 years of austerity budgets due to declines in the U.S. stock market. The 2005 budget allowed for long deferred merit and cost of living adjustments, only to see those gains effaced by the sudden weakening of the U.S. dollar. In response, the Armenian government eliminated the use of contracts pegged to foreign currency equivalents. For equity purposes, the University converted the existing faculty and staff contracts to fixed dram amounts using a factor of 500 AMD per 1 USD, when the prevailing rate, that had once been 570 AMD, was 450 AMD. This decision amounted to an additional 10% cost of living adjustment in USD terms, but meant merely preserving a standard of living for the staff living on the dram economy.

Reflective essay 3a. Providing faculty services for uninformed consumers

Few new AUA faculty have stepped foot in Armenia, much less lived in the country for an extended period of time. Consequently, faculty members have little context in which to prepare themselves for the geographic and cultural transition that awaits them. The University does its best to orient and prepare new faculty, both in advance and upon arrival, but the challenge of meeting unspecified expectations can be complex.

As faculty are recruited and hired, they discuss a number of everyday living issues with members of the search committee, the administration, and their academic program. For those who have not traveled abroad or to regions like Armenia, the words and descriptions do little to prepare them for the culture shock that awaits.

Over the years, the Faculty Services unit has developed and expanded its resources to prepare and orient new faculty, with cultural guides, maps, resource directories, orientation tours, cultural events, site seeing trips, and welcoming receptions. These formal services complement the informal mentoring and advising provided by the dean and other faculty.

Few international faculty fully appreciate that "an upgraded" apartment could mean one where water is available 24 hours per day or one whose windows were replaced and are air tight in winter rather than a luxurious suite or one with a commanding view. However, the job has gotten

easier as the local economy has improved and the range of services and goods has increased. Now English language TV channels are available, English is more commonly spoken or understood in shops and restaurants, and the airport more Europeanized in its operations.

The Faculty Services unit relies upon timely, critical feedback from faculty to guide further refinements and enhancements and actively seeks out such feedback through informal conversations over lunch to more formal survey assessments. Faculty are also involved in the design and critique of orientation materials, as the Faculty Services staff, who grew up in this environment, often overlook the points most salient to a new faculty member. Faculty services continue to improve as both the opportunities within Armenia and the needs and expectations of the faculty evolve. As one faculty member wryly noted at a recent reception launching a book on adventure hiking in Armenia, "Not too long ago, just traveling to Armenia WAS the adventure."

3b. Fiscal, physical, and information resources

Fiscal resources

To increase operational effectiveness and provide a greater sense of the University as a cohesive whole, the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees approved consolidation of budget and of the independently audited financial statements of the American University of Armenia Corporation (U.S. legal entity) and the American University of Armenia Fund (Armenian legal entity) in 2001. Since 2002, AUA has operated with a consolidated budget that states projected income and expenses from both Oakland and Yerevan in one report (using U.S. Dollar equivalents for income and expenses from Armenia).

The budget is a plan of action and priorities for the coming year expressed in monetary terms and is a tool to monitor financial activities. The budget development and monitoring process requires the active participation of faculty and staff at the departmental level and representatives at various institutional levels (e.g., the ad-hoc Technology Committee which advises on institutional technology priorities and other shared resources). The process begins with an initial letter from the President and Controller providing general budgetary guidance for the coming fiscal year. The Controller, Vice President, and the President project proposed revenues after reviewing revenue sources and rates of return on AUA endowments and other assets in setting this guidance. Cost units then develop detailed budget proposals with supporting justifications for all expenditures, recurring and new. The message to department heads is that last year's budget is not a basis for building next year's budget, next year's demonstrated budgetary needs are.

The Controller and the Vice President collate and review the proposals and develop an integrated draft. In the event of a gap in revenue versus planned expenses, an individual department may be asked, based on an assessment of relative priority, to reduce its expenditure projections or identify/develop a dedicated revenue source. Alternately, a request might be made to the Development Committee of the Board to seek additional revenues.

The Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees reviews the proposed annual operational budget with respect to projected revenues and expenses. The final budget proposal is submitted

to the Board at its September meeting. As a matter of policy, the Board only approves a balanced operational budget. It may, however, as is the case in 2005, approve contingency budget expenditures provided certain revenue versus expenditure projections are met. The Controller and the Vice President, in concert with the responsible parties for each cost unit, monitor the fiscal situation each quarter, or more frequently if needed. This information is fed back to the Finance Committee of the Board, which convenes monthly.

As discussed in depth later in this document, the economic downturn from 2001-2003 required the development and implementation of a Fiscal Recovery Plan. This plan delineated the steps, which had to be taken to insure the University's fiscal viability while ensuring the viability of its core academic programs. This recovery plan, coupled with the generosity of a significant benefactor, resulted in the elimination of all deficits and allowed the University to begin the 2004 academic year in the black. The Strategic Plan and related development plans (e.g., regional recruitment, education abroad) provide guideposts and projections of continuing and new sources of revenue and academic assets to the University.

Physical Resources

The University consists of a growing array of facilities. In the U.S., AUA occupies a small suite of offices within the Office of the President of the University of California (Oakland, CA). In Armenia, the University's presence consists of the main "Baghramian" building donated by the Armenian Government; the AUA Business Center, a rental property/conference center which generates revenue for the University; and the Hye Business Suites Hotel, a recent donation/acquisition which provides residential housing and rental income. Under construction immediately behind the Baghramian building is the future Paramaz Avedisian Building, a state of the art teaching and research facility that will house AUA's academic programs.

Information Resources

Within the Baghramian building, the Papazian Library and related satellites hold almost 30,000 volumes and Internet access to over 1,500 journals and publications. The library serves near 10,000 patrons, fewer than 17% affiliated with AUA. These tallies exclude the library's textbook holdings, which provide for student copies of textbooks to be issued during a given course. In totality, AUA possesses eight libraries of varying sizes, all smaller than the Papazian Library. As an example, the Law Library (Legal Research Center) has access to legal e-networks including U.S., Russian and Armenian statutes and case reports. A local area network of over 400 computers links faculty, staff, and students to institutional resources (printers, file servers, data sets, etc) and to the Internet and its multitude of resources. New capacity in distance learning is being developed, both in terms of web-based development and delivery, and video-conferencing (see AUA Strategic Plan, pp. 1, 11, goals 1.4.2, 1.4.3).

Reflective essay 3b. Painful pruning: Weathering the financial downturn

While austerity level belt-tightening from 2001-2003 was a painful process, it helped the University to strengthen its financial management practices in many respects and emerge with more solid and robust management structures.

A considerable portion of the University revenue sources at the time was tied to the U.S. economy and capital market performance. Upheavals in the markets not only affected rates of return on University endowments, but also portfolios of University benefactors located in the U.S. Thus, individual contributions suffered in addition to institutional portfolios.

AUA has strived to address financial hardships through construction of a solid revenue base generating income streams within Armenia, largely independent of U.S. capital markets. Such sources include the AUA Center, the AUA Club, and the Hye Business Suites Hotel, all of which are now providing revenues to AUA. This growing base coupled with the growing pace of tuition revenue supports a strategy that diversifies the income stream and lessens the instability of individual donations constrained by market fluctuations. Nevertheless, despite the fragility of individual contributions, AUA's record of attracting donations as well as endowments has been remarkable over the years.

Limited financial resources demanded more accurate planning and leaner variances in budget projections, both income and expenses. As a first step, the University sought to provide those responsible for budget planning and monitoring – at the lowest levels – with better planning tools and more timely and accurate information and increased accountability. Department heads began receiving consolidated quarterly reports on actual performance with supporting details and notes of commitments and encumbrances. In addition, budget managers were provided real time access to financial transaction ledgers and the ability to generate customized (but not consolidated) reports on demand. Having timely and accurate information allowed budget managers to make more informed decisions and allowed for greater innovation in cost saving strategies through a shared sense of purpose.

Parallel to this process, the financial difficulties pushed the Board's Finance Committee to take a more active role in steering the financial management practices and policies of the University and engage more fully in cash flow and other issues. An improved reporting package of financial statements, including a consolidated financial statement, was developed. The Finance Committee now meets monthly to review these reports.

The university has emerged from this crisis leaner and with improved financial management and forecasting tools in place and a clearer, shared sense of where its fiscal priorities lie.

3c. Organizational structures and decision-making processes

AUA is a complex and evolving organization. Since the Candidacy visit in 2002, AUA has appointed an interim Vice President to facilitate the move to a new organizational structure providing increased resident senior academic leadership. The organizational charts linked to this report show the hierarchy and relationship of the various units, but do not convey the richness

and complexity of the decision-making and information sharing processes in an institution where most full-time faculty serve multiple roles.

As noted previously, AUA operates as one institution but consists of two legal entities, one in the U.S. and one in Armenia. Fortunately, the board of one institution is the captive of the other, ensuring coordination of efforts and priorities. Formally, responsibility flows from the Board of Trustees, through the President, down to the vice presidents and deans. The Vice President (academic affairs and operations) is responsible for day-to-day operations in Yerevan. This division of responsibility is split between providing a direct link to the President (line) with multiple staff decisions affecting every function at AUA. In the extant model, the Vice President's responsibility to the deans is largely a consultative function (staff) since the latter report directly to the President and direct their own colleges. The Vice President has line responsibility over the administrative staff at AUA. Personnel in Oakland report directly to the President. In the proposed model, the Vice President/Provost serves as the senior academic officer in residence and the deans would report to him/her.

While neither the President nor most deans are currently in residence in Yerevan throughout the year, the physical distance does not hinder their commitment to AUA. The University appoints individuals to its top leadership positions that can demonstrate a professional capacity to provide academic and administrative leadership throughout the year despite their physical location. The recently appointed Acting Dean of the Law Department officially resides in Sacramento, California, yet is active internationally and utilizes both his time and contacts to guide, mentor and develop the effectiveness of the Law Department as well as related matters germane to other AUA departments. A grant proposal, for example, might easily involve law and business or additional AUA institutional resources. This coalescence of internal and external capabilities creates synergies that strengthen AUA's capacities. Associate deans oversee the daily operations and assessment functions under the guidance of the Vice President/Provost and the faculty committees. Deans, if not physically present, are kept informed electronically or by telephone. With the maturation of the academic programs and the increasing role of the Faculty Senate, the University's governance is capable of managing its affairs. This permits deans to concentrate on recruitment and hiring of faculty while exploring national and international potential for grant submissions, collaborations and other capacity building activities.

The Board of Trustees formally chartered the Faculty Senate in 2004, replacing the Faculty Council, which had operated since 2001. The Faculty Senate spent a formative year in 2004 developing its bylaws and fostering a shared understanding of its role and function as it assimilates and integrates a diverse faculty from six colleges and a multitude of countries, each approaching the senate with a different set of expectations and varying degrees of experience.

The Senate is now ready to assume most of the academic governance roles currently exercised by two faculty standing committees formed at the direction of the Vice President to foster the WASC accreditation process. The Faculty Affairs Committee, which has completed its charge, disbanded when the Senate acted on its slate of policies. The Academic Standards Committee, which still has a few tasks related to academic policy development and program assessments to complete, will remain active during the summer quarter. Once these duties are discharged and

the Senate is prepared, these functions will be subsumed within the Faculty Senate committee structure.

The Local (University-wide) Admissions Committee is maintained as a separate University structure outside the Senate. The Senate saw the implementation of the admissions process as an academic administration function, while the review and development of the underlying policies themselves was a faculty governance function. Similar administrative functions that were overseen by Academic Standards will remain under the Vice President (e.g., financial aid programs, University-wide scholarship selections, etc.)

> *Supporting the expanding, decentralized decision-making structure, are new processes and new technologies to ensure effective, timely communication and coordination across 12 time zones.*

AUA has always been at the forefront of technology innovation in Armenia, not out of novelty for the latest gadgets, but out of need for effective tools for communication and decision-making. The most recent addition to these resources are expanded course services (web drives and student folders accessible via the internet) and the introduction of MS Sharepoint services for collaborative development of policies and other distributed information as well as facilitating e-governance among the faculty.

Reflective essay 3c. From 'Adhocracy' to shared governance: A work in progress

In March 2001, nine and a one half years after AUA's founding, a body known as the Faculty Council began operating. It met monthly to provide a forum for the participation of all AUA faculty. The group was composed of persons from different parts of the world, at different points in career trajectories, and with varied commitments to their teaching positions at AUA.

Previously, much of the decision-making was dean-centered. This made sense in an institution with few resident faculty members in a rapid start-up phase. Over time, however, this led to disparate practices across programs and a sense of detachment among the growing full-time resident faculty. The creation of the Faculty Council marked the first institutional process formally involving faculty in governance and making full use of this untapped resource.

Quickly, this 'committee of the whole' model was seen as impractical and undesirable, given the growing number of faculty, the disproportionate representation of some programs, and the lack of a clear structure and mandate. In parallel to its preparations to seek WASC accreditation, the institution established two faculty standing committees, one on Academic Standards and one on Faculty Affairs. Part of the charge to Faculty Affairs was to devise a Faculty Senate model for effective faculty governance. Following approval of a Charter from the Board of Trustees, this process led to the formation of an Interim Faculty Senate in 2004. The Interim Senate spent 2004 devising its bylaws and developing a shared understanding of faculty governance and the relationship of the Senate to the institution.

In Spring 2005, the new Faculty Senate was elected. Presently, the work of the Senate centers on the formation of key committees and the development of appropriate charges in consultation

with the President. Key benefits of the Senate include guaranteed faculty participation within a faculty governance model and established uniformity and standardization among departments. The Senate also provides a forum for new ideas, perspectives, and improvement that ensures continued growth within the University.

The new Faculty Senate is interdisciplinary -- composed of new faculty, returning faculty, and individuals with experience ranging from relatively little to a great deal in academic settings around the world. An opportunity for participation, learning, and role modeling is thus created that is unique in Armenia to the AUA setting. While still evolving, the University is clearly on a trajectory from ad-hoc, autocratic decision-making to a functional model of shared governance. It might be said that creating a faculty senate that represented varying professional backgrounds as well as different cultural and academic experiences was a truly challenging opportunity.

Differing prior Senate experiences coupled with visions of what it might be in Armenia created serious, but lively exchanges. In fact, part of an ultimate debate centered on whether or not the Senate should run 'everything' even to the point of communicating directly with the Board of Trustees. In retrospect, the fact that an appropriate balance was created eliminated what might have been a structural difference of opinion among faculty members. Some of them felt that the President was a pivotal member of governance and could not usefully be bypassed. This developed within a relatively short period of time, and that augurs well for the future governance of AUA.

Recommendations for Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

3.1   The Trustees and Administration will develop and implement a fiscal sustainability plan to minimize the existing vulnerability to markets. The plan should clarify both expenditure and income goals for the 2006-2011 period.

3.2   The University Administration and senior academic leadership will develop a comprehensive plan for student recruitment and will revisit the "Plan for Regional Recruitment of Students" to consider other avenues/strategies, including collaborative or study abroad programs.

3.3   The university administration and senior academic leadership will continue its orderly process of decentralizing authority/increasing local (Yerevan-based) decision-making and leadership and increasing faculty governance and student involvement.

See also Recommendations 2.1 - 2.3.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

As discussed in a different context earlier in this document, AUA is an institution predicated upon a culture of continuous quality improvement and the use of honest, critical assessments to guide strategic planning efforts. As the University has grown, planning efforts have become more formalized and routinized at the Board of Trustees and deans' levels and utilized at increasingly lower operational levels.

Data inform and guide decision-making processes. The infrastructure to support increased data collection and analysis has expanded with the evolution of the University. Processes have been set in motion to implement both central administrative and program/college level planning. The results of these planning efforts may be observed in the Institutional Portfolio, which is linked in the variety of sections throughout this report.

As an organization committed to professing the value of learning and improvement, AUA is inherently one which also acts upon those values: learning is life-long, and perfection seldom attained.

4a. Strategic thinking and planning

Since its inception, AUA has regularly engaged in strategic planning at the University level. Over time, this process has devolved to lower level units and is now periodically required at the college/program level as part of the educational effectiveness process implemented by the then Dean of Faculty, is currently overseen by the Vice President and will soon be transferred as a charge to the Faculty Senate.

As outlined in the current Strategic Plan, AUA's three primary objectives for the next five years are:
- Excellence in Academic and Research Programs;
- Achieving Fiscal Strength and Sustainability;
- Strengthening Academic Management and Leadership and Administrative Management.

College and program strategic plans are expected to support and expand upon these directions. Data on student performance and other service delivery indicators are regularly collected and analyzed to inform decision-making. The faculty, under the leadership of their deans, developed these strategic plans through engagement via dialogues, surveys, concept papers, informal e-mail communications, and various other methods. While primarily involving faculty, staff, and Trustees, these processes have been developed through input from a variety of constituencies and stakeholders.

Building upon this vision, operational documents and decisions (policies, budgets, resource allocation decisions) are aligned to achieve targeted stated goals. Larger efforts or freestanding projects may require a separate implementation plan and cost center, while smaller efforts are integrated into normal planning and operation cycles.

Despite the evidence of local strategic planning among departments, the overall strategic plan for the University involved construction of a plan that involved review by faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Inputs were derived as well from sources outside the University such as alumni, employers, and other university rectors. The ultimate plan was reviewed within AUA departments, the Faculty Senate, and the Board of Trustees.

Reflective essay 4a. Decision making and governance across 12 time zones: Evolution of management information system and technology systems at AUA

In conceptualizing AUA's management information system (MIS) needs and challenges, the recently created MIS working group identified the following factors:

- Geographically distributed offices across 12 time zones;
- Deans primarily resident in U.S.;
- Small proportion of full-time resident faculty;
- Financial reporting in two different countries with different standards of bookkeeping;
- Limited revenue.

The increasing decentralization of activity combined with the continuing need to keep everyone informed and coordinated presented a pressing challenge for real-time or pseudo-real-time collaboration. This new methodology of administration, often called Electronic Governance or e-governance helps centralize and integrate dispersed users in a manner that facilitates timely use by all collaborators. AUA's response has been multi-pronged, deploying a suite of related technological solutions to meet a wide variety of needs, including virtual spaces, video conferencing, and other modalities equally conducive to distance learning applications as to effective governance.

The first act of the MIS working group was to select a collaborative software platform and deploy it. Given AUA's widespread use of Windows-based software (operating system, Office suite, Outlook, Internet Explorer), selection of MS Sharepoint services was a natural decision. Users in an organization can easily create, manage, and build their own collaborative Web sites and make them available throughout the organization using techniques similar to creating and saving MS Word documents through an intuitive web-browser interface or through functions directly within MS Office 2003. Features such as "notify" and "daily or weekly digests" ensure interested users are alerted to updates and changes without a plethora of alternate "track changes" versions circulating among a dispersed group while discussion boards and comment areas allow for a companion running "dialogue." Its administrator features allow creation of sub-sites and other areas restricted to subsets of users and its survey feature allows for anonymous and named polling/voting by users. While still early in its deployment, the Sharepoint site is expected to increase the effectiveness of teamwork.

Video-conferencing/distance learning is another capacity currently being deployed at AUA through a U.S. Government grant. New facilities at the AUA Business Center and the main AUA building will allow for high band-width internet video feeds, linking sites around the globe to classrooms and conference rooms for small group (10-15) meetings and seminars (see AUA Strategic Plan, pp. 1, 12). On a smaller scale, web cams and voice over IP will support individual

meetings and student advising/mentoring activities. These efforts expand the functionality of the wireless network within the Baghramian Building and surrounding community that has now become operational. The coming months will bear witness to an exciting migration to long awaited technology and rapid changes (increases in effectiveness) in AUA's communication culture.

4b. Commitment to learning and improvement

As noted throughout this document, the culture of continuous quality improvement permeates AUA. Now that focus is being systematically structured through the University's recently expanded capacity for formal institutional research. The new office of Institutional Research Manager is playing the lead organizing role in AUA's WASC efforts, using these activities to devise and implement appropriate and sustainable routine data collection and monitoring systems to provide regular, targeted analytic reports for both University and college/program level decision-making. In parallel, AUA's financial management systems are being integrated and coordinated to provide a comparable level of timely revenue and expenditure data.

In March 2005 the University established a working group on institutional research with the specific goal of creating an internal management information system with research capability, which supports the University's ongoing needs for data collection, analysis, and institutional effectiveness. Funds have been allocated to purchase or develop management information software specific to the University's needs. To date, the working group has asked the University community for data base requirements and launched a new MS Sharepoint service site to facilitate collaborative work and provide a centralized repository.

One group needing such technology to work effectively is the Faculty Senate, whose new bylaws reflect the reality of AUA as a geographically dispersed faculty. The Senate utilizes technology to create a virtual community for shared governance and collective understanding.
The bylaws state that:

> *"The Faculty Senate is authorized to recommend to the President policies pertaining to courses, curriculum, and degree requirements, while the Board of Trustees retains final authority over the establishment of new degree programs. The Faculty Senate is further authorized to recommend to the President policies pertaining to student admissions and conduct and to advise on criteria for faculty appointments, standards of conduct, and welfare."*

Educational effectiveness is a shared responsibility between the academic programs, through their deans, and the Faculty Senate. The standing Academic Standards Committee recently developed the basic framework for the periodic in-depth reviews (e.g., strategic plans, external assessments) and routine monitoring activities (e.g., quarterly course/faculty evaluations, quarterly financial reports, annual program assessments/progress reports). Academic Standards has completed the assessment of the programmatic strategic plans and curricula rationales. Responsibility for implementing these external reviews and detailed course/program assessments will soon be transferred to the Faculty Senate, with a mandate to complete the first cycle of reviews by Spring 2006.

Reflective essay 4b. Reflections on Learning and Educational Outcomes Assessment Plan

The University has established a Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan. The Plan addresses two parts: the *ex ante* (prior) portion and the *ex post* (after) portions. The *ex ante* portion: *inputs to assessment*, hypothesizes outcomes based upon linkages to the University's mission, assessed needs, programmatic or departmental missions and student learning assumptions. The *inputs to assessment* design that all academic departments are following, is shown below:

Institutional	Departmental	Student
Mission	Mission	Objective – learning
Goal statements	Goal statements	Goal – achievement
Educational learning objectives	Educational learning objectives	Student performance
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes	Competencies

For University:
- AUA mission: "As an institution of higher learning, the American University of Armenia provides teaching, research, and service programs that prepare students to address the needs of Armenia and the surrounding region for sustainable development, in a setting that values and develops academic excellence, free inquiry, scholarship, leadership, and service to society."
- To address this mission, the University: "pursues excellence in AUA's academic and research programs; seeks fiscal strength and sustainability; strengthens academic management and leadership and administrative management."
- The institution "monitors that each department has established verifiable learning objectives and outcomes."
- The institution "establishes and maintains a management information system to measure the results of its goals and objectives"

For Programs (example of the School of Political Science and International Affairs):
- The School of Political Science and International Affairs "provides students with the knowledge and perspectives to function effectively in public service, private sector, non-governmental sector and as agents for change in society."
- The School "provides students with analytical, reasoning, and problem solving skills through the study of international, comparative and domestic institutions in governance, political systems and processes."
- The School "provides students with competency in (1) understanding government institutions and economics in Armenia, the region and internationally; (2) understanding of political participants, structures and processes in democratic decision making; (3) understanding of public administration; (4) understanding of international relations; (5) understanding of social science research methodologies and policy analysis."
- The "student makes an original research contribution to the field; demonstrates and synthesizes skills and knowledge acquired in coursework, particularly analysis, reasoning and problem solving; applies theory to practice; develops a personal area of specialization."

For Students:
- A student's mission is to "learn and integrate learning experiences to maximize achievement and prepare for contributions to society"
- A student "prepares for a career in one of the main professions"
- A student "seeks to achieve educationally at the highest level"
- A student "demonstrates competence in a profession related to the course of study."

The *ex post* or outcomes to assessment design is shown below:

Learning Objectives	Learning Outcomes
Assessment of performance in classroom and/or other settings such as internships, capstone experiences, individual and group work and various methodologies such as simulations, research, oral presentations, problem solving; review of student assessments and potential focus groups	Employer surveys, student and alumni surveys, focus groups, admission to further graduate programs, publications, awards and honors; review of linkages between *inputs* and *outcomes*

The University has put in place specific statements regarding mission, goals, educational learning objectives, and learning outcomes. These are linked to this report and will indicate the diversity of language appropriate to departmental use. The University, as a whole, will integrate quantifiable measures into quarterly and annual reports. It is anticipated that once data for the desired measurables have been collected and reviewed, on an annual basis, modifications will be made to the plan as feedback suggests changes in either the input or the output design. The annual reports may be coalesced into a three-year report that should inform the University about the relevance of its educational learning designs and learning outcomes as well as appropriateness for continuing demonstration of positive performance in society, public and private sectors, and further education and research.

Recommendations for Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

4.1   The University will commit resources to make maximal use of extant data for its current analytic needs and to use this experience to guide the development and refinement of a more formalized assessment system.

4.2   The University will commit resources to develop, assess, and apply metrics and qualitative indicators that substantiate the achievement of departmental and university learning objectives and outcomes. This process shall be part of an ongoing continuous quality improvement program.

See also recommendations 1.4, 1.5

Concluding Comments

The University is committed to a process of continuous quality improvement and development to ensure it maintains the high standards of excellence and relevance to which it aspires. Preparation for the WASC process has provided the focus and generated the institutional commitment and resources needed to step back and reflect on our efforts and to systematically assess them. Emerging from this process is a clear sense of priorities, needs, and issues to resolve that will guide future growth.

The results of the self-assessment lead to the following observations:

- AUA is a young, dynamic institution committed to the best ideals and practices of Western education.
- Its curricula are of high quality, locally relevant, and conform to international standards.
- It is supported by a highly competent and highly dedicated academic and professional staff.
- Its financial, management, and governance systems are rapidly evolving to increased participation.
- Its evaluation focus is shifting from structure/process to outcome/impact.
- The process of systemization and standardization is time consuming and difficult, but worth the investment.
- Communication, both internally and externally, remains a significant challenge.
- Despite the shortcomings and difficulties identified through this process and those, which are self-evident, this reflection put into perspective the many positive and wonderful achievements of this institution and the tremendous impact its graduates are making in Armenia, the region, and the world. The illustrative recommendations (Appendix III) show directions toward continuing challenges and opportunities: impact on Armenia; research and collaboration; faculty recruitment, selection, maintenance, and retention; faculty research; fiscal stability; recruitment and retention of students; long-distance management; learning objectives and outcomes; and managing information.

AUA has weathered uncertainty, distant geography, challenges to human capital both intrinsic and extrinsic, and fiscal stress. Its transformation to 'institutional' status has taken hold. The University has systems now in place, or contemplated, for measuring success toward meeting its goals. Learning organizations make use of data to evaluate the past and present and plan the future. The Strategic Plan offers challenges that will become opportunities. AUA is ready.

Appendix I. Summary of Responses to Candidacy Report

The Steering Committee reviewed the WASC Visiting Team's Candidacy letter and Candidacy report, to insure that each concern was addressed. As those responses were detailed in the Letter of Intent, highlights of capacity accomplishments germane to institutional effectiveness are summarized here:

- Representatives to the Faculty Senate have been elected to succeed the Faculty Council. The Senate serves as the principal vehicle for faculty participation in the governance process. The Faculty Senate is currently forming committees, including a Curriculum Committee, which will replace the transitional standing Academic Standards Committee. The Senate will respond to the many curricular, integration, coordination, and quality issues questioned during the reassessment. It will also ensure that each academic program is appropriate in terms of content and is of the highest quality.
- The Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees has been active in assessing the institution's fiscal resources and working through the administration to make timely recommendations for the allocation of limited resources. Faculty input has been formalized through programmatic budget planning processes and through advisory committees and the Vice President and Provost.
- New sources of funds have been acquired to augment tuition and gifts, which had been the primary sources of revenue. These include rental income from the AUA Business Center with the completion of the second wing as well as the acquisition of a housing complex, which generates additional unrestricted revenue.
- Academic leadership is shifting to Yerevan, with one Dean now in residence and a goal of increased resident leadership within 18 months. Local decision-making continues to increase as more decisions are delegated to the resident leadership and faculty committees.
- To diversify the classroom and to increase revenues, student recruitment has expanded, targeting regional and international students.
- Each academic program completed a thorough review of its curriculum and educational outcomes and has developed plans and recommendations to improve learning objectives and outcomes.
- The administrative units continue to monitor their support role and the effectiveness of the services provided. A number of organizational changes have been implemented to increase effectiveness and respond to shifting needs, with particular emphasis on supporting newly arriving faculty.
- The admissions process was redesigned as a faculty-led, local process with increased consistency across the institution. This has resulted in more timely decisions and an increase in the overall quality of students.

Appendix II. List of Academic Programs

- The College of Engineering (CoE) offers a Master of Engineering in Industrial Engineering and Systems Management degree (M.Eng. IESM) (72 credit hours, including a culminating experience) and a Master of Science in Computer and Information Science degree (MS CIS) (72 credit hours, including a master project or thesis). The Earthquake Engineering program (M. Eng) was discontinued in 1997 due to lack of enrollment. The CoE, through its Instructional Computing Unit contributes to the computing and technology skills component of the Academic Preparatory Program (APP)
- The School of Business and Management (SBM) offers the Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree (98 credit hours including an internship), providing for concentration in marketing and management or finance and accounting.
- The School of Political Science and International Affairs (SPSIA) offers a Master of Political Science and International Affairs degree (MPSIA) (80 credit hours including a Master's Essay or a Policy Internship Project.
- The College of Health Sciences (CHS) offers both a one-year Certificate and a two-year Masters of Public Health (MPH) degree (95 credit hours). *Currently, students are not admitted into the certificate program, but may be offered the certificate if they are unable to complete the MPH.*
- The Department of English Programs (DEP) offers a one-year Certificate (32 credit hours) and a one-year Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (32-36 credit hours, including a thesis). The DEP also contributes to the English language and academic skills curriculum for the APP.
- The Department of Law offers a two-year Master of Laws degree for lawyers (LLM) (48 law course credits) and a two-year Master of Comparative Legal Studies degree (MCLS) for non-lawyers (48 law course credits).
- The Environmental Conservation and Research Center (ECRC) offers the course in environmental science and conservation required by all degree programs) and offers a Certificate in Environmental Science and Conservation (10 credit hours) to qualified students among current AUA degree candidates.

Appendix III. List of Recommendations

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

1.1   AUA, through a strategic assessment by its senior academic leadership, will assess opportunities for engagement through research, education, and training programs and technical support of IT and other areas identified as high priority for the development of Armenia and the region.

1.2   The senior AUA academic leadership will prepare a plan of action, including the development of a Community of Scholars in Armenia, for evolving AUA's academic and research offerings to meet the needs identified in 1.1.

1.3   The AUA governing body (Administrations, Board of Trustees) will prioritize efforts and develop a plan of action to ensure adequate financial and infrastructure resources are identified to implement 1.2.

1.4   The AUA administration will support the further development and evolution of faculty governed systems of educational assessment and assurance.

1.5   The AUA administration will strengthen the role and utilization of the office of institutional research and its linkages with the evolving university MIS system.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

2.1   The AUA administration, in partnership with the Faculty Senate, will develop a comprehensive plan for the recruitment, selection, maintenance, and retention of all faculty members, including articulation of explicit expectations of scholarly work and/or professional practice for full-time faculty.

2.2   The University will commit itself to increasing the proportion of faculty hired on a full-time basis and, among them, hired on a salaried basis to support scholarly and professional activities.

2.3   The University will endeavor to develop a formalized system of support for research and faculty professional development.
     See also Recommendations 1.4, 1.5

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

3.1   The Trustees and Administration will develop and implement a fiscal sustainability plan to minimize the existing vulnerability to markets. The plan should clarify both expenditure and income goals for the 2006-2011 period.

3.2   The University Administration and senior academic leadership will develop a comprehensive plan for student recruitment and will revisit the "Plan for Regional Recruitment of Students" to consider other avenues/strategies, including collaborative or study abroad programs.

3.3   The university administration and senior academic leadership will continue its orderly process of decentralizing authority/increasing local (Yerevan-based) decision-making and leadership and increasing faculty governance and student involvement.
     See also Recommendations 2.1 - 2.3.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

4.1   The University will commit resources to make maximal use of extant data for its current analytic needs and to use this experience to guide the development and refinement of a more formalized assessment system.

4.2   The University will commit resources to develop, assess, and apply metrics and qualitative indicators that substantiate the achievement of departmental and university learning objectives and outcomes. This process shall be part of an ongoing continuous quality improvement program.

See also recommendations 1.4, 1.5