**AUA Strategic Plan 2016-2022**

**Introduction**

Addressing the AUA community in 2015, the former Minister of Education and Science Armen Ashotyan noted that “education must be recognized as a very important economic and political tool in long-term and sustainable… projects [for Armenia].… Any political and geopolitical process[es] can be successful because it [education] is, first of all, [the best] opportunity for intercultural exchange and a wonderful tool for building human relations and trust.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

As it looks to the future, the AUA plans to raise the stature and increase the capacity of the University to better serve its mission locally and globally, connecting Armenia, the Diaspora and the world economically, socially, culturally and scientifically, through innovative ideas and a creative community of learners and stakeholders. In reaching an enrollment of approximately 2000 students by fall 2016, and by providing distinctive and distinguished academic programs, the AUA will ensure its impact on Armenia through the education and professional training of a critical mass of young professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to become globally competitive leaders and entrepreneurs.

The University’s newly crafted Mission Statement articulates the multidimensional identity of the institution:

The American University of Armenia aims to have an impact on students and the community as a center of academic excellence, innovation, inquiry, and diversity that contributes to the further development and advancement of Armenia, the region and the world through teaching and scholarship, fostering creativity, integrity and community service.

A newly crafted Vision Statement sets an aspirational path for the future that focuses on outcomes (on the student and faculty levels) as well as on the impact the institution has on Armenia, the region and the world:

Through its world-class academic programs, research centers, student services, and community outreach, the American University of Armenia will have a transformative impact on people’s social, economic, political and intellectual capacities to meet the challenges of a globalized world.   Our faculty and staff will inspire students to advance knowledge and become responsible citizens and leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship.

At the BoT meeting of April 2016, in addition to the mission and vision, AUA was asked to provide a definition for the term “center of excellence” which would guide planning and resource allocation. Such centers/programs are defined as areas of study and research that with additional resources could potentially achieve world-class recognition. Through this level of recognition, they will become magnets for talent, innovation and entrepreneurial activity as well as important economic drivers, generating public and private investment.

Key aspects of these centers/programs’ missions will focus on the promotion of collaboration, not just across the colleges/units/research centers of the University, but with the public and private sectors and on its role in building social, intellectual and economic capacity within the community/nation/region. Through their teaching, research and outreach activities, these centers/programs will provide leadership in the development of standards, methodologies, tools and knowledge repositories.

Preliminary conversations at the administrative level have identified the following centers/programs that can grow and attain this higher status: Computer Science, Public Health, Business Administration, Interdisciplinary Studies, Economics, the Acopian Center and the Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center. However, a discussion inclusive of all stakeholders is necessary prior to any formal announcement or resource allocation.

Meeting the Mission and Vision relies on the fulfillment of a number of goals and objectives that collectively will move the University forward. Foci include the expansion of academic programs, support for research and scholarship, establishment of a strong, diverse and successful student body, and attainment of fiscal sustainability.

**Enhance and Diversify our Academic Programs**

* Increase the number and diversity of undergraduate programs
* Study the feasibility of offering doctoral programs and expanding our masters’ offerings
* Implement applied and market-oriented academic programming to ensure students’ workforce preparedness, job placement and success at further graduate education
* Increase the number of faculty required to support new programs
* Build community and intercollegiate cooperation (institution-to-institution, faculty-to-faculty, student-to-student) to design and grow internationally competitive programs

From the very inception of undergraduate education at AUA, it was contemplated that additional bachelor’s programs would be gradually introduced. Three programs were never viewed as a steady-state for the institution. This need has been corroborated through a number of conversations, including:

* Anecdotal evidence that applicants and their parents/teachers would like to see AUA offer more than three bachelor’s programs; highly qualified applicants either do not apply to AUA because it does not offer majors of interest to them, or apply to one of the current programs even if their disciplinary or career interests lie elsewhere.
* In visits to Armenian communities in Istanbul, Beirut and the United States, the issue of the limited choice of majors has repeatedly arisen from both degree-seeking and study-abroad students; many are disappointed to learn that their choices are limited.
* An expanded offering of bachelor’s programs is important not only for enhancing the application funnels, but also for the richness and diversity that it provides to the students’ interdisciplinary learning as well as to the scholarly work of our faculty.

We have also discussed these criteria for adding or selecting new majors:

* Program(s) should reflect Armenia’s present and future economic development.
* Program design must respect the University’s commitment to liberal arts education and the need for creative, versatile graduates who can adapt to future needs.
* Programs should be distinctive (for the region) and distinguished for their quality.
* In order to maximize current resources, new programs should be aligned with current offerings.
* There must be a realistic assessment of the fiscal and other resource needs for the implementation and sustainability of these programs (e.g. faculty, classrooms, laboratories, equipment, etc).

With the above criteria in mind, the University is currently engaging in discussions to determine which undergraduate programs would be viable. A series of meetings with various faculty groups during May and June will lead to the formulation of a short list of possible programs. Clearly, there would need to be discussions with stakeholders and the completion of market surveys, feasibility studies and cost analyses prior to making any commitments.

**Grow and Cultivate our Community of Scholars**

* Develop and implement strategies to recruit and retain highly qualified and diverse faculty
* Expand funding for research, conference travel, and the Faculty Research Awards program to ensure that the Scholarship of Teaching , as well as those of Discovery, Integration, and Application, are sufficiently recognized and supported

As recommended by the BoT at their meeting in New York City, October 2015, a study was conducted during the 2015-2016 academic year to identify faculty retention and recruitment concerns and make recommendations. The University administered a faculty satisfaction survey which highlighted several recommendations in this regard, including providing faculty/researchers with additional opportunities and support for research and scholarly activities, providing more support for faculty development, and reviewing the University’s hiring policies and compensation package. In addition, an ad-hoc committee was formed by the Faculty Senate on the provost’s request to research the current situation of AUA faculty salaries, contracts, and benefits, as well as to compare its findings with other similar American universities abroad. Given the acknowledged need to increase the diversity and number of full-time faculty, the objective of the investigation was twofold: improving the retention of current faculty and strengthening AUA’s ability to attract qualified and established faculty. The recommendations included the following:

* Making salaries more competitive to attract and retain international and full-time faculty
* Improve benefit packages
* Support professional development, including sabbatical opportunities to faculty in long-term positions
* Make contracts long in term (more than 2-3 years)
* Add tenure track opportunities to offer more long-term stability

**Expand, Diversify our Student Body and Ensure Students’ Academic Success**

* Write and implement an international recruitment strategic plan in order to increase applications and enrollments by members of the Diaspora community and those of other target regions that have the potential to increase student diversity and institutional self-sufficiency
* Establish an Office of Student Affairs to address the current and anticipated needs of students

AUA has been successful in recruiting an economically diversified student body; however, initiatives to increase the number of international students have lagged behind. Initiatives during 2015-2016 have sought to increase the level of diversity; these include a number of MoUs that have been signed with universities in the US; the promotion of an “exchange” agreement with member universities in the Association of American International Colleges and Universities; recruitment trips to Turkey, Lebanon and the US; discussions with recruiting agencies with contacts in India and Iran; and the establishment of scholarships to support international students’ costs to attend.

Once students arrive on campus to begin their studies, it is imperative that AUA provide the network to ensure students’ academic success. Founded as a graduate institution, AUA did not have all of the mechanisms to support undergraduates when they arrived on campus in 2013. Slowly, the University has added support services including the Math and Writing Center, Counseling Services and workshops sponsored by the Center for Student Success. However, the demand for services has grown exponentially as the number of undergraduates has increased. Additionally, graduate students are now demanding services as they identify gaps in their previous education at regional institutions. Therefore, AUA needs to found an Office of Student Affairs to write policies and establish and implement procedures to manage this increase in activity. The Office of Student Affairs would also oversee the current residence facility at Sose 36 and the larger facility slated to open by fall 2018.

**Broaden and Balance our Financial Base**

* Develop a strategy for planned growth to reach level of fiscal sustainability and optimum level of academic offerings
* Plan and implement a 5 year, $50 million fundraising campaign to address University priorities
* Nurture the culture of giving among students, their families and alumni

Fiscal sustainability is essential to provide a strong foundation upon which AUA can grow its enrollments, add more academic programs and increase the number of international faculty, all while maintaining high academic standards and student learning outcomes. Tactics need to be developed that address all stakeholders including current students, alumni, donors and the public and private sectors.

**Strategic Planning: Mission, Vision, Institutional Goals**

**Mission Statement**

The American University of Armenia aims to have an impact on students and the community as a center of academic excellence, innovation, inquiry, and diversity that contributes to the further development and advancement of Armenia, the region and the world through teaching and scholarship, fostering creativity, integrity and community service.

**Vision Statement**

Through its world-class academic programs, research centers, student services, and community outreach, the American University of Armenia will have a transformative impact on people’s social, economic, political and intellectual capacities to meet the challenges of a globalized world.   Our faculty and staff will inspire students to advance knowledge and become responsible citizens and leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship.

**Institutional Goals**

Goal 1: To offer a breadth and diversity of internationally competitive and quality academic programs whose student learning outcomes are aligned to global and Armenian market needs

Goal 2: To develop and recognize a community of scholars dedicated to a research agenda that reflects AUA’s four sectors: Scholarship of Discovery, Scholarship of Integration, Scholarship of Application and Scholarship of Teaching

Goal 3: To recruit, enroll and retain highly qualified and diverse students who have the potential to succeed at AUA

Goal 4: To strengthen the foundational core faculty reflecting academic excellence, diversity, democratic values and the mission of the University

Goal 5: To recruit and retain qualified staff dedicated to the University’s mission

Goal 6: To foster a collegiate environment that offers services and programming promoting student engagement and success

Goal 7: To ensure state-of-the-art facilities and innovative technologies for fostering the student learning experience

Goal 8: To achieve fiscal sustainability by securing sufficient financial resources to assure current and projected operations while upholding the principle of equal access to all qualified students

Goal 9: To effectively promote the University’s accomplishments and impact

Goal 10: To provide educational and developmental programs in the community broadening the impact of the University

Goal 11: To maintain and develop effective alumni relations to ensure their active engagement with the University and broader society

Goal 12: To ensure that AUA’s administrative structure and policies facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement and support the University’s organization and governance

**Institutional Goals with Objectives**

**Goal 1: To offer a breadth and diversity of internationally competitive and quality academic programs whose student learning outcomes are aligned to global and Armenian market needs**

1. Increase number and diversity of undergraduate programs
2. Identify potential academic Centers of Excellence and resources needed to ensure their international prominence
3. Study the feasibility of offering doctoral programs
4. Implement applied and market-oriented academic programming to ensure students’ workforce preparedness, job placement and success in further graduate education
5. Build community and intercollegiate cooperation (institution-to-institution, faculty-to-faculty, student-to-student) to design and grow internationally competitive programs that meet Armenian and global market needs
6. As undergraduates apply for and enter AUA’s graduate programs, ensure cohort appropriate differentiated learning
7. Ensure the provision of resources (human and fiscal) for the operation of academic programs (Exec, Deans)
8. Provide appropriate venues and resources to foster and recognize undergraduate research (e.g. special “honors” diplomas for students completing theses or other high level academic products)
9. Study and recommend strategies to improve the Information Literacy and Writing Across the Curriculum components of the graduate and undergraduate programs

**Goal 2: To develop and recognize a community of scholars dedicated to a research agenda that reflects AUA’s four sectors: Scholarship of Discovery, Scholarship of Integration, Scholarship of Application and Scholarship of Teaching**

1. Develop an institutional statement on the role of research at AUA and recommend tactics to address resource needs for full implementation
2. Expand funding for research, conference travel and the Faculty Research Awards program to ensure that the Scholarship of Teaching , as well as those of Discovery, Integration and Application, are sufficiently recognized and supported
3. Develop efficient and effective means of logistical support for grant management support within the research centers
4. Continue identifying and applying for opportunities to foster faculty mobility and professional development
5. Establish endowments for each research center with the intent to cover their administrative expenses
6. Develop a system for capturing and measuring the impact AUA’s research centers have on Armenia and the region/world
7. Ensure the visibility of research conducted at AUA through the strategic publicizing of research results and their relevance/impact

**Goal 3: To recruit, enroll and retain highly qualified and diverse students who have the potential to succeed at AUA**

1. Identify and build capacity to grow admission funnels in respect to all aspects of diversity and indicators of student success
2. Write and implement an international recruitment strategic plan in order to increase applications and enrollments by members of the Diaspora community and those of other target regions that have the potential to increase student diversity and institutional self-sufficiency
3. Designate an office responsible for international students once admitted and AUA students inquiring about study abroad and develop resources addressing logistics, tuition, financial aid and other relevant information
4. Develop communications to ensure that students understand the cost of their education and the subsidy they receive
5. Adopt guidelines to improve effectiveness in undergraduate academic advising

**Goal 4: To establish and strengthen the foundational core faculty reflecting academic excellence, diversity, democratic values and the mission of the University**

1. Develop and implement strategies to recruit and retain a highly qualified, experienced and diverse faculty (e.g. named professorships and visiting faculty positions, faculty social and cultural engagement programming, compensation packages, longer term contracts, family and spouse accommodations)
2. Determine regional and international benchmarks in faculty compensation and make recommendations on reaching parity
3. Foster and empower faculty governance

**Goal 5: To recruit and retain qualified staff dedicated to the University’s mission**

1. Identify strategies to increase professional development opportunities for staff such as trainings and institutional exchanges
2. Establish a venue for staff participation in University decision-making (e.g. Staff Senate)
3. Ensure salary adjustments are in line with job performance and average market standards
4. Develop incentives for exemplary performance through the expansion of the staff benefit package and service excellence awards
5. Align job descriptions and annual performance evaluations to unit and University mission, goals and objectives

**Goal 6: To foster a collegiate environment that offers services and programming promoting student engagement and success**

1. Establish an Office of Student Affairs to address the current and anticipated needs of students
2. Improve offerings of student support services at graduate and undergraduate levels
3. Assess capacity of non-instructional spaces to accommodate a campus with a full cohort of students
4. Increase the number and type of extra-curricular events for students and foster their participation in national, regional and international competitions
5. Strengthen, expand and diversify relationships with employers to ensure the knowledge of industry trends and recruitment practices
6. Increase opportunities for student employment on campus and assess student compensation
7. Follow-up on new student orientation programming with a roster of events for first-year students during freshman fall semester

**Goal 7: To ensure state-of-the-art facilities and innovative technologies for fostering the student learning experience**

1. Continuously assess and implement innovative, green, inclusive and resilient operations and facilities to improve operational efficiency and care for the environment, while enhancing learning opportunities
2. Establish operational procedures for the opening and managing of an AUA residence facility
3. Increase availability of electronic/technological resources
4. Plan for the design and construction of science labs appropriate to program development in STEM

**Goal 8: To achieve fiscal sustainability by securing sufficient financial resources to assure current and projected operations while upholding the principle of equal access to all qualified students**

1. Create mechanisms to build greater collaboration between the Development Office in Oakland and the University to ensure a cohesive partnership
2. Assess and ensure adequate human and fiscal resources dedicated to the Development Office for maximum operational effectiveness
3. Develop strategy for institutional planned growth to reach level of fiscal sustainability and optimum level of academic offerings
4. Target 30% of annual budget from endowment revenue
5. Institutionalize and continue to enhance development initiatives (endowment, annual giving, major gifts, planned giving, pillars) to ensure the availability of unrestricted funds and address University priorities (e.g. need-based scholarships, named professorships, research)
6. Plan and implement a 5-year, $50 million fundraising campaign to address University priorities
7. Increase kinds and numbers of grants from extramural sources
8. Gradually decrease the tuition subsidy for those who can afford to pay the real cost of their education, while maintaining the financial assistance program for those in need
9. Expand cooperation with the RoA Government to ensure AUA receives state funds for tuition (e.g. partial tuition payment for disabled students, students who have served on border posts)
10. Project financial resources required for the maintenance/upgrade/expansion of University facilities and technological infrastructure
11. Explore the feasibility of creating a credit union for faculty, staff, students and alumni

**Goal 9: To effectively promote the University’s accomplishments and impact**

1. Assess the allocation of resources (human and fiscal) for the operations of Communications and their productive deployment
2. Improve internal communication among units (e.g. through the development of an Intranet or other information sharing mechanism) and assure awareness and better information gathering, packaging and dissemination
3. Develop a strategy for brand and image management
4. Assure that identified constituents are specifically targeted in appropriate venues
5. Assure AUA’s continual visibility in the Diaspora (e.g. social media, newsletters) and the appropriate quality of those interactions
6. Continue to develop relationships with U.S. Members of Congress and USAID to ensure the University’s grants are funded
7. Ensure the timely and effective communication of media-worthy events, student and alumni activities, 3rd party endorsements, testimonials and impactful accomplishments
8. Ensure website is user friendly and effective in reaching target demographics

**Goal 10: To provide educational and developmental programs in the community broadening the impact of the University**

1. Conduct market research on the Armenian and regional education industry and provide research-driven recommendations for further development/expansion of University offerings at the main campus and at rural and other locations
2. Research market priorities and address vocational training courses that are the most useful for meeting labor market demand in Yerevan and the regions
3. Support and grow the Extension’s capacity to deliver current and proposed future courses/certificates/workshops/trainings to local, regional and national governmental and non-governmental entities
4. Grow the research centers’ capacity for community outreach/education through projects focusing on evidence-based policy development and awareness-raising for the general public and professional audiences
5. Establish a language teaching and learning center recognized in Armenia and the region for its research and practice in teaching English and other languages
6. Grow collaborations with MoES (e.g. K-12 language teacher education assessment)
7. Grow Experimental English classes in quality and quantity to meet school children’s interests in various locations in Armenia
8. Build greater synergies between TRDP and research centers, academic programs, faculty and students
9. Continue developing projects of educational, professional and economic significance for the rural areas of Armenia and for other disadvantaged sectors of the community
10. Through income generated from projects, develop an appropriate staff support system to research, document, administer and manage such programs

**Goal 11: To maintain and develop effective alumni relations to ensure their active engagement with the University and broader society**

1. Identify alumni interests/needs including career services support
2. Create regional and international alumni clubs
3. Establish a tradition for acknowledging/recognizing distinguished alumni
4. Nurture the culture of giving among students, their families and alumni through the development of various mechanisms for donations
5. Instill the ethos of belonging to the AUA community through alumni networking activities and student mentorship and career exposure
6. Establish a calendar of local and regional professional development courses, workshops and/or seminars for alumni

**Goal 12: To ensure that AUA’s administrative structure and policies facilitate learning and research/scholarship, foster quality improvement, and support the University’s organization and governance**

1. Through the performance evaluations of directors, managers, supervisors and administrators systematically review their sufficiency and effectiveness to carry out the functions of the University
2. Ensure that administrative processes are fair, transparent, published and openly available
3. Ensure a sustained, collaborative and data-driven assessment process in compliance with accreditation standards
4. Ensure that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and used in institutional planning and resource allocation, and to improve and gain efficiencies and effectiveness in programs, services and processes, including activities specific to the institution’s mission
5. Address areas of concern within UMS to ensure that it has state-of-the-art software that provides the framework for scheduling, grading, student registration, recruitment and enrollment, course delivery, budgeting, research tracking and evaluations
6. Ensure clarity and transparency in the institutional budgeting processes

1. http://newsroom.aua.am/2015/11/23/integration-through-education-armen-ashotyan-delivers-lecture-at-aua/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)