

AUA to open Bachelor's degree studies after two decades of education in Yerevan



The American University of Armenia (AUA), which opened its doors to post-graduate students in 1991, the year when Armenia declared itself an independent republic, plans to offer also Bachelor's degree studies beginning in 2013.

Top AUA representatives say such studies will enable more students in Armenia to attend the University.

AUA currently offers graduate instruction leading to the Master's degree in eight fields of study: Business Administration, Industrial Engineering and Systems Management, Computer and Information Science, Political Science, Public Health, Law, Comparative Legal Studies, and Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Most AUA teaching staff have PhDs from United States or European universities or relevant experience of the U.S. higher education system.

AUA President Bruce Boghosian told media on Tuesday that the university is going to publish a strategic plan for the next six years that will include the launch of studies giving an equivalent of a Bachelor's degree.

"We would like to add a Bachelor's degree so that more young Armenian students could study in this accredited educational system... At the same time, this program will enable us to have every year four times as many students as we admit today," said Boghosian.

A student fee at AUA is around 1 million drams (about \$2,700), but students normally get about 40 percent discounts from the university. Such discounts at AUA may reach up to 90 percent of the fee.

“The University does everything not to lose a student because of their inability to pay fees,” said the AUA president.

AUA opened in Yerevan at a critical time for the post-Soviet republic when Armenians were taking their first steps as an independent nation and faced a multitude of problems, including a recent earthquake, ethnic tensions with neighboring Azerbaijan and plummeting living standards of the population following the disintegration of the USSR and the collapse of its economy.

“The university was founded as a new education hub in Armenia that would try and replace the earthquake-damaged schools in Gyumri. The program was implemented through the efforts of the American University in California, the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Republic of Armenia, after many visits and extensive professional consultations,” says AUA founding president Dr. Mihran Aghbabian.

During the two decades of its activities in Armenia AUA has had more than 2,000 graduates. Currently the University has 400 students.

AUA founder and provost Dr. Armen Ter-Kyureghian says 75-80 percent of AUA graduates live and work in Armenia, some are involved in educational exchange programs and some represent Armenia in international organizations. “Each of them contributes to the development of the country,” says the professor.

From September 26 to October 1 this year AUA is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Various activities, including a workshop, a concert and an exhibition, are planned as part of AUA’s week-long Celebration of Education events.