



**American University of
Central Asia**

**Strategic Plan
2025–2030**

*Empowering Minds
Building Futures*

Executive Summary

“Empowering Minds, Building Futures” AUCA’s Strategic Development Plan 2025-2030 has emerged from comprehensive conversations across the AUCA community. The Plan builds upon our well-established commitment to academic excellence, culture of learning, innovation, and regional leadership. The Plan has five interrelated goals:

- Goal 1: Adopt a financial strategy that addresses the financial challenges caused by the imminent cut-off in U.S. government (and related) funding, and aligns with the strategic plan
- Goal 2: Enhance the learning environment and expand scholarship opportunities to attract, retain, and support the holistic development of our students
- Goal 3: Improve recruitment and retention strategies for faculty and staff to promote innovative academic development
- Goal 4: Advance research and innovation with a focus on regional sustainability and societal benefit
- Goal 5: Foster a collaborative culture to support the effective execution of our strategic plan





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear AUCA Community, Partners, and Friends:

It is with great pride and anticipation that we present to you the American University of Central Asia's Strategic Development Plan for 2025-2030. Under the theme "Empowering Minds, Building Futures," this plan embodies our unwavering commitment to academic excellence, innovative research, and societal impact. It is a comprehensive roadmap that outlines our strategic priorities and sets ambitious goals for the future.

As we embark on this transformative journey, we reaffirm our commitment to empowering minds and building futures. This plan is not just a blueprint for AUCA's growth; it is a pledge to our students, faculty, staff, and community to foster an environment where critical thinking, academic rigor, excellence in all endeavors, and service to community thrive.

By working collaboratively, embracing innovation, and maintaining our dedication to academic excellence, we are poised to shape a brighter future for generations to come. Together, let us continue to advance our mission, celebrate our achievements, and build on our legacy as a beacon of intellectual freedom and excellence in Central Asia.

Sincerely,

Dr. Timothy O'Connor

Celebrating Our Legacy

Achievements and Milestones

Over the past 30 years, AUCA has become a beacon of academic excellence, community service, and intellectual freedom. As AUCA emerges from its founding years, the university has established its reputation for dedication to democratic values, individual freedoms, and the spirit of innovation. Founded on the liberal arts tradition and with self-governance, AUCA has played a central role in the educational system of this fast-changing region, becoming one of the academic leaders in Central Asia.

What began as the Kyrgyz-American School within the Kyrgyz State National University, has evolved into an internationally recognized independent institution. A key milestone in AUCA's journey was the pivotal 2008 partnership with Bard College, which brought US-accredited degrees to Central Asia, expanding opportunities for students in the region. In addition, the longstanding partnership between Indiana University and AUCA continues to flourish, creating valuable opportunities for student and faculty mobility, as well as collaborative research between the two institutions. Furthermore, AUCA enhances its students' educational experiences by providing study abroad programs at esteemed partner universities across the US, Europe, and Asia.

AUCA takes pride in its diverse alumni network, which now exceeds 4,500 individuals, many of whom are actively driving positive change across Central Asia and beyond.

AUCA's commitment to fostering critical thinking, academic excellence, service to the community, and social responsibility has left an indelible mark on the region's educational landscape. As the university looks confidently to the future, it continues to uphold these core values while shaping the next generation of leaders.

Challenges

Understanding Our Environment

AUCA is committed to addressing the complex challenges facing Central Asia, from economic and social issues to environmental concerns. As the region's higher education landscape becomes increasingly competitive, AUCA recognizes the need to stay relevant and responsive to these changes. The university is focused on leveraging its strengths to address critical regional issues such as climate change, geopolitical shifts, and digital transformation.

By fostering collaboration, enhancing academic programs, and building strategic partnerships, AUCA aims to play a constructive role in the region's development. This approach allows the university to contribute meaningfully to Central Asia's future while solidifying its place as a leading institution in the region's educational framework. Through these efforts, AUCA remains dedicated to excellence, innovation, and social responsibility.

The recent notification by the U.S. government that it will terminate all direct and indirect funding for AUCA after the completion of the 2024-25 academic year, and U.S. CAEF's expectation that for similar reasons it will cease to be able to continue to provide funding after the 2025-26 year, presents a significant financial challenge for AUCA. While a decline in government funding was anticipated, the complete and immediate termination of these funding sources was not. Because this development is a facet of the Trump administration's dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and proposed significant cuts to the U.S. State Department's operating budget, prospects for reversing these decisions during the current administration are slight. As a result, at least through the 2028-29 academic year, alternative funding will need to be sought and obtained to facilitate the successful implementation of this Strategic Development Plan.

Dynamic Response

Proactive Measures

In response to these complex and rapidly changing challenges, AUCA's strategic plan is characterized by agility and decisive action. Our plan is not static; it is a living strategy that evolves to meet the demands of our environment. We are not only preserving our standards of excellence, but actively seeking to redefine them across all facets of our mission.

Recognizing the urgency of these challenges, AUCA's strategic plan is committed to swift and decisive action. By outlining clear, practical steps, we show our readiness to tackle the urgent financial challenges facing the University, and the complex realities of our region head-on. This evolving plan is not simply about maintaining excellence, but about pushing boundaries to excel in every aspect of our mission.

Our strategy focuses on boosting academic programs, elevating student success, broadening research endeavors for societal good, and emerging as a regional leader in promoting sustainable development. Guided by its commitment to academic freedom, collaboration, interdisciplinary approaches, service to the community, and excellence, AUCA is poised to drive impactful change in Central Asia and beyond.

Our Strategic Goals 2030

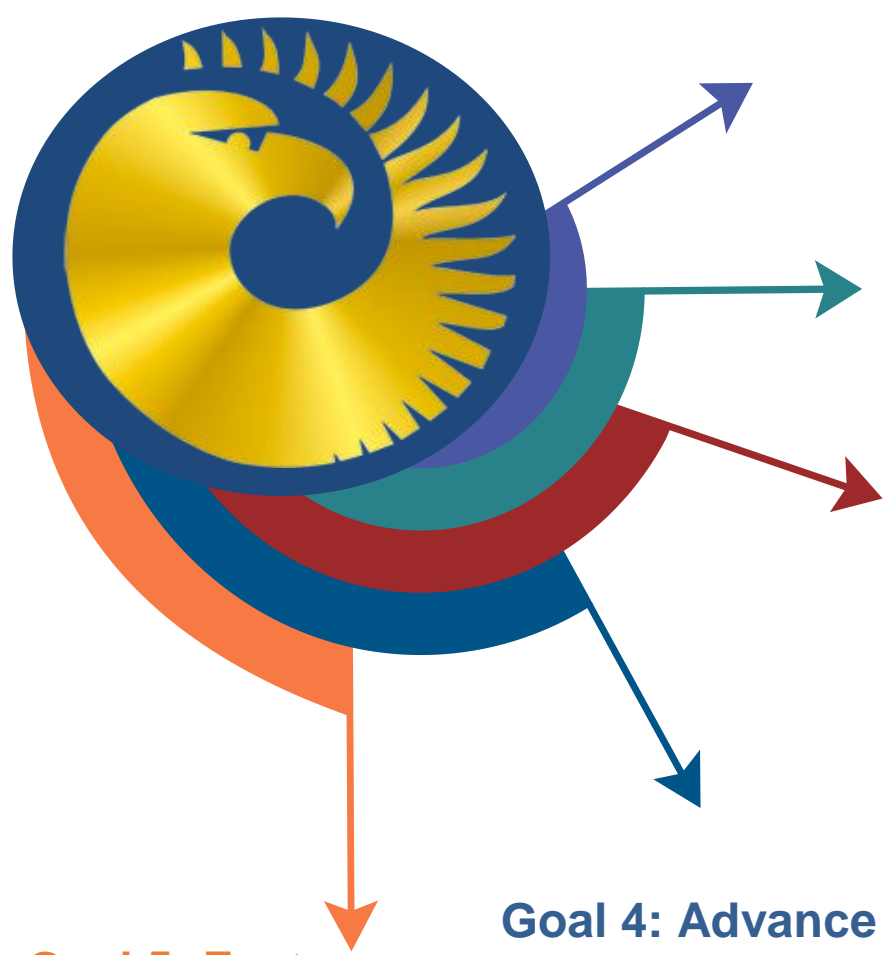
Goal 1: Adopt a financial strategy that addresses the financial challenges caused by the imminent cut-off in U.S. government (and related) funding, and aligns with the strategic plan

Goal 2: Enhance the learning environment and expand scholarship opportunities to attract, retain, and support the holistic development of our students

Goal 3: Improve recruitment and retention strategies for faculty and staff to maintain academic and institutional excellence

Goal 4: Advance research and innovation with a focus on regional sustainability and societal benefit

Goal 5: Foster a Collaborative Culture to Drive the Success of Our Strategic Plan



Goal 1

Adopt a financial strategy that addresses the financial challenges caused by the imminent cut-off in U.S. government (and related) funding, and aligns with the strategic plan

Nearly all of the objectives outlined in Goals 2-4 are contingent on securing additional financial resources. Indeed, in light of the anticipated significant cut in U.S. government (and related) financial support, there are valid concerns regarding the financial sustainability of the University's current operations, let alone the achievement of most the initiatives described below. While some of the initiatives have the potential to generate increased earned income, others will require substantial additional funding to be realized. Many of the undertakings that have the potential over the medium to long-term to increase net tuition will demand significant upfront investments, which may strain short-term financial capacity, particularly because the required additional funding will need to be in addition to that which must be raised to handle the many students already at AUCA whose scholarship funding has been abruptly terminated.

The budget forecast for the upcoming academic years shows a significant decline in revenue, as a result of the combination of the cut-off in funding, which has significantly exacerbated the already anticipated decline in funding due to the reduced number of Afghan and other non-Kyrgyz students supported by U.S. government funding. It is therefore imperative that AUCA secures new revenue sources, and implements cost-saving measures.

In light of this, it is crucial that we focus on both improving earned income through strategic initiatives and identifying new financial resources, whether through external funding, partnerships, or other revenue-generating opportunities. To accomplish the strategic goals outlined in this plan and ensure AUCA's long-term financial stability, a well-crafted strategic financial plan needs to be developed and effectively implemented.

Goal 1: Actions

1. Sustain and Expand External Financial Support Sources

Current Actions: We currently rely heavily on grants from the Open Society Foundations, the US government (“USG”), and US CAEF. These three sources of non-tuition income have been crucial in shaping AUCA's success, helping to sustain its academic excellence and financial stability.

Challenges: Before the recent notification by the U.S. State Department and U.S. CAEF that their funding would terminate, AUCA was already projecting a significant decline in funding from those two sources, as a result of a reduction in the number of Afghan and other non-Kyrgyz students that those sources supported. With U.S. government funding set to end entirely after the 2024–25 academic year, and U.S. CAEF support concluding the following year—with a partial reduction even before its termination—Afghan students who would otherwise be enrolled at AUCA in 2025–26 will be left without scholarship and living support. U.S. CAEF scholars are expected to face a similar gap in funding starting in 2026–27. Meanwhile, due to inflation and competitive pressures, faculty salaries and other expenses have risen and are likely to keep increasing. Although tuition has gone up, AUCA's ability to raise it further is severely limited, as many competing institutions offer free tuition.

Plans: To address these challenges, we plan to:

- work closely with U.S. CAEF and the American Councils to arrange, for each student receiving their scholarship support, either external funding to allow them to remain at AUCA, or their transfer to another university – e.g. in Europe – at which they can continue their education
- seek emergency funding from private foundations and other philanthropic entities to allow as many of the Afghan students who were supposed to be continuing their education at AUCA in the 2025-26 academic year to be able to do so
- as emigration to the United States now seems foreclosed, at least for the duration of the Trump administration, work with both Kyrgyz governmental authorities and also other national authorities to allow each of the Afghan students for whom funding cannot be obtained either to work in Bishkek (perhaps part-time, while they are able to continue their studies part-time) or to emigrate to another country
- urgently develop contingency plans to deal with the Afghan (and other) students for whom emergency scholarship funding cannot be arranged
- actively pursue additional grant opportunities for student scholarships and faculty support from foundations and charities with a focus on international education, Central Asia, or both;
- identify and approach major U.S. (and possibly other) multinational companies doing business in the Kyrgyz Republic to seek financial support

from their CSR or other similar programs for University programs or initiatives;

- continue and enhance efforts to seek general support from AUCA graduates;
- strategically recruit new members for both AUCA’s Board of Trustees and the U.S.-based AUCA Foundation (501(c)(3)) who possess the potential for significant financial contributions or have established connections with U.S. government agencies and major foundations, giving priority to candidates who can actively contribute to AUCA’s strategic goals by enhancing funding opportunities and leveraging their networks for increased support.

2. Enhance Internal Sources of Revenue, while Cutting Costly Programs that are not Essential to the University’s Mission

Current Actions: AUCA currently depends on its affiliated Technical School of Innovation (TSI) for annual support. Additionally, other aspects of AUCA’s operations, like renting out its central gathering space, generate supplementary income.

Challenges: Several other programs at the university are currently operating at a cash-flow deficit. The newly established Makerspace Learning and Design Center is expected to need investments that exceed its revenues in its initial years. While it has the potential to become cash-flow positive over time, this outcome is not guaranteed

Plans: In its internal operations, AUCA plans to:

- explore the potential for other opportunities to implement programs that might be cash-flow positive, and also supportive of the university’s core missions, such as (but not limited to):
 - summer language programs
 - cultural studies programs, especially if these could be funded by new third-party grants
- create tailored executive education programs or short courses in areas like leadership, digital transformation, and cross-cultural communication, specifically designed for companies in Central Asia. These programs could be offered in both on-campus and online formats to broaden their reach and accessibility;
- partner with corporate sponsors to generate revenue and build stronger connections with the business community;
- assess whether certain cash-flow negative programs, such as some M.A. and continuing education programs, could be eliminated, merged with other programs, or restructured to reduce their financial impact on the university, while ensuring that essential educational functions are maintained and the university’s core missions remain strong;
- Implement guidelines for how program revisions, reductions, or expansions are evaluated, ensuring the process is transparent, inclusive, and aligned with AUCA’s strategic goals.

3. Refocus and Improve AUCA’s Development and Grant Administration Functions

Current Actions: AUCA’s development and grant administration functions are currently separate.

Challenges: As noted under Goal 5, the level of communication and transparency between these two functions is sub-optimal, and reduces their collective ability to achieve common objectives.

Plans: To address these challenges, we plan:

- in accordance with Goal 5, to improve lines of communication among all departments and personnel involved in development and grant-seeking activities;
- to focus AUCA’s core grant-seeking activities on funding that will help address the university’s broader financial and strategic goals;
- to offer guidance and support to faculty members and departments in securing smaller research or project-specific funding, enabling those best suited to write and manage grant proposals to take responsibility for seeking and obtaining these focused grants. Consider offering course releases to faculty members who participate in the grant writing process in collaboration with the development office.

4. Implement Rigorous Financial Monitoring and Reporting Systems

Current Actions: Financial data is collected and reviewed periodically, but there is room for more structured analysis.

Challenges: Without precise and timely financial data, it can be difficult to make informed decisions regarding cost-cutting or investment in new programs.

Plans:

- ensure inclusive budget formation by engaging key stakeholders—including faculty, staff, and student representatives—in the budgeting process to promote transparency, shared accountability, and alignment with institutional priorities.
- create a financial dashboard for senior leadership to have real-time insights into financial health and performance against the strategic financial plan. This dashboard should be accessible to senior leadership, ensuring transparency and timely interventions;
- develop multiple financial scenarios based on different assumptions about enrollment, funding, and expenses. Regularly update these scenarios and use them to inform decision-making and contingency planning;
- embed Financial Monitoring into Strategic Planning: Financial monitoring should be an ongoing part of the strategic planning process, with regular reviews ensuring that financial strategies remain aligned with the university’s goals and external realities.

Goal 2

Enhance the learning environment and expand scholarship opportunities to attract, retain, and support the holistic development of our students.

AUCA's reputation for academic freedom and critical thinking, its strong academic programs, and its close relationship with Bard College, provide it with major strengths that have been advantageous for many years. In attracting and retaining students, it now confronts significant competition from other educational institutions that provide free tuition and scholarship opportunities for studying abroad, particularly in Europe, where education is free or heavily subsidized.

AUCA has also benefited enormously from the very high employment rate of its recent graduates, and long-term success of many of its earlier graduates. As the region and world continue to change, the skills and knowledge AUCA graduates require to succeed are also evolving. This requires AUCA to adapt its curricular offerings to the changing needs of its students.

Since its founding, AUCA has been committed to nurturing students in a way that extends beyond mere academic achievement. It emphasizes the importance of supporting students in various aspects of their growth and development, both academically and personally, with the ultimate goal of preparing them to become transformative leaders in their respective fields and communities. Holistic development encompasses intellectual, emotional, social, and ethical dimensions, ensuring that students are well-rounded individuals capable of addressing complex challenges and driving positive change. In this area too, the university must respond to the changing needs and priorities of students.

Goal 2: Actions

1. Improve Student Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Current Actions: We are actively implementing strategies to attract and retain a diverse student body. We have programs to enhance the English and math skills of incoming freshmen, and programs to provide assistance to students who are struggling academically.

Challenges: While demographic trends are favorable, there are several challenges in this area, which include:

- we must compete with other institutions – both Kyrgyz and foreign, several of which charge no tuition – to attract the strongest applicants;
- some otherwise deserving applicants, particularly those coming from weaker secondary schools, require support in their English writing and mathematical skills to succeed academically at AUCA;
- we must improve our retention rates, which are sub-optimal due to a combination of academic, family, and economic factors;
- we wish to maintain the national diversity of AUCA’s student body;
- we must address these challenges while facing limitations in funding for scholarships.

Plans: To address these challenges, we plan:

- to seek and implement strategies and programs that allow AUCA to uphold standards in its admissions policy that ensure its admitted students have the preparation and skills necessary to succeed at the University, while maintaining a student body of desirable size and diversity;
- to ensure that the revised marketing strategy and screening programs are launched promptly and in coordination with the updated standards to avoid delays;
- to expand our scholarship programs, to attract the very best students, to make AUCA a possibility for more students of modest means, and to seek additional scholarship funding;
- to broaden, and publicize more effectively international exchange programs and other opportunities for AUCA students to study abroad for a semester or year;
- to strengthen, and publicize more effectively, the university’s affiliation with Bard and other US universities, and the opportunities that these offer for post-graduate education abroad;
- to review the current structure of the successful New Generation Academy (NGA) to evaluate whether adjustments might increase the percentage of its participants who matriculate at AUCA;

- to increase collaboration between the Admissions Office and academic departments in relation to recruitment strategies and goals;
- to evaluate and improve pre-entry programs designed to strengthen English composition and math skills of entering freshmen;
- to enhance student services, strengthen academic support systems, facilitate earlier and more effective interventions if students face academic or personal challenges.

These initiatives are aimed at improving both student recruitment and retention rates, which will enhance student`s experience as well as the university`s reputation and revenue from net tuition.

2. Review and, where appropriate, revise elements of the university`s academic programs and curricula.

Current Actions: Regulatory liberalization has allowed AUCA to introduce greater flexibility into its undergraduate curriculum, enhancing student choice and presenting opportunities for new educational offerings. The changes to the undergraduate curriculum facilitated by the liberalization are currently being implemented.

Challenges: Some programs are perennially under-subscribed, and others (particularly certain M.A. programs) suffer from low retention rates. Two of the university`s most popular undergraduate programs – Business Administration and Software Engineering – face competitive pressures and evolving industry demands.

Plans: To address these challenges, we will conduct a thorough review of the university`s current academic offerings through close collaboration between AUCA`s President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and relevant departmental leadership and faculty. This collaborative approach will help identify areas for improvement and innovation. Additionally, we aim to leverage the MAT program to enhance teaching quality and expand educational support across Kyrgyzstan, fostering stronger connections between the university and local schools.

3. Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Student-Centered learning across all programs

Current Actions: We promote interdisciplinary courses and support student-led research projects.

Challenges: A key challenge is insufficient student-led research, limiting opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning and engage with interdisciplinary subjects. Additionally, breaking down departmental silos and fostering faculty collaboration remain significant hurdles. The current focus on discipline-specific teaching and research leaves little room for collaborative, student-centered approaches, highlighting the need to prioritize student engagement and interdisciplinary work.

Plans: To address these challenges, we will create cross-departmental teams tasked with spearheading collaborative efforts. These teams will drive initiatives

that enhance student research, promote interdisciplinary learning, and prioritize student-centered approaches across the institution.

4. Expand Micro Credentials and Certificate Programs

Current Actions: Micro credentials are currently organized under the minor arrangement.

Challenges: Our primary challenge lies in ensuring the continued relevance and alignment of these credentials with evolving industry demands and student interests, as well as addressing local, regional, and global challenges.

Plans: To address these challenges, we plan:

- to transition from micro-credentials to certificate programs, ensuring they are updated to address current industry trends and meet the needs of our local, regional, and global communities;
- to offer liberal arts majors educational opportunities and credentials that allow them to compete effectively in obtaining and excelling in employment;
- to offer those in professional majors to have an educational background that differentiates them favorably in breadth of knowledge and skills.

5. Enhance Support for Mental Health and Well-being

Current Actions: We currently provide mental health services and resources to our students.

Challenges: Our main challenge is addressing the growing demand for mental health services, while ensuring they contribute effectively to overall well-being and personal happiness of our students.

Plans: We plan to expand our mental health and wellness resources by developing initiatives focused on promoting overall well-being and personal fulfillment, aiming to support a balanced and rewarding student experience. These will include campus-wide awareness campaigns, workshops to educate students about stress-management and resilience building, and the expansion of wellness programs and initiatives on campus.

6. Expand Civic Engagement Opportunities

Current Actions: AUCA has a vibrant and impactful civic engagement program, run by the university's Center for Civic Engagement, with high levels of student involvement.

Challenges: To encourage maximum student participation in civic engagement projects, and to ensure the program's continued relevance to the community's needs, the program requires constant attention and thoughtful leadership.

Plans: To maintain both the strength and positive impact of the civic engagement program, we plan:

- to design new projects that address local community needs and align with student interests, fostering greater participation;

- to integrate civic engagement into the curricula, by encouraging faculty to incorporate service-learning components into courses;
- to build stronger partnerships with local organizations and community leaders;
- to ensure that civic engagement opportunities are inclusive and accessible to all students.

7. Strengthen Career Planning Services and AUCA’s Capacity to Support the Professional and Academic Development of Students

Current Actions: We currently provide career services to assist students in their professional pursuits.

Challenges: Keeping up with the changing job market and employer expectations.

Plans: While our alumni and industry networks are strong, we see clear benefits in building stronger ties with industry partners and successful alumni/ae. With their assistance, we can offer tailored career planning workshops, internships, and mentorship programs. We should also strengthen the university’s capacity to provide guidance and support for students seeking post-graduate education abroad.

8. Embrace Technological Innovation to Enhance Online Teaching and Learning

Current Actions: AUCA is integrating educational technologies into the curriculum, though not uniformly across all courses. Efforts have been made to modernize the learning environment, but gaps remain in the consistent application of these technologies across departments.

Challenges: AUCA faces the challenge of keeping pace with rapid advancements in technology and ensuring that all courses effectively integrate the necessary tools. There is also the need to adapt to both the challenges and potential benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) in education. Additionally, expanding access to quality education for students in remote or underserved regions, such as Afghanistan, remains a pressing issue.

Plans: Seek funding for adaptive learning technologies that personalize the educational experience for students. Explore opportunities on creating distance learning opportunities, both in relation to pre-entrance programs for students from remote locations in Kyrgyzstan and adjacent countries, and possibly for students from Afghanistan. Expand access and utilization of OSUN and other appropriate online education platforms. This will enable AUCA to extend its academic reach to regions with limited access to higher education.

Explore opportunities to harness the power of AI to enhance teaching and learning experiences, including AI-driven tutoring, personalized learning paths, and automated assessments, to improve both in-person and remote education.

Explore innovative solutions to integrate innovative educational technologies more uniformly across all courses, ensuring that every department benefits from the latest advancements.

Goal 3

Improve recruitment and retention strategies for faculty and staff to maintain academic and institutional excellence

The quality of our faculty and staff and of their teaching and research are central to the continued academic excellence of AUCA. Continuing to attract and retain outstanding faculty, both from the region and from the US and Europe, is of critical importance to the near and long-term quality of the university’s educational offerings. Providing faculty and staff opportunities for growth and advancement, and creating a supportive work environment, are essential components of achieving academic excellence. Ultimately, the success of faculty and staff members contributes directly to AUCA’s ability to deliver outstanding education and make significant contributions to knowledge and society.



Goal 3: Actions

1. Recruit and Retain Exceptional Faculty

Current Actions: We are proactively recruiting a diverse pool of highly qualified faculty members through targeted campaigns.

Challenges: We face regional challenges of an increasingly fierce competitive academic job market, compounded by resource limitations. In recent years,

- we have seen a decline in the number of international faculty, partly due to the pandemic and a temporary gap in senior leadership, as well as a reduced influx of new faculty from Central European University;
- we have also lost a few outstanding scholars to other institutions in the region, and
- we face particular challenges in attracting top-tier professors in business administration and software engineering, due to substantial discrepancies between academic salaries and those in the private sector.

Plans: To address these challenges, we plan:

- to strengthen our recruitment strategies for international faculty and Central Asian faculty educated in the US and Europe, we will target potential sources of new faculty, including AUCA graduates studying or teaching abroad, as well as PhD graduates from universities with institutional connections to Central Asia;
- to attract new faculty, particularly in subjects with a strong need for additional personnel, offering competitive compensation packages and professional development opportunities;
- to support all academic programs, particularly in fields such as Software Engineering, where bringing world-class professors to Bishkek for permanent positions may be challenging, we plan to explore the possibility of presenting lectures by experts at institutions like Bard College, Columbia, and Indiana via Zoom, taking advantage of our unique access to top-tier international universities and their professors;
- to identify and seek support from international fellowship programs such as Fulbright Scholar Program, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), and the Global Teaching Fellowship, to attract visiting faculty from abroad;
- to explore possibility of developing a program to facilitate professors with MA credentials to complete their PhD research and dissertation while teaching.
- to review faculty salary levels and other retention-related programs to ensure, as much as possible within financial constraints, that we retain and motivate our faculty.

2. Strengthen Comprehensive Professional Development Programs Tailored to Faculty and Staff Needs

Current Actions: We currently provide ongoing professional development programs to our faculty. We are actively promoting innovative teaching methodologies and cultivating a dynamic learning environment.

Challenges: Our challenge lies in ensuring that these programs align with faculty expectations and keep pace with evolving academic standards and actively involve staff in the process. Furthermore, our challenges include adapting to new teaching technologies and methods while ensuring sustained high levels of student and faculty engagement.

Plans: We plan to continually update our development programs based on faculty and staff feedback and emerging educational trends to ensure relevance and effectiveness. We also plan to design and implement faculty training programs focused on innovative teaching techniques, curriculum development, student-centered learning, and the integration of technology into coursework to address these challenges effectively. We will also review and suggest improvements to both peer-observation and student feedback mechanisms.

3. Strengthen Institutional Support for Faculty and Staff Success

Current Actions: We currently provide dedicated funding to support faculty research and enhance teaching quality.

Challenges: Our efforts are hindered by limited funding and resource allocation for these purposes.

Plans: We aim to expand the faculty development fund, implement sabbatical programs, and establish mentorship initiatives. To achieve this objective, we intend to enhance our capacity to seek external funding through grants and strategic partnerships, to ensure maximum impact on faculty development and success.

Goal 4

Advance research and innovation with a focus on regional sustainability and societal benefit

While AUCA is first and foremost a teaching university, this goal underscores the university's commitment to fostering research and innovation throughout the institution, engaging a diverse range of faculty and students. AUCA endeavors to position itself as a research hub, taking full advantage of its international connections to advance knowledge and address societal challenges. In these pursuits, the university can provide compelling opportunities for faculty advancement and satisfaction, for student involvement and introduction to research methodologies, and for delivering positive societal impact.

A related goal is for AUCA to spearhead regional advancements in interdisciplinary solutions for sustainable development and other evolving challenges. AUCA aims to be recognized as a leader – working together with other Central Asian universities and academic institutions such as the Kyrgyz National Academy of Science, and building upon its ties and access to leading US universities – in using interdisciplinary approaches to address urgent issues like climate change, artificial intelligence (AI), and other future challenges.

Goal 4: Actions

1. Promote Research with Societal Relevance and Knowledge Transfer

Current Actions: The research committee actively manages research grants and awards to support a diverse range of faculty members.

Challenges: The primary limitations are financial and human resources, which constrain AUCA's ability to foster impactful, society-relevant research across all disciplines within the liberal arts and sciences.

Plans: While individual faculty members will retain the freedom to pursue research aligned with their interests, AUCA aims to establish research priority areas that focus on societal impact. To achieve this, we will prioritize efforts to attract both funding and expertise. This will involve incremental faculty hires as well as strategic collaborations with external institutions. By providing targeted support for grant applications and cultivating partnerships, AUCA seeks to drive high-impact projects that respond to pressing societal needs.

2. Strengthen Research Capacity and Expertise

Current Actions: The research committee actively manages research grants and awards across a spectrum of faculty members.

Challenges: The teaching workload for faculty leaves some with limited time for research, leading to uneven participation in research activities among faculty members. There is a need for additional capacity-building as some faculty members require further development in grant writing skills.

Plans: To encourage enhanced opportunities for faculty research, we will explore:

- capacity-building initiatives to address skills gaps in grant writing, collaborative projects, etc.;
- whether and to what extent teaching workloads and credit allocations may be adjusted to facilitate research;
- the possibility of establishing a program of University Professorships (or similar) to facilitate significant research projects by senior faculty;
- other initiatives to support faculty in balancing teaching and research responsibilities.

3. Increase Research Visibility of AUCA

Current Actions: Undertaking initiatives to enhance research rankings and garner recognition by providing research grants to faculty.

Challenges: Navigating fierce competition with institutions worldwide for visibility and credibility, while contending with the inherent resource limitations of being an institution in the Global South, particularly in regard to faculty participation in international conferences and publication in top international, peer-reviewed journals. **Plans:** Elevate AUCA's research profile through development of comprehensive communication strategy, active participation in international conferences, publications in reputable journals, and strategic collaborations with partners.

4. Promote Interdisciplinary Research and Teaching that Tackle Sustainability and Development Challenges in Central Asia and Beyond

Current Actions: We have a program focusing on environmental sustainability, along with university-led initiatives such as Green AUCA and sustainable AUCA. However, these programs primarily approach sustainability from the perspective of climate science.

Challenges: We recognize the need to expand beyond the narrow scope of climate science and incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives to address broader sustainability and development challenges.

Plans: We plan to establish Interdisciplinary Research Clusters and implement Interdisciplinary Teaching Approaches. This includes the integration of courses on climate change adaptation, sustainability, and human rights across various academic disciplines.

5. Establish an Innovate4Sustainability Cross-disciplinary Think Tank to Explore Innovative Solutions for Sustainability Challenges in Central Asia

Current Actions: While the think tank is not yet established, we are laying the groundwork for its creation by identifying key stakeholders and researching potential areas of focus.

Challenges: Our primary challenge is securing initial funding and generating stakeholder interest to launch the establishment of the think tank.

Plans: To make this initiative a reality, we will focus on developing targeted partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations that have a vested interest in sustainability. In parallel, we will pursue specific grant opportunities that align with our goals.

6. Address Institutional Gaps through Collaborations with U.S. and other Universities

Current actions: AUCA faculty have a strong interest in issues of critical importance to the Kyrgyz Republic and Central Asia, and seek ways to have greater involvement and impact.

Challenges: AUCA currently has gaps in faculty resources that limit its ability to take on the leadership role it aspires to in cutting-edge research and related efforts concerning climate change, air pollution, water management, artificial intelligence (AI), and other matters of current or future importance to the Kyrgyz Republic and Central Asian region. It will be difficult, and in some fields nearly impossible, to recruit full-time faculty in these areas.

Plans: To address these gaps, we will seek to collaborate with US and other international universities and think tanks, taking advantage of our existing international connections and ability to forge additional international relationships. A similar strategy underpins our current preliminary planning focused on AUCA's long-term goal of establishing a comprehensive PhD program in Development Studies, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary research-driven solutions.

Goal 5

Foster a Collaborative Culture to Drive the Success of Our Strategic Plan

This goal emphasizes creating a working environment where collaboration and shared purpose unite the entire AUCA community in achieving our common vision. By strengthening communication, enhancing transparency, and aligning organizational structures, we aim to promote a culture that celebrates teamwork and cooperation. Prioritizing student, faculty and staff well-being and professional growth, we aspire to build a cohesive and agile institution where everyone feels empowered to contribute to AUCA's success. Together, through collaboration and a sense of unity, we will ensure the effective and efficient execution of our strategic plan.



Goal 5: Actions

1. Improve Communication Channels and Transparency

Current Actions: We are currently streamlining communication channels and enhancing transparency measures.

Challenges: A significant challenge is that most offices and programs are not fully aware of each other's work, projects, adopted policies, and achievements, leading to inconsistent and ineffective communication across all levels.

Plans: To address these challenges, we will develop a strategic plan for all programs to ensure alignment with AUCA's strategic plan. Additionally, we will implement annual presentations to showcase each program's progress and achievements. We also plan to establish a transparency policy and enforce a quality assurance policy to maintain high standards and continuous improvement.

2. Enhance Organizational Structure and Governance

Current Actions: There is a recognition of the need to restructure governance mechanisms to enhance flexibility and better align with strategic objectives.

Challenges: Our challenges include improving decision-making, accountability, and alignment. We need to review existing governance policies, benchmark against best practices, establish clear roles for governance bodies, and communicate the new framework effectively.

Plans: We will restructure to enhance flexibility, effectiveness, and alignment with strategic goals across both academic and non-academic offices. We will ensure the new structure supports interdisciplinary collaboration, establishes clear decision-making pathways, and promotes efficient resource utilization.

3. Foster Faculty and Staff Well-being and Professional Growth to Deliver Excellence and Elevate Culture of Learning

Current Actions: Most professional development programs currently focus on faculty rather than staff, and do not specifically address well-being.

Challenges: Meeting diverse needs and maintaining high levels of engagement.

Plans: Develop comprehensive well-being programs, implement mentorship initiatives for staff, and strengthen the employee recognition and reward system. Additionally, conduct regular well-being surveys to tailor support programs based on feedback.