

American University of Armenia
Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
Institutional Report

Submitted to the WASC Senior College and University Commission
August 7, 2023
The AUA Accreditation Steering Committee

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Abbreviations

ACE	Acopian Center for the Environment
AUA	American University of Armenia
AUAC	American University of Armenia Corporation (US entity)
AUAF	American University of Armenia Fund (Armenia entity)
AGBU	Armenian General Benevolent Union
CRAL	Center for Research in Applied Linguistics
CHSS	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CC	Curriculum Committee
DIGILIB	Digital Library of Armenian Literature
DEI	Diversity, equity and inclusion
EPIC	Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center
ERC	Engineering Research Center
FS	Faculty Senate
CHS	Gerald & Patricia Turpanjian College of Health Sciences
ICTS	Information and Communication Technologies Services
LRC	Legal Resources Center
CBE	Manoogian-Simone College of Business and Economics
MQID	Meaning, quality, and integrity of the degree
OE	Open Education
CBRD	Paul Avedisian Center for Business Research and Development
SLA	Student Learning Assessment
SLAP	Student Learning Assessment Plan
SLAR	Student Learning Assessment Report
TPR	Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation
TCPA	Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis
CSE	Zaven P. & Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering
CHSR	Zvart Avedisian Onanian Center for Health Services Research and Development

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American University of Armenia

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

1. Introduction

A. Institutional Context

a. History of the American University of Armenia

Recently celebrating its 30th anniversary, the American University of Armenia was established with the specific purpose of introducing an American model of higher education to Armenia, becoming the first U.S.-accredited higher education institution in the region. From its beginning, AUA has benefited from support of the University of California through a formal agreement. The University opened its doors on September 21, 1991, in a building provided by the Armenian government and with the financial assistance of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). That same day, Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

AUA’s mission is “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.”

Those early days of institution building were difficult for both faculty and students due to the severe challenges of working in a country that was undergoing a major transition in both its

political and economic systems and dealing with geopolitical unrest. Among the significant challenges were shortages of electricity and water, the inability of some students to afford the cost of attending AUA, the need to train students in English, and shortages of office and classroom space. And while AUA had the support of the Armenian government, the university had to find its place in the Armenian system of higher education as the very first private university. Undaunted by these challenges, the founders of AUA forged forward, seeing the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to the development of Armenia and the region despite the challenges.

AUA has grown extensively since its founding, significantly diversifying its offerings, faculty and financial base and enhancing community outreach, positioning the university for continued growth and excellence. The reaffirmation of accreditation process itself has helped AUA become a stronger, more vibrant university by building institutional capacity.

From those early days of its establishment, the university has been dedicated to educational innovation, having a significant impact on Armenia and the region. AUA brought the first U.S. master's degrees to Armenia and promoted a focus on student-centered learning. As the only English-language university AUA attracted hundreds of faculty with American and Western educations to Armenia, established a university extension program for continuing adult learning, introduced wireless internet and videoconferencing to a college campus, created the first university library open to the public at large with open stacks and electronic collections, opened university counseling services, established a Math and Writing Center, and was the first university to introduce graduation ceremonies to Armenia. AUA established the first student loan and need-based tuition assistance programs in Armenia. AUA policy is that no Armenian citizen admitted to AUA will be denied study because of demonstrated financial need, as determined by

the AUA Financial Aid Committee. These initiatives provided effective models for higher education in Armenia and the region based on American values and pedagogy.

As a means to fulfill AUA's mission have an impact not only on students but also on the community, in addition to its academic programs, colleges have established research centers that focus on applied research related to development issues.

AUA originally opened in 1991 as a graduate institution that offered master's degrees in disciplines that were chosen specifically to complement, not duplicate, programs offered in local institutions of higher education. However, that strategy has since evolved as Armenia and the region changed. During this period, the Armenian government adopted a three-level higher education system of degrees with state universities offering bachelor, master's, and doctoral degrees, moving away from the previous two-level system. The Armenian government also signed on to the European Union's Bologna Process and continues to reform university education to meet the requirements of the European Credit Transfer System. Along with these developments, other universities in Armenia and the region began offering degrees once offered only at AUA and other foreign affiliated universities emerged. Adjusting to a rapidly changing environment, AUA has evolved from the early years of its complementary approach to a focus on providing excellence in education in a competitive market.

Attachment 1Aa Memorandum Concerning the Establishment of the American University of Armenia

b. Academic programs

Since the early days of its establishment, AUA has grown from three to ten master's degrees (11 beginning in fall 2023), seven undergraduate degrees (eight beginning in fall 2023), and seven

graduate certificates. The table below shows the fall 2022 enrollment as well as the number of degrees granted per program through June 2023.

Table 1Ab(a) Degree Program Snapshot: Degrees Granted and Most Recent Enrollment

Program	Year Initiated	Degrees a/o June 2023	Fall 2022 Enrollment
Graduate			
Business Administration (MBA)	1991	1251	59
Teaching English as a Foreign Language (MATEFL)	1997	374	26
Political Science and International Affairs (MPSIA) ¹	1994	622	44
Industrial Engineering and Systems Management (MEIESM)	1991	456	12
Earthquake Engineering (MSEE)	1991-1998	34	N/A
Computer and Information Science (MSCIS)	2001	330	59
Public Health (MPH)	1997	324	24
Laws (LL.M.) (<i>incl. Master of Comparative Legal Studies</i>)	1996	581	45
Economics (MSE)	2013	135	23
Management (MSM)	2017	167	39
Human Rights and Social Justice (MAHRSJ)	2021	14	27
Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomacy (MAIRD)	2023	N/A	N/A
Master of Arts in Public Affairs (MPA)	2023	N/A	N/A
MBA-MPH dual degree	2012-2016	9	N/A
Total Graduate		4297	358
Undergraduate			
Business (BAB)	2013	1054	642
Computer Science (BSCS)	2013	351	371
Data Science (BSDS)	2018	45	253
English and Communications (BAEC)	2013	487	343
Engineering Sciences (BSES)	2016	28	97
Politics and Governance (BAPG)	2021	N/A	80
Nursing (RN to BSN)	2022	N/A	17
Environmental and Sustainability Sciences (BSESS)	2023	N/A	N/A
Total Undergraduate		1965	1803

¹ *The MPSIA is being phased out. The last cohort was admitted in Fall 2022. Two programs will be launched in 2023-24, a Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomacy and a Master of Arts in Public Affairs).*

Table 1Ab(b) Graduate Certificate Snapshot

Certificate	Year Initiated	Certificates a/o June 2023	Fall 2022 Enrollment
Law and Public Advocacy	2010-2013	1	0
Public Health	1995	28	0
Teaching English as a Foreign Language	1992	214	22
Translation	2012	115	7
Finance	2019	3	0
Data Analytics	2019	4	1
Hotel and Hospitality Management	2020	38	22
Management	2021	37	16
Total Graduate Certificate		440	68

AUA also offers several undergraduate minors, providing students with an opportunity to expand learning and focus studies in an area outside of their major. Five minors are currently offered. Several additional minors are under development. Table 1Ab(c) below lists the number of minor earners to date.

Table 1Ab(c) Undergraduate Minor Snapshot

Minor	Year Initiated	Completers a/o June 30, 2023
Environmental Studies	2015	2
Genocide Studies and Human Rights	2015	34
Gender Studies	2022	N/A
Philosophy	2022	N/A
Philosophy, Politics and Economics	2015	105

c. Students

Student enrollment is at its highest level since the establishment of the university mainly due to the launch of undergraduate programs in 2013, the transition from a March-October academic calendar to the more standard September to June academic calendar in 2009, AUA’s

growing reputation for educational quality, an alumni network, its active recruitment efforts, and continued commitment to ensuring financial assistance.

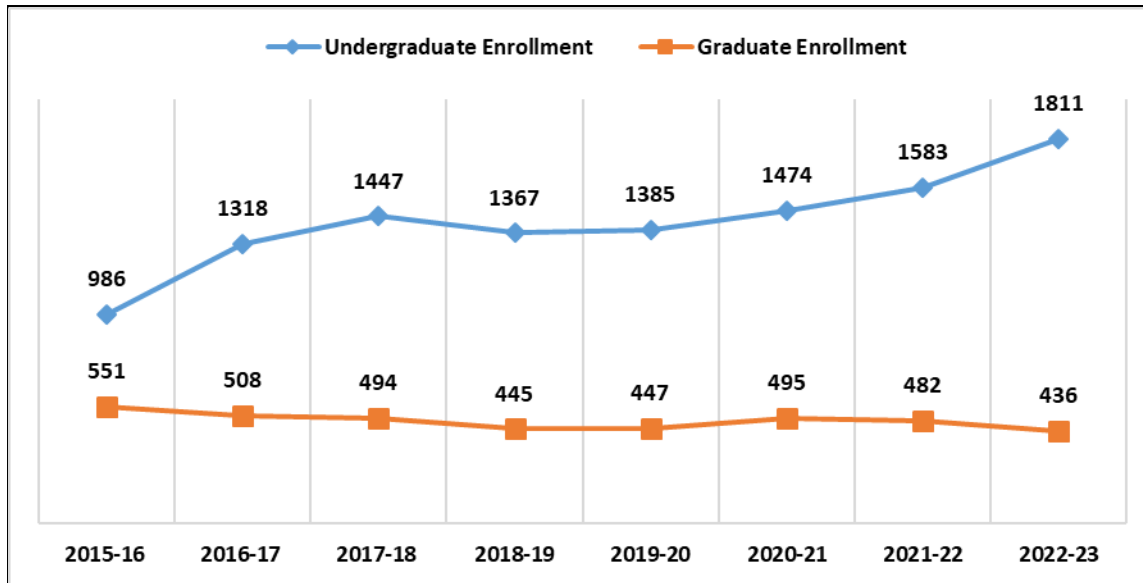
AUA's student body has rapidly grown since the 2013 launch of the undergraduate program. In September 1991, AUA enrolled 101 students, all graduate students. In fall 2022, AUA enrolled 2247 students, 1811 undergraduate students and 436 graduate students. The table below shows the growth in enrollment since 2015. Approximately 63% of the student body is female compared to 37% male, (61% of the undergraduate student body is female compared to 68% of the graduate programs). And, 92% of students are citizens of the Republic Armenia.

The calendar change was introduced in order to facilitate recruitment of both faculty and students by decreasing the length of time between admission of students and the beginning of classes, and by making AUA's academic year compatible with U.S. institutions from which many part-time faculty were drawn.

The growth in the undergraduate program has been accompanied by a slight decline in graduate enrollments. This decline is partly due to a gap year in secondary education resulting from Armenia's transition from a 10-year to a 12-year secondary school system. Further analysis is necessary to ascertain root causes and impact, as well as to determine what the university sees as the optimal ratio of undergraduate and graduate enrollment. One example is the analysis of the interest and transition of AUA undergraduate alumni to graduate programs including possible streamlining admissions in a vertical progression (e.g. BS in Computer Science to MS in Computer and Information Science) as well as alumni considering a degree in a different field of study for their masters. This transition from undergraduate to graduate studies is further discussed in section 3B below (The Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree). Another example is

AUA’s commissioning of a market study to update our understanding of local and global market trends and the higher education landscape.

Chart 1Ac Student Enrollment 2015-2022



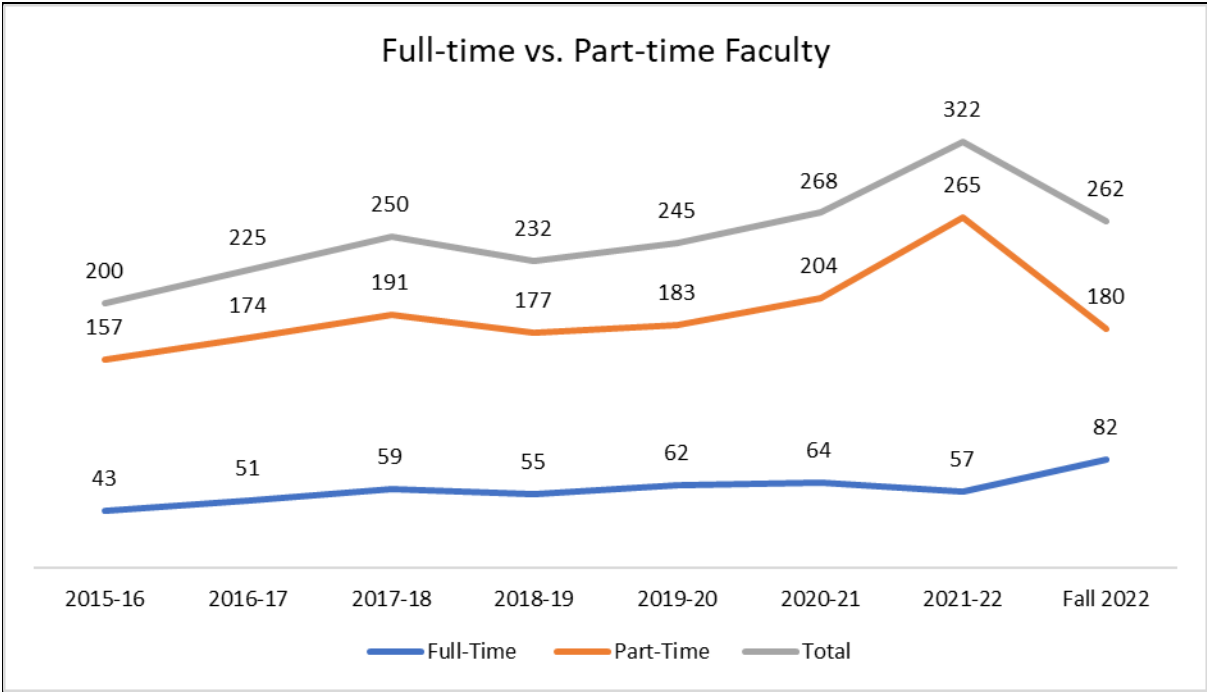
d. Faculty

In fall 2022, the AUA faculty comprised 262 instructors: 82 full-time and 180 part-time. Of the 262, 184 are core faculty. AUA does not offer tenure but does offer multi-year contracts. Moreover, at AUA *core faculty* includes full-time faculty as well as part-time faculty who have taught at AUA at least three semesters in the last three years. AUA considers its cadre of dedicated faculty, academic administrators and support staff as one of its strengths. In addition to the 31% of faculty that are full-time at AUA, an additional 39% are core. The charts below show the growth in faculty over time.

Faculty involvement in scholarship, innovation, public discourse and service, and collaborative efforts with other educational institutions in Armenia, have had an impact on Armenia, and AUA’s reputation for quality and integrity. Alumni have served in such roles as ministers, members of parliament, judges, heads of civil society organizations, CEOs of companies and start-ups, and educators nationwide.

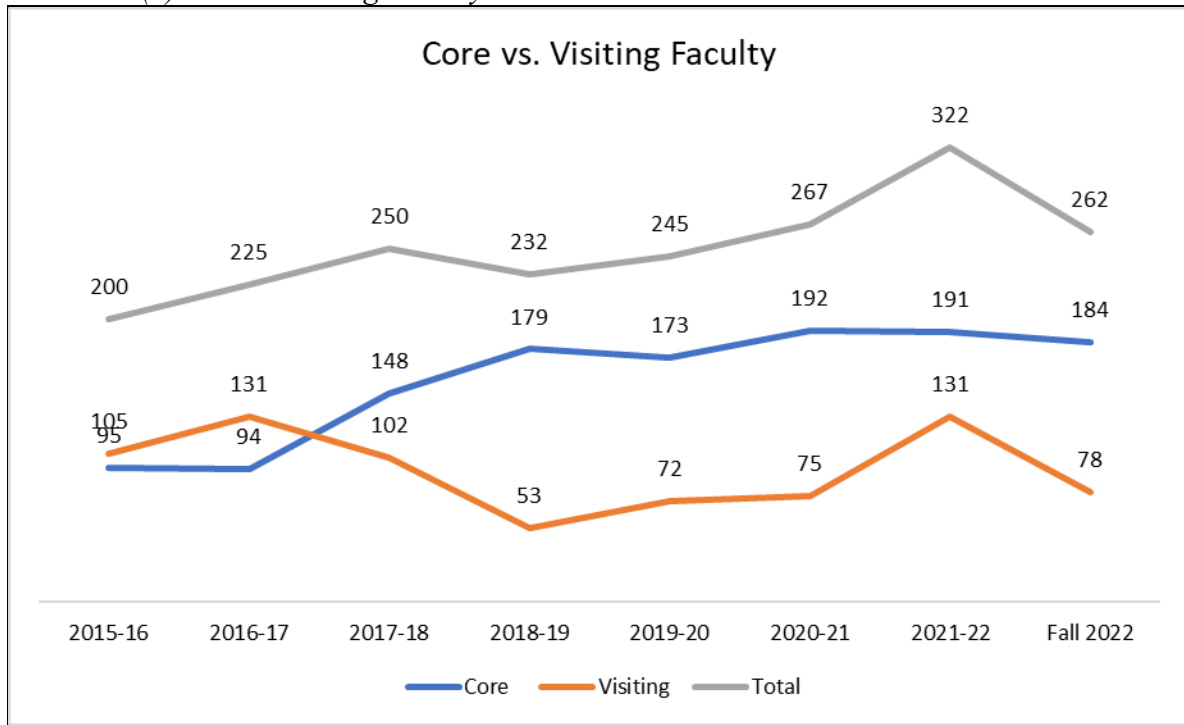
At the same time, the university must recalibrate for the next phase of growth in light of its aim to double student enrollment in ten years, and the changing higher educational landscape in Armenia, regionally and globally. In particular, the university must remain committed to increase the number and percentage of full-time faculty. The two themes selected, Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree and Academic Program Review, are harmonious with AUA’s growth to include undergraduate education as well as the strengths of the university and some of the challenges it must address during its fourth decade.

Chart 1Ad(a) Full-time v Part-time Faculty



In the chart above, the last data point reflects only fall semester from AY 2022-23.

Chart 1Ad(b) Core v Visiting Faculty



In the chart above, the last data point reflects only fall semester from AY 2022-23.

Table 1Ad(c) Faculty by College/Center (Fall 2022)

College /Center (Including General Education)	Total		Full-Time		Part-Time		Core		Visiting	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Acopian Center for the Environment	3	1.2%	1	1.3%	2	1.1%	2	1.10%	1	1.28%
Manoogian-Simone College of Business and Economics	51	19.7%	20	25.3%	31	17.2%	38	20.99%	13	16.67%
Gerald & Patricia Turpanjian College of Health Sciences	13	5.0%	4	5.1%	9	5.0%	7	3.87%	6	7.69%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	118	45.6%	37	46.8%	81	45.0%	88	48.62%	30	38.46%
Zaven P. & Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering	74	28.6%	17	21.5%	57	31.7%	46	25.41%	28	35.90%
Total Instructional headcount	259	100.0%	79	100.0%	180	100.0%	181	100.00%	78	100.00%
Non-Instructional										
Senior Academic Leadership	25	9.5%	25	30.5%	0	0.0%	25	13.6%	0	0.0%
Total headcount	262	100.0%	82	100.0%	180	100.0%	184	100.0%	78	100.00%

e. Alumni

AUA’s impact on Armenia has been significant, not only through the development work carried out by research and other centers, but mainly through its more than 6700 alumni. The most recent three-month after graduation survey (September 2022) revealed that approximately 84% of undergraduate and 70% of graduate alumni are living in Armenia. Furthermore, 93% of employed undergraduate alumni and 74% of employed graduate alumni are employed in Armenia, advancing AUA’s mission to further the development and advancement of Armenia and the region. AUA alumni move onto further education or employment quickly. On average (for five graduating classes through June 2022) 86% of graduate alumni and 90% undergraduate alumni are either engaged in further education or employed.

f. Staff

As AUA opened its doors to undergraduate education in 2013 and its student body grew, so has the need for additional staff. In June 2013, AUA employed 155 non-faculty staff. In June 2022, AUA employed 222 staff, 43% more than the decade before, 202 of whom are in full-time positions. Non-faculty staff perform a wide range of administrative and professional responsibilities, from professional and academic support services to operational and maintenance functions. The table below breaks down the non-faculty staff by category for 2021-22.

Beginning in 2021-22, custodial staff was outsourced.

Table 1A Categories and Numbers of Non-faculty Staff (as of June 2022)

Categories	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Administrative and Professional	35	3	38
Support Services	36	1	37
Operations and Maintenance	131	16	147
Total	202	20	222

g. Colleges and programs

AUA's academics are centered in four colleges with 11 graduate and eight undergraduate programs, (including two graduate and one undergraduate programs which will launch in fall 2023), and seven graduate certificates.

The Manoogian-Simone College of Business and Economics (CBE) houses one of the university's inaugural programs, the MBA, which graduated its first class in 1993, and now boasts 1251 graduates. In addition to the MBA, CBE offers graduate degrees in Economics, and Management, as well as undergraduate degrees in Business. CBE also offers Graduate Certificates in Finance, Data Analytics, Hotel and Hospitality Management, and Management.

The CBE is also home to the Paul Avedisian Center for Business Research and Development (CBRD), established in 1992. Bringing together teams of faculty, local experts, students, alumni and graduate assistants, the CBRD designs and implements a variety of outreach, research and development projects within and outside of Armenia. These projects focus on a wide-range of topics such as economics, business analysis and planning, feasibility studies for business start-ups, market research and analysis, production planning and optimization, and implementation of classroom and on-the-job training programs.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) offers five graduate programs in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Laws, Human Rights and Social Justice, International Relations and Diplomacy (starting fall 2023), and Public Affairs (starting fall 2023); and two undergraduate programs, in English and Communications, and Politics and Governance. CHSS also offers two master's-level certificate programs: the Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and the Certificate in Translation.

CHSS is also home to three research centers. Established in 1995, the Turpanjian Center for Policy Analysis (TCPA) provides students and graduates with opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary applied research in a broad range of social, political, and legal fields concerning Armenia. The Center for Research in Applied Linguistics (CRAL) offers English language learning opportunities to children in the community, while providing MA TEFL students with an opportunity to student-teach and engage in applied research activity. An integral part of the LL.M. program, the Legal Resources Center (LRC), organizes seminars and conferences on current legal issues, and promotes international standards in legal education and research with a focus on law reform, legal-education reform, and legal information dissemination through public events and online resources.

The Gerald & Patricia Turpanjian College of Health Sciences (CHS) offers a Master of Public Health (launched in 1995) as well as one of AUA's newest undergraduate degrees, an RN to BSN program (initiated in fall 2022). Over 300 MPH graduates work in public and private sectors in and outside of Armenia in public health, health services research and evaluation, and health care delivery and management. The CHS is also home to the Zvart Avedisian Onanian Center for Health Services Research and Development (CHSR), which engages in research and outreach to the professional public health community, while providing training and employment opportunities for students and graduates.

The Zaven P. & Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering (CSE) offers three (four starting fall 2023) undergraduate degrees--Computer Science, Data Science, Engineering Sciences, and AUA's newest undergraduate degree, Environmental and Sustainability Sciences--as well as two graduate degrees, Industrial Engineering and Systems Management, and Computer and Information Science. The CSE is also home to the university's Engineering

Research Center (ERC), which brings together AUA faculty and researchers, visiting faculty, and students to collaborate on interdisciplinary projects focusing on alternative energy, industrial systems, cyber security, artificial intelligence, and computer-aided design and manufacturing.

In an effort to encourage collaboration among faculty from different fields and facilitate AUA as an anchor in the community, the university also established several other centers, the Acopian Center for the Environment (ACE), the Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC), the Turpanjian Rural Development Program (TRDP), and the Digital Library of Armenian Literature (DIGILIB).

AUA's ACE promotes the protection and restoration of the natural environment through research, education, and community outreach with a focus on environmental policy, sustainable natural resource management, protection of the built and natural environment, and information technology and the natural environment. ACE works hand in hand with the CSE to offer courses in undergraduate education, and most recently to roll out the BS in Environmental and Sustainability Sciences (fall 2023).

EPIC is AUA's on-campus start-up incubator that provides students, alumni, and other entrepreneurs with an ecosystem to advance their ventures from idea to success. EPIC provides modern first-class facilities and collaboration space, programs and events, and a network of mentors, advisors, and investors to teams of AUA students as well as outside entrepreneurs.

AUA's DIGILIB collects, digitizes and preserves classical Armenian literature, making it available to audiences around the world. Over 2,000 literary works have been digitized using an advanced method of collecting and storing information in a digital format. DIGILIB is utilized by AUA faculty and students as well as scholars and the public around the world.

While not yet directly connected with the academic programming, AUA's TRDP provides education and economic opportunities to individuals in rural areas of Armenia, neighboring Artsakh, and Georgia to encourage rural development, create jobs, and improve communities. Rural residents set up a variety of businesses, such as bakeries, retail stores, and auto repair shops. TRDP has had an impact not only on economic development but also on the morale and long-term outlook of rural communities.

h. Facilities

The University has extensively renovated its original building, inaugurated a second adjacent state-of-the-art academic facility in October 2008, and renovated and expanded existing facilities. Much of the campus has been renovated with the assistance of USAID's American Schools and Hospitals Abroad funds.

The AUA's main campus includes two buildings located in the center of Yerevan. In addition, the university's facilities include an off campus dormitory, and facility dedicated to expanding AUA's outreach programs and aspects of entrepreneurship (opened June 2023) in downtown Yerevan, as well as a distance location in the town of Dilijan where one of AUA's graduate programs resides (MS in Economics). AUA's main buildings include classrooms, lecture halls, computer labs, exercise room, study areas, a student union, faculty offices, academic support offices, a cafeteria, a small café, a faculty and staff lounge, a library with group study rooms, and administrative offices. Classrooms are equipped with modern technologies including computers, projectors, screens, and audio equipment.

The student union includes a math and writing center, workshop spaces, collaborative study spaces, and open spaces for student clubs and other activities. The AUA library provides

students with access to computers and printers; e-book readers; tablets and laptops, and study rooms.

A student dormitory was opened in 2021 accommodating 56 students from regions outside of the capital and international students. In addition, the Najarian Center for Social Entrepreneurship, opened in June 2023, houses 13 additional classrooms, conference spaces, faculty collaboration spaces, and administrative offices.

Expected to open in 2024 is an on-campus media lab which will enhance the university's curriculum by providing classroom, laboratory, studio, and meeting space for students and faculty to engage in audio/video productions.

AUA's future plans include the opening of a 25,000 square meter facility (expected 2028). The new facility will be located adjacent to the existing campus and will house classrooms, laboratories, studio art spaces, experiential learning areas, study spaces, additional common areas, and faculty offices.

In addition to the facilities connected with the degree programs, AUA operates a business center in downtown Yerevan, and is currently transforming an existing property formerly utilized as a hotel into a second business center. Both of these facilities aim at providing revenue to the university to help subsidize education.

i. Technology

Wireless internet is available in classrooms, faculty offices and throughout the campus. In addition, all classrooms have a computer, projector, audio and video equipment, and internet access to assist with course delivery. Faculty are equipped with an online video conferencing account. AUA has recently transitioned to a new student information system to support the university's growth. AUA's continues to utilize the learning management system, Moodle.

The AUA's Information and Communication Technologies Services (ICTS) and Library provide support on and off campus. During regular Library Hours a reference librarian is available to assist students and faculty. The Library also provides online Ask a Librarian support. The ICTS help desk assists students and faculty during regular hours and has a 24-hour hotline to address emergencies.

j. Community engagement and partnerships

i. Open Education

AUA's Open Education (OE) offers non-degree educational programs geared to meet the educational needs of individuals as well as organizations. OE offers a range of courses and certificate programs, including language classes, test preparation courses, and a wide range of professional development training. OE also administers international tests (college and university admission tests, placement tests, professional certification tests). Through OE's seven regional centers throughout Armenia and neighboring Artsakh, AUA creates opportunities for individuals to engage in life-long learning and personal and professional development, and to contribute to the development of their communities. Open education courses do not bear academic credit and cannot be applied toward fulfillment of degrees.

In 2021-2022 OE provided 3900 enrollments in 362 courses, of which 82% were studying English as a foreign language, 7% business or professional development courses, and 3% test preparation.

ii. Partnerships

AUA has signed approximately 20 MoUs with international higher education institutions, private sector entities, and public sector partners. The partnerships include creating conditions

for student, faculty and staff mobility, research collaborations, internships and practicum, as well as professional development opportunities.

B. Major Internal Events

a. Presidential transition

Since AUA's previous reaffirmation of accreditation in 2015, AUA inaugurated its fifth president and has finalized its search for and announced its sixth president, who will begin on September 1, 2023. The somewhat abrupt resignation of the university's fifth president was addressed with the hiring of an interim president. The interim president was both a founder of the university and the university's fourth president. Three of four vice-presidents continued and all five of the university's academic deans remained, as did all administrative heads. Therefore, the transition to an interim president had minimal impact on the institution's day-to-day operation.

b. Strategic planning

In 2020, prior to the completion of its previous strategic plan, AUA began to engage in a broad-based strategic planning endeavor, to position the university to move into its fourth decade. The goal was to continue to build capacity to address complex transdisciplinary problems while maintaining excellence in academic programs built on disciplinary expertise. This involved both a horizontal dimension, providing research, outreach, and teaching and learning opportunities across programs, colleges and administrative units, and a vertical dimension—enhancing depth and alignment in programs within academic colleges. Strategic Planning focused on four areas: world-class education, excellent research, sustainable outreach, and first-class internal environment. The process included dialogues within strategic units,

follow-up dialogues between strategic units and the executive team, budget dialogues to recommend priorities, and decisions on budget and strategic priorities.

This strategic plan remained in place but was not fully implemented. The new president will be tasked with reviewing and updating the strategic planning process.

Attachment 1Bb 2020-2022 Strategic Plan

C. Major External Events Since Last Review

AUA experienced several overlapping extraordinary events in recent years. The effects of the worldwide COVID pandemic were exacerbated by the 2020 war in neighboring Artsakh.

a. COVID Pandemic

The worldwide 2020 COVID pandemic forced education systems around the world to quickly move from onsite to online. For the first time in all of history, students all over the world were studying online. Just before moving to online instruction, AUA reached out to online teaching experts and was able to engage faculty in several emergency workshops focused on redesigning courses to an online format. Most courses were redesigned for a synchronous modality.

The University immediately subscribed all faculty and staff to an online collaboration platform, augmented and engaged in continuous monitoring of the university's internet bandwidth, and reached out to students and faculty to understand and mitigate limitations of internet access. The transition posed several challenges. Some students were faced with financial difficulties trying to secure sufficient internet access. Others lived in areas that did not have adequate connectivity. While the university was able to provide some financial assistance to students to support increasing home internet access, inadequate connectivity was more

challenging. As a consequence, more students than usual were issued Incomplete grades, with a commitment from faculty to help students complete courses in subsequent terms. The Office of the Registrar and the respective deans and program chairs provided follow up support to instructors to be sure students with Incomplete grades were sufficiently supported to completion.

The University remained completely online through spring 2021. During this period online support for students, faculty, and staff was developed including various workshops on teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, Faculty brown bag discussions were held online in order for faculty to share teaching strategies and discuss teaching challenges. The University's course syllabus template was revised to include a specific section on communication to provide students with information about how to best communicate with instructors. And, syllabus preparation open office hours were organized throughout the summer to prepare for fall 2020 online delivery.

Furthermore, the Office of Student Affairs administered the Writing Center and Student Workshops online. A virtual Student Union was created to provide students with access to the campus resources and support, including the Math and Writing Center, Counseling Services, Career Services, and various student activities. New Student Orientation and Peer Mentoring was conducted online for fall 2020.

The Office of the Registrar increased the availability of online submission of documents as well as accepting documents through email. Electronic signing of education contracts was made available in cases where physical presence was not an option. A number of paper-based documentation processes were also transitioned to an online platform. Office phone lines were transferred to mobile phones permitting staff to respond remotely throughout the day. Accounts

were set up on mobile platforms with a dedicated cell phone number for staff to be able to reach students.

As the university transitioned back to campus, additional faculty trainings were organized to help students transition back to campus.

b. 2020 War in Artsakh

The University and the Republic of Armenia faced increased challenges as a consequence of the war in neighboring Artsakh, which exacerbated the effects of the worldwide pandemic. Some students, faculty, and staff were called up to serve in the military. Others volunteered to serve. Many students, faculty, and staff organized or participated in efforts to collect basic supplies for displaced families.

Seven AUA students gave their lives during the war. Many students, faculty, and staff lost family members, friends, and classmates.

In addition to the physical effects of the war (loss of life, POWs, life-altering injuries, displaced families, losing connections with family members) the mental health of students, faculty, and staff already in a nation-wide quarantine was intensified by the devastation of the war. The University increased its efforts to support the campus by adding additional health services including consulting with mental health experts with experience in the undermining effects of war on learning.

Moreover, the impact of the subsequent blockade imposed by Azerbaijan in December 2022 has prevented some students from returning home, and others from returning to the university.

D. Accreditation History - Response to Previous Commission Actions

AUA initiated the accreditation process in 1998. The University was granted Candidate status in 2002, and was granted accreditation effective August 2006, at which time the AUA was a graduate institution. In March 2015, AUA’s accreditation was reaffirmed for nine years, through February 2024.

In 2011 AUA initiated a Structural Change process to begin undergraduate education. And, in May 2012, AUA was granted approval to launch an undergraduate program as of fall 2013.

The University applied for and earned approval for several new programs: undergraduate degrees in Business, Computer Science (formerly Computational Sciences), and English and Communications (2012); Engineering Sciences (2017); Data Science (2017); Politics and Governance (2020), Nursing (2022); and Environmental and Sustainability Sciences (2022); and graduate degrees in Economics (2012); and Strategic Management (now Management) (2017); Human Rights and Social Justice (2020); International Relations and Diplomacy (2022); and Public Affairs (2022).

a. March 6, 2015 Commission Action Letter

WSCUC’s March 6, 2015, Commission Action Letter noted the following areas for further attention and development:

1. Strengthening the institution’s financial position and capacity

AUA’s action to date: The University has enhanced and expanded its development staff in Armenia and California. In 2013, the AUA launched a five-year multi-faceted development initiative which resulted in the six-fold increase of the market value of the university’s endowment, which is managed professionally by the University of California.

The endowment growth was partially due to the naming of three colleges: the Manoogian-Simone College of Business and Economics, the Zaven P. & Sonia Akian College of Science and Engineering, and the Gerald and Patricia Turpanjian College of Health Sciences. Several other facilities were named through donations, allowing the accrual of unrestricted funds for future growth as well as to buffer against unfavorable market conditions, such as exchange rate fluctuations. The sharp evaluation in the local currency vs. the US Dollar (a 25% increase over the past 1.5 years) has posed challenges. In response, the university has maintained a balanced budget by allocating more donations towards the annual budget rather than to the endowment.

In addition, the 100 Pillars program also launched in 2013 secured 100 donors who gifted \$50,000 over five years. The campaign raised five million dollars of unrestricted funds to support the university operating budget. More recently, the university launched a follow-up program to attract 200 individuals to donate \$5,000 a year for five years. Currently, \$1.2 Million has been raised, and it is expected that the number will reach its target by the end of 2026.

While maintaining a commitment to admitting all qualified applicants who are citizens of Armenia regardless of need, the university implemented modest annual tuition rate increases. The University has been able to uphold this goal by identifying new scholarships and financial aid donors for direct and endowed scholarship gifts.

Additionally, The William Frazer Professorship and the C. Judson King Professorship were established to reduce the cost burden on the budget during the university's efforts to expand its full-time faculty and attract prominent academics.

Endowment payouts are expected to cover approximately 19% of the operating

budget in FY24, compared to 8% in FY13. Tuition revenue is expected to cover approximately 41% of the total operating budget in FY24, compared to 13% in FY13, while the budget itself has grown from \$6 million to \$19 million in the same period. Increases in these diverse revenue sources has decreased the dependence on fundraising for the operating budget resulting in a more financially stable institution.

For the past 7 years, the university has operated without any budget deficit.

Moreover, this year AUA received the largest single donation pledge in the history of the university, \$20 Million towards the construction of humanities and social sciences, and arts buildings. Another \$10 Million is pledged for a science and engineering building.

2. Continuing to implement the policy on faculty scholarship

AUA's action to date: Following the 2015 Educational Effectiveness Review, the university revised its *Appointment, Retention, and Promotion and Faculty Titles* policy and adopted corresponding promotion procedures. The policy outlines the university's definition of scholarship. This definition, based on the Boyer model, includes (1) scholarship of discovery, (2) scholarship of integration, (3) scholarship of application, and (4) scholarship of teaching. The promotion procedures, approved by the faculty senate and board of trustees, include self-reporting and a peer review of evidence of achievement in each of the spheres of teaching, scholarship, and university/professional/public service.

In 2015 to help faculty share their research, the university instituted a self-reporting mechanism to document research and scholarship. The reporting mechanism

was revised in 2021 for faculty to highlight their research on a public web space. Also in 2015, to promote research, the university began granting annual faculty research awards as well as faculty and staff professional development, research and instructional development grants. Nominations for the grants are reviewed by a faculty committee and awarded recipients are announced at the university's commencement ceremony. The *Faculty Workload* policy, revised in 2017 and currently under review, includes the valuing of time for research and scholarship, while the faculty evaluation procedures require faculty to highlight research and scholarship.

Financial austerity measures due to COVID-19 precautions put a hold on promotions in 2020-21 and the processes were reinstated in 2021-22. In 2020-21, the Faculty Senate reviewed and approved a new faculty evaluation procedure which further aligns with research, scholarship and other expectations. These procedures are currently under review. The ongoing efforts to increase the number of full-time faculty have positively impacted the university's research output.

3. *Enhancing Diversity*

AUA's action to date: Issues surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion require a unique approach for the university. While Armenia is a homogenous country (98% ethnically Armenian), the university embraces and strives for diversity particularly in gender, regional origin, and socio-economic background.

In fall 2022, approximately 8% of AUA students were international², 63% of AUA's students female, and 27% of the students from Armenia were from regions

² The National Statistical Service of RoA reports that approximately eight percent of all university students nationwide were international in 2021-22 (that last year for which data is available).

outside the capital. Equal access to education, regardless of ability to pay, is a key diversity issue for AUA and the university prides itself on not turning down a qualified Republic of Armenia citizen applicant due to inability to pay full tuition. AUA also offers merit-based scholarships to international students. The University has been proactive in addressing this diversity goal by creating the country's first loan and need-based tuition assistance programs, without which many students would not be able to pursue graduate education. Approximately 50% of AUA students receive some form of tuition assistance.

Enrollment diversity, including both international and regional students, had been a focus of intensified recruitment efforts prior to the worldwide COVID pandemic. In the last two years, AUA has returned to international recruitment as well as efforts outside Yerevan, the capital city in which approximately half the country's population lives. In fall 2022 international students from over 20 countries made up 8% of the student enrollment, while still short of AUAs target of 20%.

AUA's faculty is similarly diverse, including from Greece, United States, Lebanon, Russia, France, Canada, Bulgaria, Iran, Chile, and other countries.

The University continues to strive to expand and diversify the campus. To this end, the AUA has engaged in several initiatives. A number of MoUs have been signed with universities in the United States and Europe promoting student, faculty and staff exchanges. As a result of these MoUs, as well as the AUA's participation in the Erasmus+ program of the European Union, students, faculty and staff have engaged in exchanges and trainings in several countries such as Norway, France, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

To promote rural and international representation within AUA's student body, recruitment efforts have increased throughout Armenia as well as in the United States, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Russia and Lebanon. The University maintains scholarships to support international students.

In terms of services, the university's campus is accessible to individuals with physical disabilities. The University's accessibility has been highlighted in a report supported by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as the only higher education institution surveyed in Armenia to have a physically accessible campus and to have developed policies relevant to students with disabilities. The policies follow the AUA's commitment to be open to all academically qualified applicants regardless of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, marital status, sex, age, or sexual orientation.

In addition, the university provides services and programs to support students with disabilities. The University's Office of Student Affairs provides counseling and disability services and accommodations, and organizes workshops and discussions relevant to help promote and encourage inclusion and tolerance.

The AUA has participated in more than a dozen partner projects funded by the European Union some of which aim to promote access and inclusion for students from vulnerable and underrepresented constituencies to higher educational institutions.

As part of this reaffirmation of accreditation, the university appointed a working group that explored AUA's current strengths and areas needing attention. Information related to this exploration is included in section 3D below.

4. *Aligning program review, planning, and resource allocation.*

AUA's action to date: Following the 2015 Educational Effectiveness Review and with the adoption of the university's strategic plans, AUA began to better harmonize the budgeting process with assessment efforts, to ensure that sufficient provision of human and financial resources are considered.

In an effort to underscore the importance of program review, the university earmarked a course release for program chairs leading program review, and, upon request, allocated administrative staff resources beyond that provided in all cases by the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA).

The budgeting process timeline has been adjusted to better align with overall university planning and to consider recommendations from program review. The academic program review (APR) guidelines require that program self-studies consider the allocation of resources and the need for additional resources, which is expected to be reflected in academic program proposed budgets. Despite these initial steps, as further discussed in section 3C below, and as a core component of this thematic approach for reaffirmation, more attention is needed to regularize and better align these processes.

The March 6, 2015, Commission letter also required that AUA submit a progress report on undergraduate education. AUA submitted a progress report on undergraduate education on September 7, 2018.

Attachment 1Da Progress Report on Undergraduate Education September 7, 2018

b. Response to January 20, 2022 Substantive Change Report to RN to BSN proposal

Regarding the January 2022, Substantive Change Report concerning AUA's RN to BSN proposal, see Attachment 1Db.

Attachment 1Db: Response to January 2022 Substantive Change Report to RN to BSN proposal

2. Compliance with Standards of Accreditation

Attachment 2 describes in detail AUA's compliance with the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation. Below is an overview of the university's introspection of its strengths and areas needing attention specifically related to the Standards of Accreditation. And, Section 4Bb below is an initial look at the new Standards of Accreditation. Although AUA was not required to reflect on the new Standards of Accreditation for this reaffirmation period, section 4Bb below describes the university's preliminary look forward to the new Standards. The areas needing attention are highlighted in the action plan in Attachment 4B(a).

Attachment 2 Compliance with WSCUC Standards

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Strengths. AUA has clear, publicly-available mission and vision statements, academic program goals, and expected student learning outcomes. AUA's mission to help develop and advance "Armenia, the region and the world through teaching and scholarship, fostering creativity, integrity and community service" is demonstrated through the university's outreach programs, public events, research accomplishments, and agreements with other universities and industry, as well as with the government. The University has undergone annual iterations of strategic planning at the institutional, college, and unit levels.

Needing Attention. As noted elsewhere in this self-study, the university needs to improve communication related to internal processes. In addition, greater resources are needed to encourage and support university research output.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

Strengths: AUA's graduation and retention rates are substantially above the average in the United States. Student support services such as writing and math centers, student workshops, counseling services are widely utilized.

Needing attention: The University needs to expand high-impact opportunities such as experiential learning, increase professional development for teaching and learning, and improve completion rates for annual student learning assessment.

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

Strengths: AUA's financial base is strong, with an endowment that has expanded in recent years. The organization chart has remained effective as the university has grown.

Needing attention: The percentage of full-time faculty needs to increase to meet AUA's evolution. Similarly, physical space constraints need to be addressed during this growth period. The Faculty Senate must regain its role in university governance.

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Strengths: AUA has institutionalized data collection and reporting, with some lapses over the last year. The University's student learning assessment and Academic Program Guidelines are strong. The University's boards of trustees contribute ample expertise, stature, and experience to AUA's stewardship.

Needing improvement: Institutional processes such as assessment, strategic planning, and budgeting should be better aligned to enhance AUA's overall effectiveness. A near-term improvement is the broader use of the data that is compiled and documentation of evidence-based decision making.

3. AUA's Thematic Pathways to Reaffirmation of Accreditation

A. Description of the Approach

In continuing to build upon and evaluate the university's growth, AUA chose to explore two themes: The Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree and the Academic Program Review.

These two themes were chosen to coincide with AUA's growth and explore educational effectiveness since the university launched undergraduate programs in 2013. To explore these themes two working groups were established consisting of faculty, staff, and students. One additional working group was established to explore diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Attachment 3A Reaffirmation of Accreditation Log of Activities

B. The Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree

a. Background

As of fall 2023, the university will have eight undergraduate majors: three original undergraduate programs (Business, Computer Science (formerly Computational Sciences), and English and Communications); four which opened in the last decade (Data Science, Engineering Sciences, Politics and Governance, and Nursing); and, one program scheduled to open in fall 2023, Environmental and Sustainability Sciences. In fall 2022 undergraduate enrollment was 1803, and the number undergraduate alumni as of June 2023 is 1965. The undergraduate student-faculty ratio (13.2:1, in 2021-22) has fluctuated over the past years, while continuing to enable open discussion in class and student access to faculty. This student-centered environment has not been sacrificed despite the growth in enrollment.

Table 3B(a) Student Faculty Ratios

Academic Year	Ratio
2021-22	13.2:1
2020-21	11.5:1
2019-20	11.0:1
2018-19	15.5:1
2017-18	16.4:1
2016-17	16.1:1

AUA undergraduate degrees consist of courses in the disciplinary major, including a capstone project, General Education courses, and elective courses. The major courses provide students with depth, specialization, and career preparation, while General Education provides breadth and a foundation of general knowledge and skills for life.

AUA also provides undergraduate students with an opportunity to earn a minor, by studying a discipline outside of their field of study in some depth. Five minors are currently offered (Environmental Studies; Gender Studies; Genocide Studies and Human Rights; Philosophy; and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics) with several more in development.

The three inaugural academic programs and General Education have undergone one full academic program review (APR), during which data and evidence was collected from students, graduates, alumni, employers and faculty, to assess attainment of expected learning outcomes. Two of the undergraduate minors have undergone slight revision based on student and faculty feedback, while the minors have not yet undergone full review.

A component of the APR (as further noted in section 3C below) is an annual student learning assessment based on direct and indirect evidence to systematically investigate one or two of the program SLOs. While both annual student learning assessment and the broader program-level APR provide opportunities to review data and evidence to assess effectiveness and propose recommendations, a comprehensive analysis of undergraduate effectiveness has not been yet conducted. Therefore, AUA chose to explore the meaning, quality, and integrity of an

undergraduate education more holistically, asking broader questions about what students gain from an AUA undergraduate education. Similar to many higher education institutions, the challenge for AUA, especially as it moves into its fourth decade was to clearly define the value of an undergraduate degree, and to further evaluate whether university and program goals and expected student learning outcomes align with AUA’s mission, student expectations, market demands, and developing regional and global needs

In fall 2022, a working group of faculty, staff, and students began exploring the integrity of the undergraduate degree, and developed a process to explore several questions:

- How does AUA define the value and integrity of its undergraduate degree?
- What data needs to be collected to demonstrate the value and integrity of the degree, and the dynamic of integrity during growth?
- Where does AUA stand in terms of high-impact educational opportunities?
- Do alumni feel prepared for graduate studies, in their field or alternatively in a different field of study?
- Are program goals and student learning outcomes aligned with AUA’s mission, student expectations, market demands, and developing regional and global needs?

b. Description of process

AUA sought to define meaning, quality, and integrity of the degree (MQID) in a way that supports the university’s values. Several models for assessing MQID were reviewed, including the Lumina foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile and the National Survey of Student Engagement’s (NSSE) list of High-Impact Practices.

AUA’s after graduation survey indicates that 83.7% of 2022 undergraduate alumni found jobs or went on to further education within three months. At the same time, the university’s

existing data was reviewed and supplemented with additional research in order to understand whether undergraduate alumni who pursued graduate studies felt sufficiently prepared for their further studies. While tangentially investigated in previous AUA studies, this specific issue had not been specifically researched. Graduates of AUA undergraduate programs sometimes pursue graduate studies in fields quite different from their undergraduate degree. For instance, English and Communications majors have pursued graduate studies in Management, Political Science, and Anthropology. Therefore, a focus on whether alumni who went on to graduate studies felt sufficiently prepared was considered a particularly pressing question. A further aspect of this question is that AUA, despite its recent growth, still only houses relatively few undergraduate degrees; consequently, some students select majors close to their preferred field in the hope that they will have the opportunity to focus on their real interest in graduate school. In addition, in the course of undergraduate study, students often discover new fields and their interests evolve away from their initial major selection. All of these lead to some misalignment between undergraduate study and preparedness for further graduate education in the students' chosen field of interest. Existing research included reviewing several key performance indicators including admissions and enrollment yields, six-year graduation rates as well as time-to-degree metrics.

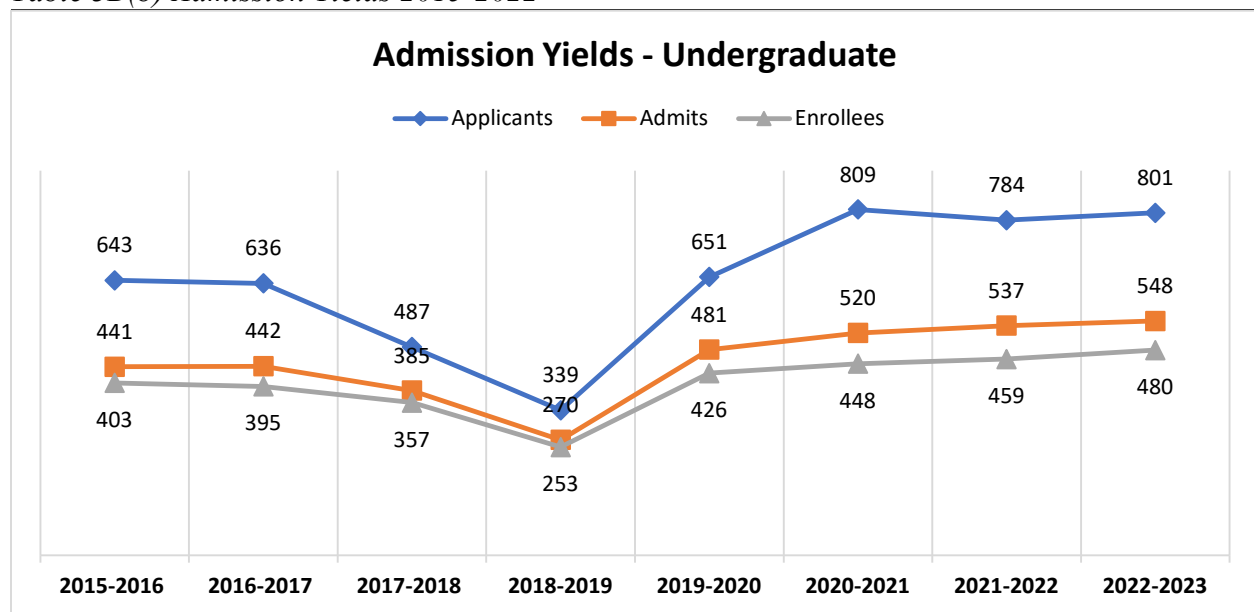
Most applicants to AUA's undergraduate programs decide well in advance to undergo the preparation necessary to apply to AUA, a process which is unique in Armenia's higher educational ecosystem and thus more demanding than for other universities in Armenia. As an American-style institution, AUA requires most applicants to take standardized admissions tests which are not used by other HEIs in Armenia. As an English-language institution, applicants must be sufficiently fluent in a non-native language. On a more technical level, AUA's admissions calendar which is more in line with American admissions decisions are largely before

the high school exit examinations and admissions deadlines for other Armenian universities. Thus, applying to AUA requires special commitment and consequently, there is a high level of self-selection in the AUA applicant pool.

Average applicant-to-admission yields for the six-year cycle (2015-16 to 2022-23) is 71%, while the average enrollment yield is 89%. While the high applicant-to-admission yield is not surprising given the self-selection criteria discussed above, the extraordinary enrollment yield demonstrates AUA’s high reputation among its applicant pool.

The table below shows the eight-year gradient. Note that a decrease in applicant and enrollee numbers in 2018-19 is a consequence of the one-time effect of Armenia’s 2008 adoption of a twelve-year secondary school system (from a ten-year system), resulting in low high school graduation numbers in 2017 and 2018.

Table 3B(b) Admission Yields 2015-2022



While there is always room for improvement, AUA is pleased with the 81.5% average six-year graduation rate for the first four cohorts, which is significantly above the U.S. average of 62.3%.

Table 3B(c) Six-year Graduation Rates

Year	Size of Cohort	1 Year Retention		2 Year Retention		4-Year Graduation		6-Year Graduation		Graduation rate as of June 30, 2022	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2013	281	242	86%	229	81%	187	67%	221	79%	229	81%
2014	387	358	93%	335	87%	245	63%	319	82%	328	85%
2015	405	358	88%	345	85%	283	70%	336	83%	344	85%
2016	402	373	93%	341	85%	261	65%	329	82%	329	82%
2017	354	318	90%	287	81%	220	62%	N/A	N/A	250	71%
2018	251	219	87%	205	82%	148	59%	N/A	N/A	148	59%
2019	427	382	89%	374	88%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2020	457	410	90%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2021	484	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Similarly, over 80% of all undergraduate students graduate within four years. A large percentage of students who graduate in six years are male students who enter AUA and then go on to serve in the military for two years, and then return to complete their studies.

Table 3B(d) Time to Degree for 2017-2022 Graduates

Time to Degree (in years)	N	%
Up to 4	12	0.7%
4	1335	81.6%
4.5	102	6.2%
5	76	4.6%
5.5	12	0.7%
6	71	4.3%
6.5	17	1.0%
7 and more	11	0.7%
Grand Total	1636	100.0%

The high graduation and low time-to-degree rates are noteworthy and partly attributable to local university culture, which demands full-time status of its students, and the self-selection among the applicant pool. When surveyed, undergraduate alumni expressed a high level of

satisfaction, noting that their education made a significant contribution to their writing, oral communication, and analytical skills. And, alumni who have gone on to further graduate studies indicate a high level of preparedness for graduate studies when it comes to these fundamental skills.

AUA's undergraduate education incorporates a number of high-impact educational practices. In particular, each undergraduate program has a required senior capstone project aimed at integrating students' academic experience. Some of the advantages of small learning communities are also a part of an AUA undergraduate education. At AUA students are admitted to a specific major, and in the first semester they attend small mandatory peer mentoring sessions with other students in their major. Freshmen also engage in a two-semester first-year seminar with students outside of their major, and engage directly with the university's Office of Student Affairs, including through the Writing Center, and small student workshops on a range of topics such as strategies for academic success, healthy lifestyles, time management. A majority of undergraduate students surveyed expressed satisfaction with support services. Outside the formal curriculum, AUA's research and other centers provide interested students with experiential opportunities to apply what they have learned to real-life situations.

c. Findings and recommendations

Several areas that require attention regarding how AUA might further assess and enhance the meaning, quality and integrity of its undergraduate education are listed below.

Further expand high-impact educational opportunities for students. A working group is being established to examine how the university might further expand the range of opportunities for students including:

- AUA's new media lab, expected to open in summer 2024, should provide new possibilities for students interested in communications and public advocacy to create

projects that will impact their local communities and enhance Armenia's media landscape.

- Expanding student engagement with outreach modalities such as the Entrepreneurship and Product Innovation Center (EPIC), the Acopian Center for the Environment (ACE), and AUA's research centers.
- Expand undergraduate research and outreach opportunities

Support faculty to develop and implement more high-impact practices such as service-learning, project-based learning, internships, and inclusion of undergraduates in research, which can be underscored during regular faculty advising. An important aspect is incentivizing all faculty to be more active in this regard, including the large percentage of adjunct faculty who may not be as engaged as full-time faculty in everyday campus life.

Encourage student engagement in high-impact educational practices by examining questions such as whether the university has sufficient systems in place to motivate students to engage in such assignments.

Enhance coordination between academic programs and the Office of Alumni Relations in order to maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date database of alumni, tracking their accomplishments after graduation and soliciting feedback on the value of their AUA education. A comprehensive and current alumni database will strengthen the university's ability to track the professional progress of its graduates and measure the long-term impact of AUA's undergraduate education.

Expand upon extra-curricular activities that contribute to the integrity of the undergraduate degree. Activities and support services that are currently offered should be analyzed to quantify the percentage of students these services engage, and understand the possible needs for those students not yet engaged. Activities might include but not be limited to counseling, accessibility support, clubs/organizations, service/volunteering activities, athletics, and student publications.

Enhance data collection to understand the relationship between academic studies and the growing population of students who are employed, given the increase in the number of students who are working more than 20 hours a week. In addition, this data may contribute to revisiting University matriculation policy to allow more flexibility for lighter course loads, longer time-to-graduation, and part-time undergraduate study generally.

Enhance relationship between major and non-major courses. What is the extent to which the curriculum integrates knowledge and skills from major courses and non-major courses? There are systems in place to assess the quality of our undergraduate majors and make changes to them as needed. And, there are systems in place to provide quality assurance for General Education. However, an understanding of the experience of the degree in its entirety should be further explored, through, for example, interdisciplinary real-world applications of basic knowledge, how writing across the curriculum might enhance a graduate's communication capacity in their chosen career, and relevance of the application of numeracy skills in everyday life.

Update: In early 2023, the university contracted with an independent consulting firm to conduct a market study of the higher education landscape. In particular, AUA aimed to examine local and global needs and identify potential new degree programs, research directions, and benchmark current trends in higher education. In June, the report was presented to the board of trustees and AUA's senior leadership. Campus is currently reviewing the recommendations from the study.

C. Academic Program Review

a. Background

Academic programs at AUA have clearly defined and publicly available goals and expected student learning outcomes. These goals and outcomes are studied using direct and indirect evidence through student learning assessment and periodic academic program review.

With the launch of undergraduate education in 2013, the university simultaneously increased its capacity to collect, analyze, share, and assist faculty and staff in reviewing data and evidence. The staff of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) increased through the hiring of several new analysts, primarily responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting data, and supporting faculty and staff in utilizing data in the assessment of student learning. As of this writing, the OIRA is nevertheless somewhat understaffed due to recent turnover, causing delays in current year reporting. This lapse is currently being remedied.

AUA's academic program review guidelines were reviewed and revised by the Faculty Senate in 2013 and then again in 2017 with input from the university's board of trustees. Now that several undergraduate programs and all graduate programs have undergone an initial academic program review, and most graduate programs have undergone three or more reviews, the time was right to again evaluate the implementation of the review process as well as the guidelines to be sure they meet the expectations for thorough analysis and AUA's growth.

The Academic Program Review (APR) working group met periodically beginning in fall 2022 and developed a process to explore a number of questions:

- Does the data collected, reported, and shared meet the needs of the academic programs?
- Are we identifying the "right" external reviewers?
- How are the data/findings being used to improve student learning?
- (How) are students engaged in the process of academic review and assessment in general?
- Are recommendations from Wrap-up Memo and Prioritized Recommendations implemented?

- How well are university processes integrated to include recommendations from the academic program review process?

b. Description of process

To explore these questions, a thorough review was conducted of existing data and information as archived in the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment and published online including: AUA's January 2022 Thematic Pathways to Reaffirmation Proposal, WSCUC April 2022 Response to AUA's Thematic Pathways to Reaffirmation Proposal; the university's APR Guidelines, previous APRs (self-studies, external review reports, wrap up memos), feedback from external review committee chairs, feedback from extramural reviewers (external review committee members from outside of AUA), status of academic program reviews in the current cycle of reviews, list of faculty who had previously been involved in academic program review process as a means to review capacity, and as a focus group, and the status of annual student learning assessment and academic program reviews in the current cycle.

Focus Group discussions were conducted with academic program chairs, faculty who had engaged in an external review committee, other faculty, and students. A follow up survey was distributed to program chairs. Following the data collection, the working group administered focus groups as noted above and then reviewed and summarized the data, outlining the main findings and suggesting recommendations based on these findings, as relevant.

AUA's APR Guidelines comply with the *WASC Resource Guide for Good Practices in Academic Program Review* document, while providing some context for AUA's situation. The APR Guidelines provide for three unique but interconnected components of the review process: a self-study, an external review, and a formal wrap up.

The Self-Study provides program faculty an opportunity to examine and analyze the educational effectiveness of the program through a thorough exploration of data and evidence.

The Self-Study focuses on both strengths of the program and areas that need improvement. The External Review, which includes reviewers from both inside AUA (but outside of the program and college in review) and external to AUA, focuses on ensuring objectivity of the program review process, determining how the program compares to other similarly-situated programs, and identifying commendations as well as recommendations for improvement. The formal wrap up provides the program an opportunity to reflect on the recommendations of the Self-Study and the External Review, and to discuss priorities and plans for the program for the coming 3-5 years. The outcome of the wrap-up is a formal memo prepared by the program with prioritized recommendations and a multi-year plan, including budgetary recommendations. This Wrap-up Memo along with the Self-Study Report and External Review Report are published on an internal server with access for faculty.

As an important part of the university's assessment procedures and as a component of the APR, the AUA's annual student learning assessment (SLA) guidelines were also reviewed. The AUA's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) has published a Student Learning Assessment Manual and provides programs with templates for engaging in the planning and reporting of student learning assessment.

Attachment 3C(a) Student Learning Assessment Manual

Attachment 3C(b) Academic Program Review Guidelines

Attachment 3C(c) Student Learning Assessment Plan Template

Attachment 3C(d) Student Learning Assessment Report Template

Student learning assessment focuses on identifying an investigation topic, including the specific student learning outcomes being explored; the rationale for exploring the particular SLO (at the given time, if not in rotation); the assessment schedule and plan; a description of the

assessment methods; the members of the assessment team; and how the program intends to utilize the findings.

Student learning assessment reports are published on an internal server, available to all faculty. While summaries of student learning assessment reports are published on the university's website at <https://assessment-ira.aua.am/sla-reports-and-templates/annual-student-learning-assessment-summaries/>

The university's Student Learning Assessment Manual and APR Guidelines in general provide a structure for engagement, templates, and questions to explore. The AUA's OIRA provides data, including longitudinal data, guidance, and additional support.

Program chairs and faculty found the university's APR Guidelines to be useful. Faculty found the data provided by the AUA's OIRA to be helpful in the exploration of their program. And, the OIRA responded in a timely manner to additional requests for data. As previously noted, the OIRA is partially understaffed due to recent departures. As a result, academic programs under recent review noted some delays in OIRA response to data requests and in overall support.

Several areas needing improvement were discovered both in the APR Guidelines and in the implementation of the APRs as well as in the implementation of the student learning assessment.

In particular, the completion of annual student learning assessment has been inconsistent. As noted in Table 3C(a) below, only one academic program has completed annual assessment regularly, while at least one program has not yet completed an annual student learning assessment. Annual summaries of student learning assessment are not regularly published on the university's website.

Table 3C(a) Completion of Annual Student Learning Assessment and APRs 2012 through 2022

Program	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	Most recent SLA summary published
Undergraduate												
Business				x	x	x	APR	x				N/A
Computer Science							APR					N/A
Data Science												2023
Engineering Science												N/A
English and Communications				X	X		APR		X			2021
Nursing												
Politics and Governance												2022
General Education			X	X			APR					
Graduate												
Business Administration				APR	X	X	X				APR	2019
Computer and Information Science							APR	X				2021
Economics		X		X	APR		X	X	X			2021
Industrial Engineering and Systems Management	X			APR	X						APR	N/A
Human Rights and Social Justice												
Laws	X	APR	X	X	X		X			APR		2019
Management						X	X	X		APR		
Political Science and International Affairs			X	X	APR	X			X	X		2021
Public Health	X		X		X		X					2019
Teaching English as a Foreign Language	X		APR	X	X	X	X	X	APR	X		2019

The implementation of APRs is more consistent than annual student learning assessment.

As noted in Table 3C(b) below, programs generally follow the university’s program review timeline which is published on the AUA’s website at <https://assessment-ira.aua.am/academic-program-review-timeline-and-reports/>. And, in general recommendations of the external review report were included in the final Wrap-up Memo and Prioritized Recommendations. However, the university found it difficult to secure two external reviewers for some APRs.

Table 3C(b) External Review Committee Recommendations Considered in the APR Wrap-up Memo and Prioritized Recommendations

Program	Most recent Completed APR	Reviewers: External-to-AUA	External review recommendations in the Wrap up Memo
Undergraduate			
Business	2019	1	Yes
Computer Science	2019	2	Yes
Data Science			
Engineering Sciences			
English and Communications	2019	2	Yes
Nursing			
Politics and Governance			
General Education	2019	2	Yes
Graduate			
Business Administration	2016	2	Yes
Computer and Information Science	2019	2	Yes
Economics	2017	1	Yes
Human Rights and Social Justice			
Industrial Engineering and Systems Management	2015	2	?
Laws	2021	2	Yes
Management	2022		
Political Science and International Affairs	2017	1	Yes
Public Health	2020	1	Yes
Teaching English as a Second Language	2021	1	

Several additional issues were identified that require further attention as the university continues to build institutional capacity and enhance the effectiveness of assessment.

In general, follow up between APRs is an oversight task of the deans and provost and has been somewhat inconsistent from program to program. To remedy this, various measures are under consideration including standard operating procedures for new program chairs, deans and the provost on APR implementation and oversight as well as provision in the APR Guidelines for interim progress reports by programs.

In some cases, programs also noted that there are too many recommendations from the external review, some of which were not well aligned with the academic program's priorities. In particular, some recommendations from the external review did not consider the specific context of the program in review and were therefore dismissed as not relevant. Some of the external reviewers chosen were not aware of the context. This challenge is less of an issue in the United States, where external reviewers often come from similarly situated institutions.

Another area of concern is the minimal student participation in student learning assessment and APRs in specific. In meetings with students including the Student Council, several issues have been identified including a low-level of awareness of the processes, lack of incentive for students to engage in the process, and general confusion regarding how findings are used.

Additional faculty workload during APRs was also identified as an ongoing challenge. While the timeline for completion was considered workable, some faculty, in particular program chairs, noted that even with course release for leading an APR, the workload is heavy considering other obligations. At least one program hired short-term administrative help to provide support during APRs. This assistance relieved some of the administrative burden. Some programs noted that the support provided by the OIRA throughout the process was helpful, while others noted that help was less available during the most recent cycles.

c. Recommendations

In light of these findings, several recommendations were made:

Revise APR Guidelines. Several recommendations were made to facilitate the implementation and render the recommendations more implementable.

- Self-study report - include information about specific program context and priorities, and vision for program development

- Self-study report - describe how the program demonstrates DEI including in the curriculum, support for students, faculty, and staff
- External review report - recommendations should consider the context of the program and priorities as outlined in the Self-study report
- Post APR follow up - annual reporting of progress on implementation of the recommendations, not only as a requirement of the subsequent APR, but also by adding an amendment to the annual student learning assessment report (SLAR) template to include describing progress on the implementation of the prioritized recommendations
- Review committee composition - change the existing text from “should include at least two internal and at least two external members” to “the Review Committee should *ideally* include two internal and two external members” and clarify that external reviewers can be from either Armenia or abroad
- Review the anticipated frequency of implementation of both APRs and student learning assessment

Update: The APR Working Group drafted revisions to the APR Guidelines which have been recommended to the university’s Curriculum Committee for its review.

Review efficacy of the APR process. While the current review looked at a variety of components of the APR process, one component was not fully addressed. Now that several of the programs together with faculty have engaged in at least one complete APR process, the university should engage in a review of its efficacy. In specific, the university’s financial and other resource investment may be better optimized. This review should include how to make the process more effective and efficient; how human and financial resources are allocated; how to more efficiently engage in the process as the university scales up, to engage both experienced as well as novice faculty, as a means to build capacity and further build a culture of assessment. Additionally, a review of the efficacy of onsite vs. online external reviews, as well as the ideal frequency of implementation should be considered.

Improve harmonization of internal processes. Create an internal calendar of processes and documentation for review. Currently the value of processes such as student learning assessment,

academic program review, budgeting, and strategic planning, are not leveraged as well as they could be. Integrating the processes through a review of inputs, outputs, and synchronization may boost efficiency and overall effectiveness.

- Assure university-wide consistency and awareness of the APR process by regular reference to APRs (Self-Study Report, External Review Report, and Wrap-up Memo with Prioritized Recommendations) in administrative decision-making and policy making.
- Assure university-wide consistency, awareness and participation in the preparation of the Wrap-up Memo with Prioritized Recommendations.

Engage students more meaningfully in university assessment processes. A targeted effort to review current processes to identify methods to increase effective student engagement in university assessment processes (including course evaluations, student learning assessment, focus group discussions, etc.) is necessary.

Update: The Interim President held an open meeting with students to ascertain student knowledge of assessment processes and reasons for minimal student participation. A follow up meeting was held with the university's Student Council to underscore the importance of and identify strategies toward student engagement. As one step, the Student Council was asked to develop outreach strategies to help increase the response rate on end-of-course evaluations in spring 2023. This included a student-prepared poster encouraging students to complete course evaluations. A modest increase in the response rate was noted.

D. Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

a. Background

While diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) was not a formal part of AUA's thematic pathway to reaffirmation, the university took time to reflect on the Commission's 2015 recommendation and AUA's responsibility, particularly in light of WSCUC's new standards, to foster creativity, fresh perspectives, and understanding.

b. Description of process

In order to explore AUA's strengths and areas for improvement related to diversity, equity and inclusion a working group of faculty, staff, and students conducted a multi-pronged review of demographics, survey data, focus groups, department self-assessments, policies, procedures, strategic documents, educational program objectives, and support for research. The following questions were explored:

- How does AUA define diversity?
- What data exists, or is needed, to understand, measure and encourage DEI?
- What are AUA's strengths related to diversity and supporting all students, faculty, and staff?
- What are areas that need greater attention?

A thorough review of DEI was conducted, including previous survey reports; publications; academic program goals and student learning outcomes; student, faculty, staff and governing body demographics; university policies; and the university's mission and strategic plan. In addition, several focus groups were conducted with faculty, staff, and students to further explore the university's experience, and a survey was administered to academic programs and administrative units. Furthermore, an inventory was compiled of support services, facilities, equipment and other assets from a DEI perspective.

This review revealed AUA's strengths in DEI include its physical accessibility, equity in student services, relative diversity, and potential to foster DEI in the classroom. Areas for improvement include communication and decision making, perceptions of equity including salary and promotion; barriers to access, and policy implementation. Based on the data collected, the working group highlighted a number of findings:

Physical accessibility. AUA's campus is largely accessible to those with physical disabilities, increasingly over the years since its founding in 1991. The university's founders underscored the importance of accessibility of facilities, and over the years the campus has undergone renovations to ensure access from the entrance to all floors. New construction, including the Paramaz Avedisian building opened in 2008, a student dormitory opened in 2021, and the Najarian Center for Social Entrepreneurship (opened June 2023), were designed as fully accessible buildings. The university's Dilijan (distance) location still lacks full accessibility at the time of this report.

As part of an European Union funded Erasmus+ grant focused on inclusion, in 2019 a number of tools were purchased to support students with learning disabilities or physical or cognitive impairments such as dyslexia, reading difficulties, low vision, color blindness, etc. These include software and devices for transforming text to speech, magnification, accessibility of documents, note-taking tools, typing/computer accessibility tools, recording tools, and exam tools. While these resources are available for all students with a disability, they are underutilized. In Armenia, learning disabilities often go undetected. Raising awareness among students and conducting training for faculty could improve the use of these resources to support students with disabilities.

Student services. University and student support services are a DEI-strength for undergraduate students at AUA. The Office of Student Affairs provides counseling, career, and math and writing services to students. Veterans (male citizens returning from mandatory two-year military service) are provided support related to re-acclimating to academic studies, time management, mental health, and overall reintegration. For international students, the university provides support services such as university and cultural orientation, information about housing, transportation, etc. And students who wish to study abroad are supported with communication with host institutions, help with logistics, etc. And co-curricular and extracurricular programs contribute to inclusion, as students can form clubs and groups to create communities of belonging.

Diverse and welcoming environment. Although Armenia is an overwhelmingly homogenous country (98% ethnically Armenian), AUA embraces a diverse community. The December 2022 campus climate survey indicates that faculty and staff believe that diversity is one of the top five “core values” of the institution. And, in focus group discussions, students and faculty noted that many people who would feel marginalized in the wider society feel more comfortable at AUA.

Institutional-level commitment to DEI. AUA’s mission and vision articulate DEI as values for the university. AUA’s mission statement explicitly highlights its commitment to diversity, and encourages inclusion and equity through repetition of the term “community” and by framing citizenship both as a duty and right. There is a similar emphasis on citizenship and community in the vision statement. While there is room for improvement regarding the implementation of some policies as noted in the recommendation section below, several university policies explicitly aim at enhancing DEI including the university’s Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity in Employment policies.

Attachment 3D(a) Non-Discrimination policy
Attachment 3D(b) Equal Opportunity in Employment policy

Fostering diverse perspectives in the curriculum and research. While the full extent of DEI in the classroom practices has yet to be evaluated, AUA has academic resources to support DEI in learning. Nevertheless, 95% of academic programs evaluated have at least one student learning outcome (SLO) related to DEI. And, AUA's undergraduate programs include two specific SLOs related to DEI: think critically and creatively, conceptualizing real-world problems from different perspectives; and work productively in diverse teams and solve problems collaboratively. Moreover, AUA's library boasts a wealth of learning resources to support DEI in the classroom.

c. Recommendations

While the university boasts many strengths related to DEI, the working group made several suggestions for continued evolution in this regard. These recommendations are highlighted in in the action plan in Attachment 4Ba.

Improve communication and decision making. Survey results, focus groups, and department self-assessments revealed a need to strengthen communication between the administration and campus, and improve community participation in university-level decision making, especially for staff and faculty with part-time affiliation. The newly developed AUA Intranet, launched in February 2023, is expected to boost internal communication, engagement and collaboration.

Undergraduate students also expressed that they do not know what the proper mechanisms are for reporting grievances. There is a need to better inform students about where to find information and how to engage the institutional entities such as the Ethics and Grievance Committee, Standing Committee on Student Conduct, Codes of Conduct, the university's

whistleblower mechanism, and stakeholder groups such as Student Council, Program Chairs, and Deans.

Review perceived equity in compensation, promotion, professional development opportunities and workload. Varying perceptions of equity in salaries and promotion were revealed. A range of satisfaction regarding salary levels was noted and should be investigated in more detail.

Differences in overall satisfaction were noted in faculty vs. staff as well as by sex and age.

Similarly, there are perceived inequities regarding promotion and professional development. In addition to the perceptions of salary inequity, there are broader issues related to perceptions of fairness and equity within the institution.

While the results of surveys and focus groups indicate that the majority of faculty and staff feel there is overall fairness, there are a number of perceived inequities that should be further examined including among international and local faculty (and students), and among faculty in general.

As an American university in Armenia, AUA attracts a diverse student body and faculty. There are certain inclusion-related challenges that accompany this international environment. For example, some faculty highlighted differences rooted in perceived challenges based on citizenship or country of origin. In addition, a few concerns were noted related to supporting international faculty who experienced challenges acclimating to the new environment.

Some faculty expressed their perception that there is an unequal distribution of labor in both teaching and university service. They feel that some faculty serve on many committees, while some serve on few or none and that service obligations continue to fall on a few. Some faculty noted challenges balancing teaching, research, service, and opportunities for professional development. As one step towards recognizing employees who demonstrate exceptional work,

AUA introduced a staff excellence award, and teaching and research excellence awards for faculty. Nonetheless, in light of these perceptions, AUA's *Faculty Workload* policy should be reviewed again.

While explicit sex-based inequity was not identified, perceptions of some forms of implicit sex-based bias were noted. Female faculty and staff showed significantly lower levels of agreement with the statement that “all employees are treated fairly at AUA” and “decisions regarding promotion are fair and equitable” than their male colleagues on the most recent climate survey.

To ensure both smoothness of operations; as well as accessibility, inclusion and even safety, attention should be made to ensure that there is at least one employee available in all units with a basic level of English. While the language of instruction at the university is English, some staff members in non-academic support units do not speak English well (e.g. cafeteria, maintenance, security). And some students, faculty and staff do not speak Armenian. On campus, while English is the language of record, instruction, and official communication, for ordinary communication and as appropriate to the circumstances and interlocutors, communication in other languages exists at times.

Update: An analysis of actual equity in salary and promotion is underway. And, the Deans Council has been tasked with reviewing the Faculty Workload policy.

Address barriers to access/decrease barriers. Several barriers to access to studying at AUA were identified which may leave some groups underserved, particularly low-income students, students from the regions outside of the capital, and international students. This includes access to admissions testing, admissions processes, and financial aid information. In addition, given that

the student population is majority female (partly due to the fact that military service is mandatory for male citizens at the age of 18 years), some academic units noted the need to recruit more male students.

While up to 50% of AUA students receive some form of financial assistance, and AUA engages a need-blind admissions policy, there is still a challenge in ensuring that this opportunity is communicated effectively to prospective applicants. Efforts must be made to ensure that opportunities are communicated effectively.

Review policy implementation. AUA's mission statement explicitly highlights its commitment to diversity, and encourages inclusion and equity. And while several explicit policies exist (such as the Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity in Employment policies) as policies come up for periodic review DEI should be considered. Moreover, while aspects of diversity are articulated in the above-mentioned policies, AUA had not previously defined diversity, equity and inclusion.

Update: Through stakeholder input, the Working Group on DEI developed draft definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion, for further discussion, review, and adoption by campus. The definitions were reviewed by the Accreditation Steering Committee, and will be further reviewed in the upcoming academic year.

4. Conclusion: Reflections and Plans for Improvement

A. Summary of the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

The current reaffirmation process comes as AUA embarks on its fourth decade, an occasion for deep reflection and analysis based on the experience of two generations of graduates. It is also an opportunity to recalibrate AUA's mission, academic programs, student support capacity, fiscal capacity, and quality assurance mechanisms to the challenges ahead.

Offering only graduate degrees and open education courses at its founding, AUA's launch of its undergraduate program in 2013 was an inflection point in the university's growth. Moving from 101 students in three graduate programs in 1991, to 805 students in eight graduate programs and three undergraduate programs in 2013, to 2231 students in 10 graduate and seven undergraduate programs in fall 2022, the university has grown rapidly. As the university has grown, its people, infrastructure, policies, and capacity have shown remarkable resilience and readiness to rise to new challenges.

The two themes selected for inquiry--The Integrity of the Undergraduate Degree, and Academic Program Review--reflect the university's strength and some of the challenges AUA faces as it continues to grow to fulfill its mission and meet the demands of 21st century higher education. These two themes are intertwined as they address the capacity of the university to engage in educational effectiveness while taking a close look at its degree and course offerings at the graduate and in particular at the undergraduate level. The choice of these two themes was timely given the university's goals of growth in degree programs, student enrollment, and research and the concomitant growth of faculty, administrative capacity and facilities.

Through the efforts of several working groups, which included faculty, students, and staff, the university reviewed existing data, carried out focus group discussions, administered surveys,

and examined its processes, procedures and their implementation, and institutionalization, and assessed its quality assurance mechanisms to assure evidence-based decision-making, well-tailored to AUA's capacities and needs.

The university aimed to explore six specific questions addressed throughout the report and summarized below.

How is the current academic program review process working? In general, academic programs engage in academic program review as scheduled, every five to six years. Areas that require attention include follow up in the years in between consecutive APRs for a given program, and effective harmonization among institutional processes including budgeting, strategic planning, faculty development, research support, and onboarding of program leadership. Despite best efforts, the APR and related recommendations are rooted in a particular time and circumstances and while intended to guide, they are not meant to impede necessary or desirable changes to address needs unanticipated at the time of the APR, especially for new programs in their first years of implementation, when a shorter feedback loop may be required. APR Guidelines are currently being revised to address these limitations. Once the APR Guidelines have been revised, a review of their implementation should be conducted especially as many curricular revisions arise from efforts to improve the meaning, quality and integrity of the undergraduate degree (MQID), most of which are still in their inaugural phase of delivery.

Does the data collected, reported, and shared by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment meet the needs of the academic programs? The data collected, reported and shared by the university's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) help substantiate program decision making. And, the OIRA has provided programs with additional data as requested, while due to staff limitations the reporting of data has lagged. APR Guidelines are

being revised to include this additional data to better serve the stated APR goals as well as the broader analysis of MQID. The revisions aim to engage in a deeper look at co-curricular and support services, a specific look at DEI, as well as the satisfaction of graduates as they transition into further education or career paths. These new Guidelines will need to be reviewed following a cycle of implementation. And, AUA's Administration will need to pay attention to the adequate staffing of the OIRA to meet the growing needs of the university.

How are the findings from assessments being used to improve student learning? The university engages in multiple assessment practices. Graduation and retention rates are high, and time to degree is comparatively low. At the same time, the direct connection between assessment practices and improvements in student learning remains vague. Greater attention is necessary to strengthen the university's assessment practices and to better understand how student learning can be improved.

What resources are needed to meet the needs of faculty and students? Resources are essential to the ability of the university to meet the needs of students and faculty. AUA's operational budget has increased with the increase in the number of students and faculty. The operational budget is projected to continue to increase as the university aims to grow its student population. Nevertheless, due to efficiencies and economies of scale, the overall cost per student has decreased by 30% from \$10,082 in 2013/14 to \$7071 in 2022/23.

The university faces several challenges with its planned growth. More students than originally expected are working and studying, reducing time for campus engagement, including engagement in educational assessment and planning efforts. Faculty too have expressed concerns regarding the heavy expectations of teaching, research and service. The university is exploring

ways to incentivize student engagement in quality assurance processes and reviewing the current expectations and support for faculty, in particular program chairs, related to assessment.

With the growth of student enrollment, physical space has been a concern. In particular, sufficient faculty office space, student study space, and student extra- and co-curricular space is limited. Student dormitory space is also limited, leaving some students from abroad and the regions waitlisted for housing. While these concerns are being addressed with AUA's campus expansion plans, the university is exploring short-term solutions.

Importantly, better harmonization among processes such as assessment, budgeting and strategic planning will facilitate the university to more effectively consider recommendations from program review.

How are student support services contributing to the fulfillment of student learning outcomes? While student services play a significant role in the life of university education, a thorough analysis of how student support services have contributed to student learning has not yet been conducted. APR Guidelines had not previously included a required component to review student support services as they contribute to student learning, and academic support units have not undergone review. In 2014 the university developed guidelines for the review of academic support units. However, due to other priorities during the initial undergraduate buildout, the guidelines were not implemented. The university plans to review these guidelines, revise them as needed, and engage in meaningful review of the academic support units that contribute to both student learning and the overall quality of an undergraduate degree.

How is the current annual student learning assessment process working? The Academic Program Review (APR) and student learning assessment guidelines provide the university with a formal structure to engage in regular review. Guidelines and timetables are published online.

Templates are made available. And, data and support are provided to programs throughout processes to facilitate implementation. Nevertheless, challenges remain. While most programs engage in APRs on schedule, student learning assessment is less consistent, with some programs not completing each year. It is time to review the anticipated frequency of implementation of both APRs and student learning assessment in accordance with the university's capacity and need. In addition, the APR Guidelines require some updates to address limitations, as noted previously. Regular completion of both annual student learning assessment in all programs and more effective APR efforts with the updated Guidelines should serve to improve both student learning and positively affect the meaning, quality and integrity of the undergraduate degree.

B. Looking Ahead

a. Action plan

AUA has much to do to address the needs of the institution as it evolves in its next phase. This includes those aspects related to the continued growth of the institution as well as its more general evolution. Through the efforts of the three working groups and with input from campus, an implementable action plan has been developed to address the areas that need attention.

Attachment 4Ba Draft Action Plan

b. New standards

Although AUA was not required to reflect on the 2022 Standards of Accreditation, the university utilized the opportunity of reaffirmation of accreditation to look forward. In particular, as noted in section 2 above, a thorough review of how campus defined and engaged with diversity, equity and inclusion was conducted.

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity. The institution defines its mission and establishes educational and student success objectives aligned with that mission. The institution has a clear sense of its essential values, culture, and distinctive elements, and its contributions to society and the public good. It promotes the success of all students and makes explicit its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The institution functions with integrity and transparency.

AUA's vision and mission statements play a central role in how the university operates. The university has developed policies to ensure that the institution operates in a manner that is consistent with its character, purpose and aspirations. Policies are published online and are scheduled to be routinely reviewed to avoid stagnation as well as help identify areas needing attention. The schedule of policy review, especially during the pandemic and changes in university leadership, has been somewhat sporadic and needs further institutionalization for sufficient and effective review. External communication, through the university's website, social media, and other extensive outreach keeps the public apprised of developments. The recent development of an intranet aims to engage the university in better communication within campus, in particular to help students better identify university resources. Similarly, the recent, focused effort to understand the university's engagement with DEI serves to inform both upcoming policy revision and support needs.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success. The institution achieves its educational and student success objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, and through support for student learning, scholarship, and creative activity. It promotes the

success of all students and makes explicit its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The institution demonstrates that core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning.

Faculty develop graduate and undergraduate programs with broad benchmarking of comparable programs globally and with attention to local needs. Undergraduate degrees include sufficient depth in the major as well as breadth to address the broader needs. Program goals and student learning outcomes are published online and are included on all course syllabi. Attainment of student learning outcomes is reviewed in annual assessment and regular program review. These processes need attention for better consistency of completion. And the respective guidelines, currently under revision, should clearly address DEI and student support services. AUA ensures that faculty expertise matches program expectations. Faculty engage in orientation and ongoing professional development. Faculty developed and adopted a definition of research which reflects both AUA's research activities and best practices in similarly-situated institutions. The policy definition was incorporated into the university's policies and faculty evaluation processes. The *Faculty Workload* policy outlines clear expectations for teaching, research and service in line with the university's mission statement. While graduation and retention rates are high, and time to degree comparatively low, more consistent and extensive assessment, including alumni surveys, is expected to provide deeper understanding and insights for policy making.

Attachment 4Bb Faculty Workload policy

Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures. The institution achieves its educational and student success objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal,

technology, and information resources within appropriate organizational and decision making structures, and consistent with its explicit commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

AUA employs staff, faculty and administrators to ensure that students and operational needs are met. Data on faculty and staff, including degree attainment and time status is published annually in the university's *Factbook*. Continued staff and faculty professional development is addressed through both regular internal offerings, as well as a program providing grants to staff and faculty to engage in external opportunities. As the university has grown, the number of faculty has grown along with the diversity of offerings. In order to address the curricular needs of the students in fields where there are not enough course offerings to support a full-time faculty member, AUA has engaged highly qualified part-time faculty. At the same time, the number of full-time faculty has increased with the size of the student body and efforts will continue to grow percentage of full-time faculty.

AUA has been a leader in information literacy and technology in Armenian higher education and the campus has accordingly been designed and equipped and staffed to support student learning in this sphere. As AUA grows, assuring adequate resources to meet new demand is a priority. AUA's organizational chart and decision making process are grounded in a full panoply of university policies ensuring transparency and efficacy. During this period of growth, incongruences have surfaced from time to time and have been timely addressed to assure smooth operation, especially during the pandemic years. AUA's parallel US and Armenian corporate structure continues to work in tandem and the boards of trustees and senior administration are qualified and sufficient to meet the university's needs. During this period of growth, the Faculty Senate has played an important role, but, particularly during the pandemic, there was less Faculty Senate engagement in governance than previously, which is being addressed through improved

communication, faculty orientation, and a more proactive outreach by the administration for Faculty Senate input. As previously noted, recent staff departures from the OIRA are being addressed through new staffing in order to resume regular and consistent reporting of institutional data.

Standard 4: Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement. The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its mission, achieving its educational and student success objectives, and realizing its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The institution envisions its future in light of the changing environment of higher education. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness.

AUA publishes an annual Factbook with a broad set of data and information, including on graduation and retention rates. AUA has developed multi-layered quality assurance processes, including end-of-course course evaluations; annual student learning assessment; regular academic program review; student exit surveys; faculty, staff and alumni surveys. Attention is needed to ensure more consistent implementation of these processes and higher survey response rates. Moreover, while corresponding guidelines have been adopted for academic support units, implementation has been uneven and some provisions need to be revisited for efficacy as implementation proceeds. The university also augments its own analysis by commissioning third-party studies to better understand the local and global educational and labor market trends.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1Aa Memorandum Concerning the Establishment of the American University of Armenia

Attachment 1Bb 2020-2022 Strategic Plan

Attachment 1Da Progress Report on Undergraduate Education September 7, 2018

Attachment 1Db Response to January 2022 Substantive Change Report to RN to BSN proposal

Attachment 2 Compliance with WSCUC Standards

Attachment 3A Reaffirmation of Accreditation Log of Activities

Attachment 3C(a) Student Learning Assessment Manual

Attachment 3C(b) Academic Program Review Guidelines

Attachment 3C(c) Student Learning Assessment Plan Template

Attachment 3C(d) Student Learning Assessment Report Template

Attachment 3D(a) Non-Discrimination policy

Attachment 3D(b) Equal Opportunity in Employment policy

Attachment 4Ba Draft Action Plan

Attachment 4Bb Faculty Workload policy

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Organizational Chart

Appendix 2 Federal Compliance Forms

Appendix 3 Distance Education Review Team Report Appendix Form

Appendix 4 Off-Campus Locations Review Team Report Appendix Form

Appendix 5 Summary Data

- Enrollment by program - longitudinal through fall 2022 – Undergraduate
- Enrollment by program - longitudinal through fall 2022 – Graduate
- Fall enrollment by sex- longitudinal through fall 2022 – Undergraduate and Graduate
- Enrollment International – Undergraduate and Graduate (2016-2022)
- Enrollment in regions outside of the capital - For Republic of Armenia (RoA) Citizens
- Graduation and Retention Rates – Undergraduate
- Graduation and Retention Rates – Graduate
- Faculty: by time status (full-time/part-time; core/visiting) (fall 2022)

Appendix 6 Accreditation Steering Committee and Working Groups