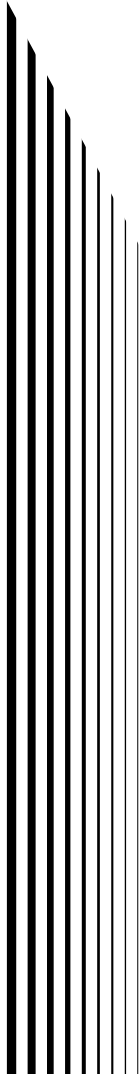




AUS Planning Structure

March 2007



This document provides a framework for university planning and is intended to serve as a supplement to the university's initial planning documents. It provides the following:

- the background for the university's planning processes.
- the revised university mission, goals and objectives.
- the programmatic strategic processes through which the university aims to fulfill its mission, goals and objectives between 2005 and 2010.

Background

The university's mission statement and goals were originally developed in 1999, reflecting the vision that His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Sharjah, held for the university. A *Rolling Five-Year Plan* was developed in consultation with faculty and staff and subsequently approved by the Board of Trustees in February 2002.

While the mission statement and goals guided the overall development of the university in its early years, the *Rolling Five-Year Plan* served as a guide for university strategic planning and financial sustainability. The plan focused its aim on "sustainable excellence" and projected the means by which the university could operate without any need of an annual subsidy from the Government of Sharjah. The objective was to achieve this important goal by 2007, 10 years after the university's founding. Financial sustainability was achieved in 2004, three years in advance of the goal. This remarkable achievement is a tribute to the vision of the founder, His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, the guidance of the Board of Trustees, the leadership of the senior administration team, the hard work of hundreds of dedicated faculty and staff, and the efficacy of the plan.

During the period between the development of the *Rolling Five-Year Plan* and the landmark year of 2004, in which the primary aim of financial sustainability was achieved, the current chancellor appointed two committees as additions to the university's planning components. The committees met periodically to update the *Rolling Five-year Plan*, reviewed implementation progress and identified new planning requirements. Also between 2002 and 2004, the university community engaged in an extensive review of its academic and operational processes as part of the self-study it undertook for the accreditation process with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Since that time, the chancellor, vice chancellors, deans and other senior staff members have engaged in both formal and informal planning processes to clarify and reassess the university's planning needs.

The new planning structure outlined here is the result of the work of the planning committees, the self-study report and MSCHE recommendations, and the formal and informal planning processes undertaken at several levels in the university. It consists of the revised mission, goals and objectives that follow below, and a more detailed set of strategic planning processes that outline how the university's objectives will be achieved for the five-year period from 2005 to 2010.

While the university's earlier planning aimed at developing a solid academic foundation and ensuring financial sustainability, the new planning structure builds upon these bases and establishes the context for continuous quality improvement and excellence. It provides a framework from which the university can carefully weigh development options and ensure that new initiatives are sustainable for the long term and that resource allocations are based on both this sustainability and continued quality improvement. The new planning structure provides the university with a means for reaching a new and even higher level of excellence in the coming years.

Revised Mission, Goals and Objectives

The mission, goals and objectives of the university were reviewed and revised during the 2005–2006 academic year, with the Board of Trustees approving the new documents in February 2006.

The revised mission statement provided the basis for the new planning structure:

AUS Mission Statement

The mission of the American University of Sharjah (AUS) is to achieve and maintain preeminence as a coeducational institution based upon American models and grounded in the history and culture of the Arab Gulf region.

AUS is a not-for-profit university that:

1. Admits students on the basis of their academic qualifications regardless of race, color, gender, religion, disabilities, age or national origin.
2. Employs faculty and offers academic programs that are equivalent to those at leading institutions of higher education in the United States.
3. Integrates liberal studies, professional education, and co-curricular and extracurricular learning experiences to provide its graduates both breadth and depth of knowledge.
4. Values strong relationships with its alumni, the public, the media and appropriate governmental entities.
5. Encourages and supports research and scholarship by its faculty and students and serves as a resource for the community.
6. Provides students with a rich and varied campus life that fosters personal growth, maturity and a sense of social responsibility.
7. Operates effectively and efficiently, develops and uses its fiscal and human resources wisely, and encourages wide participation in its governance.

Goals were then developed to link directly with each element of the mission statement:

AUS Goals

The goals for the American University of Sharjah are intended to guide the institution in fulfilling its mission.

AUS is a student-centered university that strives to:

1. Recruit national and international students from a variety of ethnic, religious and social backgrounds who are capable of and motivated for academic success.
2. Periodically evaluate its faculty and its academic programs to assure that they meet the personal and professional needs of students, are appropriate relative to resources, further the university's mission and foster teaching effectiveness.
3. Offer courses and curricula to assure students a coherent array of general education options plus professional specializations that expose them, both in and outside the classroom, to world cultures, religions, arts and traditions, as well as scientific developments and technologies.
4. Inform its alumni, the public and governmental agencies of its programs, its needs, its successes, its opportunities and its challenges.
5. Assure that active research and scholarship inform and improve teaching and learning, and contribute to the intellectual traditions as well as the economic progress of the nation and the region.
6. Involve students in athletic activities, artistic performances, recreational events, social clubs and community service activities to enhance their personal growth and development and their sense of social responsibility.
7. Improve its administrative and governance processes through continuing development, evaluation and judicious allocation of resources.

Specific objectives were then developed to enable the fulfillment of the goals and the mission, and provide direction for the five-year period between 2005 and 2010:

AUS Objectives 2005–2010

The objectives for the American University of Sharjah in the period 2005–2010 should assist the university in measuring its progress in meeting its goals.

AUS will utilize its planning and evaluation capabilities to measure its progress in:

1. Recruiting students showing demonstrable improvement in their ability to succeed doing university-level work.
2. Developing review processes that for curricula incorporate standards of national and international accrediting bodies to assure program quality, currency and relevance, and that for faculty enhance their abilities to provide high-quality educational experiences for students.
3. Increasing student success in course work, as well as retention and graduation rates consistent with high standards, participation in co-curricular activities and opportunities for extracurricular activities such as exchange programs and internships.
4. Strengthening its relationships with alumni, the media, governmental entities and friends.
5. Enhancing internal and external support for research and scholarly endeavor, and faculty and student participation in these activities.
6. Expanding student participation in intramural, athletic, social and community service activities and increasing the numbers of alternatives available for such participation.
7. Providing a productive, participatory and rewarding work environment in which all employees contribute to the institutional mission and to a wise utilization of resources.

Strategic Processes

Strategic processes were developed to provide more detailed information regarding achievement of the objectives for the five-year period from 2005 to 2010. The processes indicate specific areas of continuous improvement emphasis and incorporate measurable elements in each of the seven areas of focus:

1. An enrollment management plan that focuses not upon increasing student enrollment, but rather sets enrollment objectives focusing upon the following kinds of considerations:

 - a. Improvement in the academic qualifications of students entering our programs at all levels and, to facilitate that improvement, development of techniques for predicting applicants' ability to succeed academically at AUS.
 - b. Better retention rates of enrolled students to the extent consistent with maintenance of high academic standards.
 - c. National and ethnic diversity of the student body.
 - d. Career, graduate school and professional school readiness of matriculating students upon their successful completion of AUS programs.
2. A program assessment process that focuses upon measures such as the following:

 - a. Success in meeting requirements specified by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.
 - b. Compatibility and consistency of faculty credentials with the program distribution required to meet the needs of our academic programs and ambitions.
 - c. Competitiveness of faculty salaries and benefits with those of a reasonable cohort of universities with which AUS aspires to be compared.
 - d. Opportunities for faculty professional growth and development.
 - e. Ways for faculty members to improve their teaching effectiveness in the unique educational environment at AUS.
3. A curricular review process that

 - a. Evaluates, integrates, and updates as appropriate both general education requirements and professional preparation.
 - b. Identifies promising additions to the AUS academic program menu consistent with the interest of students and institutional interests and capabilities.
 - c. Facilitates modification or elimination of programs as student interests and needs change and as institutional perspective adapts to economic and social evolution.
 - d. Obtains accreditation and other significant program recognition as the university matures and thrives.
4. An external relationship initiative that

 - a. Enhances the image of the university in the eyes of prospective faculty, students, staff and alumni.
 - b. Identifies partnership and exchange possibilities with educational and cultural institutions;
 - c. Raises the profile of the university in the United Arab Emirates and abroad.
 - d. Develops contacts with professional associations, governments, non-governmental organizations and the corporate sector in the region and worldwide.
5. Research initiatives that

 - a. Utilize and build upon faculty expertise.
 - b. Provide increased opportunities for both faculty and students to engage in scholarly and creative activities that enhance teaching and learning.
 - c. Focus upon areas of particular concern to the Emirate of Sharjah, and the needs of the United Arab Emirates and the region.
 - d. Enhance the reputation of the university as a vital component of the culture and economy of Sharjah.

6. Student life enhancement that

- a. Makes appropriate residential and recreational opportunities available to students.
- b. Integrates student life into academic programs.
- c. Encourages development of productive social experiences and traits in the student body.
- d. Promotes responsibility to society and community.
- e. Fosters development of leadership skills and familiarity with modern technologies.

7. A financial and administrative planning process that

- a. Assures the availability of facilities and financial resources to fund the academic and support functions of the university.
- b. Provides information sufficient to support the administrative actions of management and policy decisions of the Board of Trustees.
- c. Encourages the efficient organization of human resources and wise utilization of financial and physical resources.
- d. Enhances the capabilities of staff through professional development and opportunities for personal growth within the organization.
- e. Provides an atmosphere where all employees can contribute to the educational environment of the university.

As it moves forward within its new planning framework, the university will periodically review its progress in each of these programmatic areas, identify any adjustments required and highlight milestones achieved. As the strategic processes evolve, they will supplement the university's mission, goals and objectives and be used to evaluate trends and guide resource allocation decisions from year to year.

With this new planning structure in place, the university assures itself of a new and even higher level of excellence, founded on the established hallmarks of its sustainability and continuous quality improvement.

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