

2025-2030 Strategic Plan

A Bold New Chapter

Pillar 1

A Transformative Educational Experience

Operational Plan AY 2025-2026

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A Transformative Educational Experience

This pillar focuses on enriching the entire student journey, from initial recruitment to alumni engagement, by integrating academic rigor with vibrant student life and support services. It aims to enhance undergraduate and graduate education to attract high-achieving students and support long-term success.

Key student touchpoints, including onboarding, learning experience, graduation, and post-graduation outcomes, are examined to deliver a personalized educational experience. This approach ensures AUS remains competitive and responsive to the needs of students and the labor market, particularly amid growing digital and social disruptions in higher education. Strategic priorities include modernizing curricula, expanding flexible learning models, and enhancing graduate education through enriched academic and residential offerings. These efforts aim to increase student engagement, satisfaction, and success while strengthening AUS's reputation as a leading liberal arts and research institution.

The Vice Chancellor for Student Experience, Ms. Shaima Bin Taliah, serves as the Executive Sponsor for this pillar, ensuring coordinated execution and accountability.

Executive Summary

The first pillar aims to strengthen the full student journey, from recruitment to alumni engagement, through a holistic approach that integrates academic excellence with a vibrant, supportive environment. Initiatives target both undergraduate and graduate levels, focusing on modernizing curricula, expanding graduate programs, adopting flexible delivery methods, and enhancing advising, student services, and digital infrastructure. The plan emphasizes responsiveness to market demands, student expectations, and technological shifts in higher education. Key actions include curriculum reform, enriched academic and career advising, improved digital services (website and mobile app), and data-driven enrollment strategies.

Strategic Objectives

Inspirational Undergraduate Experience (S01)

Enhance teaching, learning, and academic support to drive a selective, inspirational liberal arts undergraduate experience via updated curricula, vibrant student life, and flexible learning models.

Globally Influential Graduate Education (S02)

Develop graduate education to transform into a globally influential research institution by expanding residential and academic opportunities and increasing recruitment.

Initiative 1 - Future-Ready Curriculum: Analyze Academic Programs

Timeline: Sep 2025 - Apr 2026

Maps to: S01

Lead: Dr. James Griffin

Analyze 25% of academic programs in phase 1 to ensure they are future-ready, aligned with market demands, and support timely degree completion.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Form a working task force (AOC and GPC), analyze 25% of current program offerings and student satisfaction with the offerings (internal scan) and gather data on benchmarking and best practices (external scan) (Yearly basis)	Mid-project report finalized (Month 4)	Sept 2025 – Dec 2025
Identify gaps in the curriculum, propose potential solutions	Final report finalized (Month 8)	Nov 2025 – Apr 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Completion and submission of analysis report [Weight=50%].
2. Student satisfaction with their involvement in the proposed changes to overall curriculum (average of 3.5 or above on 5-point Likert scale) [Weight=25%]
3. Faculty satisfaction with their involvement on proposed changes to overall curriculum (average of 3.5 or above on 5-point Likert scale) [Weight=25%]

Contributors

Deans / HoDs / Faculty representatives / Student representatives/ Academic Operation Council (AOC) and Graduate Programs Council (GPC)

Initiative 2 - Future-Ready Curriculum: Comprehensively Review Gen Ed Program

Timeline: Sep 2025 - May 2026

Maps to: S01

Lead: Dr. James Griffin

Comprehensive review of the Gen Ed Program to equip students with essential skills, knowledge, and competencies for academic, professional, and personal success. The purpose is to align the program with societal and industry trends, foster critical skills, and enhance interdisciplinary learning.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Form a working group, analyze current gen ed program (internal scan), gather data on benchmarking and best practices (external scan)	Mid-project report finalized	Sep 2025 – Jan 2026
Draft new curriculum and seek key stakeholder feedback	Final report finalized	Dec 2025 – May 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Completion and submission of analysis report [Weight=50%].
2. Student satisfaction on proposed changes to gen ed curriculum (average of 3.5 or above on 5-point Likert scale) [Weight=25%]
3. Faculty satisfaction on proposed changes to gen ed curriculum (average of 3.5 or above on 5-point Likert scale) [Weight=25%]

Contributors

Deans / HoDs / Faculty representatives / Student representatives

Initiative 3 - Future-Ready Curriculum: Develop New Graduate Programs

Timeline: Sep 2025 - May 2026

Maps to: SO2

Lead: Dr. Mohamed El Tarhuni

Develop new graduate programs, especially at the doctoral level, aligned with emerging industry trends and workforce demands.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Evaluate market needs, national priorities, and AUS capabilities.	Pre-proposals for new graduate programs approved by Senior Leadership.	Sep 2025 – Oct 2025
Develop proposals.	Full proposals for new programs submitted.	Oct 2025 – Dec 2025
Obtain external validation.	External feedback about proposed programs obtained.	Jan 2026 – Feb 2026
Secure BOT approval.	Proposed programs approved by BOT.	Feb 2026 – May 2026
Secure CAA Approval.	One or two programs approved.	Mar 2026 – May 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Two new graduate programs approved by CAA [Weight=100%]

Contributors

Deans / HODs / Faculty

Initiative 4 - Student Success: Implement Key Student Success Taskforce Recommendations

Timeline: Sep 2025 - May 2026

Maps to: S01

Lead: Dr. James Griffin

In 2023, at the request of the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor established a Student Success Taskforce to examine and recommend strategies for improving student outcomes. The Taskforce conducted two in-depth analytical studies—one on first-year undergraduate retention and the other on six-year degree completion—and produced two comprehensive reports with actionable recommendations. This initiative aims to implement two recommendations from the Taskforce to enhance student success.

Activities

Milestones

Timeline

Implement recommendation of student success committee on retention: introduce adaptive differentiated math placement test (ALEKS software).

Math placement test piloted in Fall 25, with a mid-size launch completed Spring 2026.

Sep 2025 – May 2026

Implement recommendation of student success committee on graduation rates: Bring in change of major interventions.

Policy interventions introduced for students who fail placement tests and key introductory courses for the major (2 months).

Experiential and Skills based major maps developed for most majors and disseminated / made available to relevant stakeholders.

Sep 2025 – May 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Overall satisfaction rate with the new placement test system amongst relevant faculty and staff stakeholders measured at 3.5 or more on a 5-point Likert scale [Weight=35%]
2. Satisfaction with change of major policies and interventions by HoDs and AD's measured at 3.5 or more on a 5-point Likert scale [Weight=30%]
3. 20% of all majors develop experiential and skills based major maps [Weight=35%]

Contributors

Deans / HoDs / Director's/Testing Center

Initiative 5 - Student Success: Enhance Academic Advising and Mentoring

Timeline: Sep 2025 - May 2026

Maps to: S01

Lead: Dr. James Griffin

Enhance academic advising and mentoring programs, academic support, and more personalized learning.

Activities

Introduce institution wide comprehensive advising tool.

1. Complete procurement of tool
2. IT installation of tool
3. Training for relevant staff, faculty, and administrators
4. Pilot the tool amongst select groups of students and staff
5. Troubleshoot
6. Full launch

Milestones

Tool installed and staff training completed in Fall 2025; tool piloted in Spring 2026.

Timeline

Sep 2025 – May 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. 100% of all academic advisors / administrators trained to a satisfactory level; 10% of all faculty trained to a satisfactory level [Weight=50%]
2. 10% of all undergraduate advising (pilot phase) for Fall 26 (taking place in Spring 26) done using the tool [Weight=50%]

Contributors

Deans / HoDs / ASC / IT

Initiative 6 - Recruitment, Admissions, and Enrollment: Review and Revise UG Recruitment Strategy

Timeline: Oct 2025 - Aug 2026

Maps to: S01, S02 & S08

Lead: Mr. Ali Shuhaimy

Review/revise the UG recruitment strategy to attract a highly selective and high-caliber student body, aiming to maintain a student body of about 5,000 by 2030. Conduct a comprehensive review of the current strategy to focus on enhancing branding and messaging highlighting unique value propositions.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Develop, in collaboration with SCM, comprehensive awareness campaigns showcasing the institution's unique value propositions.	Benchmarking review report (with defined goals and metrics) completed.	Oct 2025 – Dec 2025
Build relationships with international schools and counselors to expand international recruitment.	Enhanced branding and messaging campaigns finalized; target audiences defined.	Oct 2025- Aug. 2026
Attract a diverse, academically talented well-rounded student body via strengthening academic and financial incentives.	Optimized application process finalized and implemented.	Oct 2025- Aug 2026
Regularly monitor the effectiveness of the strategy using the defined metrics and make appropriate adjustments.	Feedback collection completed and priority refinements implemented.	Oct 2025- Aug 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Increase the number of Fall 26 applicants with 90% + high school GPA by 5% [Weight=35%]
2. Increase the percentage of enrolled Fall 26 applicants of 95% + high school GPA by 2% [Weight=35%]
3. Expand recruitment catchment area by 30% [Weight=30%]

Contributors

SCM and Colleges

Initiative 7 - Recruitment, Admissions, and Enrollment: Integrate Analytics into Enrollment Management

Timeline: Oct 2025 - Aug 2026

Maps to: SO1 & SO10

Lead: Mr. Ali Shuhaimy

Conduct a market and feasibility study to evaluate the use of AI and predictive analytics in enrollment management. This initiative aims to identify suitable technologies that can help AUS forecast enrollment trends and better target prospective students in the future. The focus is on defining institutional needs, assessing available solutions, and recommending next steps.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Conduct a market study on potential AI solutions for identifying high-potential applicants and forecasting enrollment.	Objectives defined; key stakeholders involved in data collection and proposal development.	Oct 2025 - Dec 2025
	Assessment of AI solutions and evaluation of in-house or external tools completed.	Jan 2026 - Aug 2026
Conduct an internal assessment of AUS's readiness (in terms of data availability and quality) for an AI solution that supports enrollment management.	Objectives defined; readiness assessment report completed.	Jan 2026 - Aug 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Complete a market study and institutional readiness assessment and recommend the most appropriate AI-based solution for high-potential applicant identification and enrollment forecasting [Weight=100%]

Contributors

IT and OIRA

Initiative 8 - Recruitment, Admissions, and Enrolment: Review/Revise Scholarship and Financial Aid Program

Timeline: Sep 2025 - Aug 2026

Maps to: S01 & S09

Lead: Dr. James Griffin

Review/revise the scholarship and financial aid program based on best international practices while aligning with cultural and local norms. Collaborate with the Office of Financial Grants and Scholarships to assess the current scholarship and financial grants program to align with institutional goals to attract and retain a diverse, and high-caliber student body.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Revise the financial grant and scholarship offering to align with institutional financial goals while maintaining adequate financial support for students.	Merit scholarship review completed, including recommendations.	Ongoing. – Sep. 2025
	Financial grants review completed, including recommendations.	Ongoing. – Sep. 2025
	Institutional approval for revised OFGS offering for incoming student Academic year 2026-2027 secured.	Ongoing - Oct 2025-
Implementation of approved OFGS offering for incoming students for Academic year 2026-2027	Alignment of all OFGS and OEM procedures with revised offering completed	Ongoing - Oct 2025-
	All communication channels updated to reflect policy or process changes	Ongoing - Oct 2025-
	Ongoing impact on admissions assessed and documented.	Oct 2025-Aug 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Reduction of OFGS spending on incoming students for Fall 2026. [Weight= 100%]

(Target % reduction to be determined at end of August.)

Contributors

Office of Financial Grants and Scholarships, Office of Enrollment and Admissions

Initiative 9 - Recruitment, Admissions, and Enrolment: Grow Graduate Enrollment

Timeline: Sep 2025 - May 2026

Maps to: S02, S03, S04 & S05

Lead: Dr. Mohamed El Tarhuni

Grow graduate enrollment, especially at the PhD level, to support AUS's research agenda.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Develop and implement a marketing and branding strategy for graduate programs.	Graduate marketing strategy finalized, and promotion campaign launched.	Sep 2025 – Dec 2025
Review and enhance the graduate assistantship program to attract top graduate students.	Graduate assistantship package revised and approved.	Sep 2025 – Apr 2026
Streamline the application and admission process.	Admission process reviewed and revised.	Sep 2025 – May 2026
Improve pre-admission engagement with prospective students (e.g., faculty contact, program webinars, virtual tours).	Virtual engagement sessions conducted for key programs.	Sep 2025 – May 2026
Review and enhance the onboarding and the first-year experience support (e.g., peer mentoring, advising, academic check-ins) for new graduate students.	Graduate orientation/welcome program redesigned; first-year graduate student support framework developed and implemented.	Sep 2025 – May 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Increase the number of PhD applicants by 10% [Weight=25%]
2. Increase the yield of the same group by 8% [Weight=25%]
3. Increase GR/Masters applications by 15% [Weight=25%]
4. Increase Masters yield by 10% [Weight=25%]

Contributors

Office the V.C. for Academic Affairs and Provost, Office of Graduate Studies, Enrollment Management, SCM

Initiative 10 - Student-Facing Digital Transformation: Revamp Website (Website 2.0) to Enhance Student Experience

Timeline: Feb 2025 - Dec 2026

Maps to: SO1

Lead: Ms. Shaima Bin Taliah

Website Revamp: the website will be redesigned to improve user experience and simplify navigation using up-to-date technology. Enhance student experience by redesigning the website for consistent, intuitive navigation that simplifies access to key resources and services, boosting engagement and satisfaction.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Identify the Scope and finalize the RFP package (SCM and IT) (SCM and IT).	Scope defined with stakeholder input; market research to verify the scope completed.	Feb 2025 – May 2025
Issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to potential vendors or design agencies.	Request for Proposal (RFP) issued.	June 2025 – Sep 2025
Select the vendor(s) and onboard them with necessary information.	Vendor selected and Onboarding completed.	Sep 2025– Oct. 2025
Project Implementation based on the proposed project plan timelines. Project activities are subject to vendor service delivery methodology.	Fit-gap assessment, concept design, content review and migration, governance framework, user acceptance testing, cut-over and go-live completed. Followed by 2-month hyper-care phase.	Oct 2025 – Sep 2026
After the website is launched, monitor its performance and user engagement	Post-launch review and optimization completed; Ongoing maintenance plan established.	Sep 2026– Dec 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Achieve the desired number of clicks rule to arrive to the desired information [Weight=35%]
2. Achieve 80% satisfaction rates for the look, feel and usability of the website [Weight=35%]
3. Achieve 70% of website users Click and time spent on important pages such as Admissions [Weight=30%]

Contributors

IT, SCM, All departments for content.

Initiative 11 - Student-Facing Digital Transformation: Develop a Mobile App

Timeline: Apr 2025 – Dec 2025

Maps to: SO1

Lead: Ms. Shaima Bin Taliah

Deliver a scalable, secure, and user-centric unified mobile application/platform aligned with the university's vision for innovation and operational excellence. The project (Phase 1) is designed to enhance student digital engagement, improve operational efficiency, and provide a seamless, intuitive experience. Release 1 will include

- Secure Digital IDs initial setup and centralized communication
- Real-time class attendance and academic scheduling
- Campus engagement via athletics updates and emergency contacts
- Easy access to academic resources and commercial/outlets services
- Enhanced campus exploration through interactive virtual tours and integrated student support channels

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Conduct planning and concept design.	Initiative planning and concept design completed (including user research, requirement gathering, development and finalization of app design and user experience (UX) concepts, workshops & Environment setup.	Apr 2025- June 2025
Develop and integrate the app and conduct early pilot launch.	App features developed, integrated with AUS systems, and pilot launch executed.	June 2025– July 2025
Test the app and conduct the final launch.	Quality assurance and user acceptance testing completed, app launched, and initial post-launch support provided.	June 2025– Sep 2025
Evaluate the app performance and plan for a follow-up phase .	App performance and engagement monitored, evaluation completed, and Phase 2 requirements defined.	Sep 2025 – Dec 2025

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Achieve 80% User Adoption rate i.e. 80% of enrolled students should register and actively use the app within the first 3–6 months after launch [Weight=50%]
2. Achieve 80% satisfaction rate from users (Phase 1) [Weight=50%]

Contributors

IT, OSE , SCM all department (Product owners)

Initiative 12 - Comprehensive Career Services: Expand and Personalize Career Support

Timeline: Sep 2025 – Mar 2026

Maps to: SO1

Lead: Ms. Shaima Bin Taliah

Expand and personalize student career support to meet the diverse professional needs of those students who wish to access assistance. Develop a comprehensive and scalable framework and structure to extend and enhance internship and career support services, ensuring continuous, personalized career guidance, seamless access to opportunities, and lifelong professional development for both students and alumni.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Review and Approve the New Structure.	New structure and budget approved.	Sep 2025 – Sep 2025
Announce New Job Vacancies and Begin Hiring for Positions.	Job vacancies announced and hiring process initiated.	Oct 2025–Dec - 2025
Finalize alignment on partnership management and other scope of work between OSE and OAAA.	Completed engagement strategy between OAAA and OSE.	Sep- 2025– Oct- 2025
Identify Strategic Objectives and Set Clear KPIs.	Strategic objectives and KPIs finalized.	Dec 2025 – Jan 2026
Integrate Career Services into the Student Lifecycle.	Career services relaunched and integrated into the student lifecycle.	Jan - 2025– Mar - 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Complete and approve the new Career Services organizational structure, with a minimum of 4 new positions advertised and filled by January 2026 [Weight=40%]
2. Develop and implement a standardized framework and a set of templates to streamline coordination between the central office and colleges, ensuring consistency in communication, reporting, and execution of shared initiatives[Weight=30%]
3. Fully integrate Career Services into at least two key student engagement touchpoints (e.g., orientation, academic advising) [weight= 30%]

Contributors

OAAA, Colleges, HR (Hiring)

Initiative 13 - Comprehensive Career Services: Maximize Effectiveness of Career Services Platform

Timeline: Jul 2025 – Apr 2026

Maps to: SO1

Lead: Ms. Shaima Bin Taliah

Maximize the effectiveness of the career services platform: Improve efficiency and create a more effective resource for other functions on campus that also help with career-related initiatives. Maximize the effectiveness of the career services platform by enhancing its efficiency and expanding its functionality to support other campus initiatives related to career development, ensuring a comprehensive and integrated resource for students, alumni, and faculty.

Activities	Milestones	Timeline
Review Existing Platform & Identify Key Gaps.	Platform audit completed and gaps identified.	July 2025 – Aug 2025
Evaluate Market Alternatives and Finalize Requirements with Stakeholders.	Market platform research and shortlist completed.	Aug 2025 – Oct 2025
Select and onboard vendor.	Integration with all AUS platforms finalized (including app, banner, oracle, etc.)	Dec 2025 – Mar 2026
Train stakeholders and AUS community.	Training materials developed and key stakeholders identified. Training sessions delivered to AUS community. Go-live support and refresher sessions provided.	Jan 2026 - Mar2026
Launch and market platform.	Marketing and communication campaign executed. Platform launched and user engagement activities conducted.	Feb 2026 - Apr 2026

Performance Targets [and Weights]

1. Complete a comprehensive evaluation report to identify gaps in the current career services platform and outline future requirements. [Weight=40%]
2. Launch a new, comprehensive career services platform that meets identified institutional and student needs. [Weight=60%]

Contributors

OAAA, Colleges, HR (Hiring), IT