Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

AUI 2015-2020 Strategic Plan
Executive Progress Summary Report

Introduction

AUI's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan officially ended in July 2020. From the onset, the plan was based on six strategic priorities for university development until 2020. These priorities were identified following a SWOT analysis of the University and incorporated contributions from the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students and alumni. They are as follow:

1. Student Learning, Development, and Success.

2. Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

3. Internationalization.

4. Advancement for Growth and Sustainability.

5. Research, Innovation and Discovery.

6. More Effective communication

The University was able to achieve 100% of its target goals for "Quality Assurance and Enhancement;" all actions and goals planned at the beginning of the 2015 term were met. Closely following, "Student Learning, Development, and Success" reached 94% of its target, and "Internationalization" reached 86% of its target.

The other priorities did not see similar progress. "Advancement for Growth and Sustainability" progressed moderately, achieving 56% of its target. "More Effective Communication" and "Research, Innovation and Discovery," falling well behind its mark, only reached 50% and 37% achievement, respectively. These priorities are highly valued and will be focused on and re-strategized in AUI's 2021-2025 Strategic Plan.
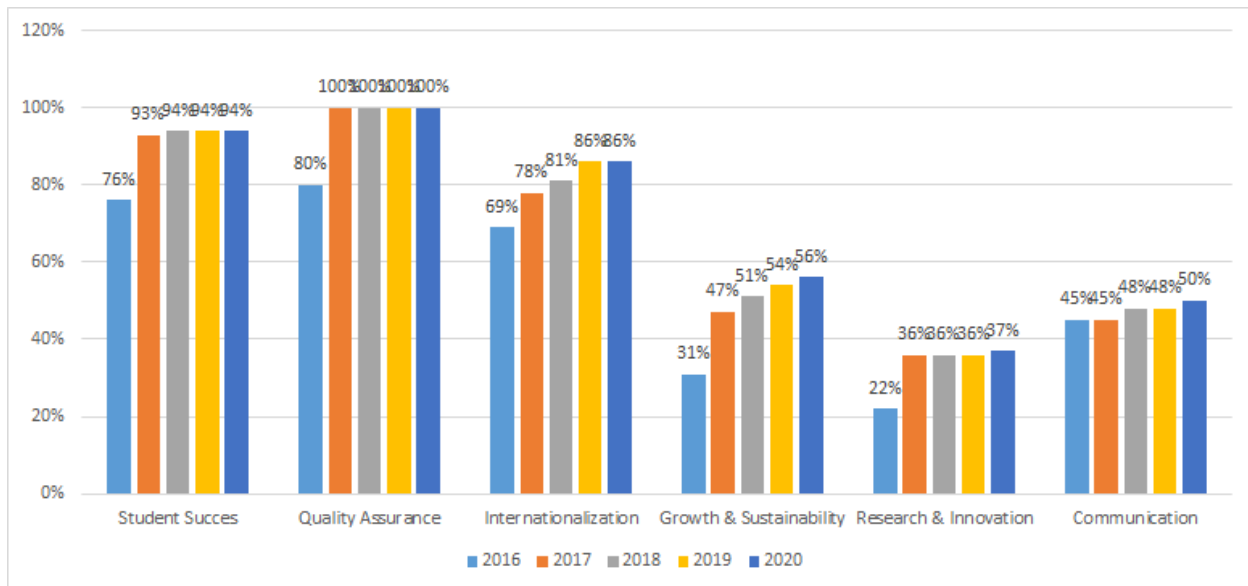
Figure 1. Progress of the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan:

Priority 1: Student Learning, Development, and Success (94%)

The university completed 76% of its set targets within the first year of the plan and reached a 94% completion rate by 2017 and maintained it through 2020. This rating was measured by the increased percentage of student retention for undergraduates (from 84.18% to 91.58%) and student graduation rate (from 76% to 78.65%) through the past 5 years. These same indicators remain to be improved for graduate students where they remain low and fluctuating because of the time taken by students to defend their thesis and because of low enrollments. Additionally, the level of student satisfaction remains high overall, measured in the Student Opinion Survey which has been administered annually. In the 2020 Student Opinion Survey, students reported increasingly high satisfaction with academic services and, notably, Career Services and the Leadership Development Institute.

AUI concluded this phase on a strong note regarding student success. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the First Year Experience unit reported an increase in the number of students on President and Deans' lists, a general increase in academic results and a decrease in the number of students on probation. The Community Involvement Program (CIP) reported a combined 20,493 hours of volunteer work completed, averaging 68 hours per student.

Student success is best measured in their success after graduation. Reported in surveys from 2019-2020, 70% of alumni reported finding employment in companies in Morocco or abroad. Additionally, 12% went on to graduate studies, 10% found placement in internships or short-term employment and 8% are yet to find employment.

Priority 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement (100%)

AUI achieved 100% completion of its performance goals concerning Priority 2 by 2017. This included continuing with the efforts leading to full accreditation by NEASC that was compiled with input from all AUI units and stakeholders and submitted at the end of the 2016. This led to accreditation by The New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE). In 2017, The School of Business Administration was reviewed by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) which announced the renewal of the SBA's EPAS accreditation for five years. The School of Engineering received accreditation from the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for its Computer Science, General Engineering and Engineering and Management Science programs. Finally, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences completed a number of program validations, for example a team from the George Washington University reviewed the HRD program. In terms of overall quality, in 2019, AUI was ranked as the number one university in Morocco by QS ranking agency for the sixth year in a row.

To better track and stimulate the progress and effectiveness of AUI units, the university established an Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) and an Audit Unit. In addition to serving as the official data repository, the OIRE assisted all academic and non-academic units to develop Unit-level strategic plans with Goals, KPIs, and actions that align with and contribute towards achievement of the institutional strategic plan. The University maintained its 100% quality assurance goal through to 2020 with the aim to continuously improve quality governance.

Priority 3: Internationalization (86%)

The university has made steady progress in its internationalization efforts, reaching 86% of its completion target by 2020. This progress was due to an increased focus on recruitment and retention of international students, faculty and staff as well as promoting study-abroad for AUI students.

For this pillar, the major achievement was the significant increase in the percentage of graduating students who had spent one or more semesters at a partner institution abroad which reached 76%. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the university had 110 Outgoing exchange students (to 55 institutions in 15 countries). The percentage of international faculty remained stable at around 40%. Additionally, the University increased its south-south collaborations in the Ivory Coast and increased internationalization training for front-line staff. The curriculum maintained and even increased its international outlook through the use of international editions of well known US textbooks and shared classes with international partners.

However, the number of international degree-seeking students remains below the University's ambitions. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the university had 55 International students (from 25 different countries), 41 Incoming exchange students (from 25 institutions in 6 countries) making up 5% of the student population coming from outside of Morocco in Fall 2019. This figure would unfortunately fall to 57 (2%) non-Moroccan students in Fall 2020, largely due to the health situation. AUI must expand its recruitment efforts outside of Morocco.

A major gain was the introduction of the Presidential Internship program, launched in August 2016 and modeled after AUC's (American University in Cairo) similar program. AUI invites recent graduates from liberal arts institutions around the world to apply for a year-long internship at AUI. The interns work closely with their colleagues, collaborate on projects that promote internationalization, diversity and sustainability in AUI and are encouraged to explore and learn about Morocco. The program has continued to be a success, incorporating international perspectives and liberal arts experience to the staff and student base at AUI.

Priority 4: Advancement for Growth and Sustainability (56%)

Progress on priority 4 started strong in 2015, with increased student recruitment and the introduction of many new programs. However, progress began to slow in 2017 and AUI ultimately met 56% of its established goals. In fall 2019, AUI enrolled 2022 students, which is a 6.65% decrease from the enrollment numbers in 2015. While overall recruitment has declined, there has been a reported increase of the academic quality of students enrolling at AUI, as evidenced by the percentage of new students with distinctions in the national high school leaving examination (Baccalauréat). Recruitment will be a primary focus of AUI's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to meet the ambitious growth objective of the University.

In 2015, a revitalized promotional campaign was launched for EEC-Casablanca and EEC-Ifrane. In 2016, The Academic Building 8B opened providing an auditorium, with capacity of up to 126 seats, 16 classrooms and laboratories, 22 faculty offices, three administrative offices, a conference room, and a faculty lounge. This same year, AUI launched a cloud-based desk platform which improves ticketing features and expands reporting analyses and results. Internet capacity was doubled from 0.5 GBPS to 1.0 GBPS to support increased online activity and Internet was available for 97% of the time during the academic year 2016-2017.

The University also started conversion from diesel heating to biomass heating which allowed significant savings on the energy bill as well as a reduction in CO_2 emissions. This included the installation of four biomass boilers. The projected annual savings is estimated to be 1.2 million Dirhams per year.

Priority 5: Research, Innovation, and Discovery (37%)

Much like Priority 4 before it, Priority 5 saw some progress in the beginning stages of this plan, but progress slowed dramatically in 2017. While AUI faculty and students continue to produce an acceptable body of research and publications, it remains below the University's ambitions to be a leader in innovative research. As documented in the chart below, the rate of Faculty's scholarly publication is inconsistent year-to-year.

Table 1. Faculty Publications by Year:

Academic Year	Books	Book Chapters	Peer-Reviewed Articles
2015-2016	4	21	61

2016-2017	3	6	40
2017-2018	6	2	24
2018-2019	5	6	29
2019-2020	4	5	21

In the 2019-2020 academic year, students completed 18 theses, 8 from the School of Business Administration and 10 from the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. As of yet, the university has not launched any PhD programs.

To encourage research at AUI, faculty teaching, research, and service data management system was purchased in 2015 and the Office of Sponsored Research was established in the 2018-2019 academic year with the objective of promoting externally funded research. The 2020-2025 Strategic Plan must focus on providing further infrastructure for promoting independent and collaborative research and innovative projects.

Priority 6: More Effective Communication (50%)

Priority 6 has seen mixed results throughout 2015-2020. AUI's media presence has consistently grown, both in traditional media and, especially, online/social media. However, interdepartmental communications structures remain inefficient and will be a critical area of improvement as AUI moves into its 2020-2025 phase.

At the beginning of the phase, a student and faculty satisfaction survey regarding internal communication was administered to identify improvement opportunities, and a staff survey administered in 2017. In the 2016-2017 academic year, six social media campaigns were organized in collaboration with an external communication agency. The ads were invitations to open houses, different student fairs in major cities, high school visits, calls for application, and a "Laywaffeq" ("God luck" with your exams) video. These campaigns reached almost 2,000,000 people and generated around 80,000 clicks. By 2020, The Department of Development & Communication had adopted an aggressive PR strategy, presenting key facts and figures, highlighting student and faculty actions and events worthy of media interest. The Share of Voice on social media was highest among competitors, with 38% for AUI and 34% for its nearest competitor.

In 2017, the university shifted efforts from just enhancing presence in traditional and social media, to improving internal communications in AUI. This effort focused on the construction of the "Intranet," a centralized location for information related to all units, policies and procedures strategic plans, annual reports, etc. Likewise, a new website was developed and launched with a user-friendly interface.

In 2020, there was also a deficiency documented in effective communication to students. Tracked in the 2020 Student Opinion Survey, students reported that they did not have timely notice about events or policy changes and response times from several service offices were slow; notably, dissatisfaction rates with the Admissions Office increased by 10.25%, Financial Aid Office by 6.27%, Registrar by 2.45%, and Information Technology Services by 6.97%. All-in-

all, internal communication and especially inter-unit flow of information is still an area that requires dedication and improvement.

Conclusion

Completion of AUI's 2015-2020 has demonstrated our institution's will to progress both as a national and international beacon of higher education. We look to our achievements as examples of the path forward and our deficiencies as new opportunities to improve. The priorities that fell short of the Universities ambitions, **Advancement for Growth and Sustainability**, **Research, Innovation, and Discovery**, and **More Effective Communication**, will be important pillars of improvement in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

The induction of our new president, Amine Bensaid, a new strategic plan and our continued dedication to quality assurance and fostering development and success for our students motivates us to overcome our past and future challenges and establish AUI as a leading academic institution.