Strategic Plan

2017-2022

(Revised Version Approved by BOT in October 2019)

Message from the Chancellor

It is a distinct delight to share with you the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan of Ajman University (AU). The plan builds on the University's impactful achievements since its establishment in 1988, while paving the way for more future successes and distinction as AU embarks on its fourth decade. The plan is aligned with Vision 2021 of the Emirate of Ajman which is turn in aligned with Vision 2021 of the United Arab Emirates.

The process of developing the plan, which started in November 2016, provided an opportunity for collective reflection and strategic debate and alignment, drawing on the wealth of knowledge acquired through the recommendations of local accrediting bodies, recent regional developments and global trends. This blueprint is the outcome of extensive meetings and focus groups with different constituents of the University including alumni, employers, partners, parents, faculty, staff, and students.

The plan, which is intended to be iterative, interactive and dynamic, is both ambitious and pragmatic highlighting the University's profound commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. The plan capitalizes on AU assets that include innovative and effective teaching, impactful research, responsible community service and a commitment to quality assurance.

Due appreciation and sincere gratitude go to all those who have been actively involved in the process for their hard work and dedication to developing and drafting a balanced strategy; an iterative process which proved invaluable in stretching the horizon of ambition for Ajman University moving forward.

While the process of developing the strategy comes to a culmination in the plan herein, it is with the support, dedication and enthusiasm of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, employers, parents, partners, and students, that this plan will be accomplished to continue AU's ascending trajectory towards new heights of academic prominence on the national, regional and international levels.

Sincerely,

Karim Seghir, Ph.D.

Chancellor

Executive Summary:

Ajman University is the first private university in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It was instituted in 1988, under the name of Ajman University College of Science and Technology (AUCST), via an Emiri Decree issued by His Highness Sheikh Humaid Bin Rashid Al-Nuaimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Ajman. AUCST received its first intake of students on September 15th, 1988, and on May 3rd, 1994, it was recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research as Ajman University of Science and Technology (AUST). In 2016, the name Ajman University (AU) replaced AUST in recognition of the growth achieved by the University in non-science and technology disciplines such as Business Administration, Law, Mass Communication, Humanities, and Education.

The strategic direction of AU centers around its past achievements, its core strengths and its distinct location. AU's vision moving forward is *to be internationally recognized as one of the leading universities in the Arab region in terms of cutting-edge learning, impactful research, responsible outreach and community engagement.* The emphasis of the vision is for AU to be a global institution building on its deeply-rooted regional expertise and knowhow. The main building blocks towards realizing this vision include: ensuring excellence in learning, enhancing the quality and impact of research, strengthening AU positioning on the global map of higher education, building long-lasting and mutually beneficial ties with the private and public sectors and providing cutting-edge and environment-friendly services to its different stakeholders.

This document is divided into two main sections as follows:

- Taking Stock which provides a summary of the main achievements over the past 29 years and a SWOT analysis.

- The Way Forward which illustrates, the mission, vision, core values and strategic goals for the next 5 years.

I. Taking Stock:

1. Achievements:

Ajman University (AU) was established in 1988 as the first private university in the GCC. Since then, it has become one of the leading universities in the UAE, accumulating successes and gaining the praise and trust of its stakeholders. Its program portfolio grew significantly over the past 29 years. As of Fall 2016, AU offers 34 accredited undergraduate programs and 11 accredited graduate programs. These programs, covering a variety of majors and sub-specialisms, aim at providing the community with competent graduates capable of meeting the demands of an ever-changing job market and supporting the overall development and prosperity of the UAE and the Arab world. AU takes pride in its rich intellectual environment through its diverse student body, represented by more than 75 nationalities, and its highly- qualified faculty members from 38 different nationalities. AU has more than 32,000 alumni who occupy leading positions in prominent institutions both in the private and public sectors in different parts of the world. The number of enrolled students as of Fall 2016 has exceeded 8000.

A major point of pride for Ajman University comes from the fact that it equips its students with academic rigor and hands-on expertise as illustrated by the very high employability rate of its alumni and the numerous awards that its students and alumni won. The most recent competitions are:

- AUE AI and Robotics Award for Good: AU won the 1st prize of 1AED million which was awarded by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai;
- The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Award: AU students won the highest number of awards among all UAE universities for this award over the past five years.

Over the past 29 years, AU has been committed to responsibly engaging with the community at large as illustrated by numerous initiatives. The most recent initiatives in this context are:

- The establishment of Thamer Salman Fund for Education Solidarity to provide assistance to financially disadvantaged students. Donations to the fund reached a total of AED 10 million and so far, 366 students have benefited from the Fund's support, with a total amount of 3.6 million dirhams. This initiative is consistent with AU's commitment to giving sustainable financial support to bright and underprivileged students.
- The Establishment of Innovation Center Ajman (ICA), which was inaugurated in 2016 by H.H. Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Ajman. ICA aims at providing an innovation platform to create opportunities for productive interactions between students, alumni, faculty, industry, government and society in order to achieve significant economic and social benefits for the engaged stakeholders through sharing and implementing innovative ideas and solutions. ICA also includes a business incubator for potential entrepreneurs to translate technologies and innovations into commercially viable and scalable ventures, thereby contributing to economic development and job creation.

2. SWOT Analysis:

The following analysis illustrates the internal and external factors that are likely to shape AU's trajectory. This analysis is based on empirical data drawn from internal and external environments as well as focus groups with faculty, staff, students, alumni, employers and partners.

	Positive	Negative
	Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Internal	- Employability of graduates - Location (Ajman and UAE) - Campus facilities - Commitment to excellence and continuous improvement - Flexible, modular, and convenient program structures - Commitment to diversity - Strong ties with the public sector - Regular assessment and benchmarking - Local recognition - Availability of financial resources to support expansion & launching new initiatives	- High Degree of dependency on tuition fees - Positioning on the global map of higher education - Non-competitive salaries - Quality of research - Faculty are overstretched due to extended length of service and teaching loads - Faculty to student ratios - IT system's limited capabilities - Space limitations
	Opportunities	**Threats**
External	- Stronger ties with the private sector - Untapped potential of alumni network - Untapped potential of fundraising - Potential to revise the fee structure to match the market - The increasing market needs for launching new academic programs - Expanding the scope of the Continuing Education Center - Building geographically diverse partnerships - Young population in the UAE	- Increasing local, regional and global competition - Strong regulatory framework in UAE - Economic and business cycle fluctuations

II. The Way Forward:

1. Mission Statement

Ajman University (AU) is a multicultural, dual gender, academic institution that offers a broad range of high quality and relevant undergraduate and graduate academic programs. The University strives to fulfil the needs of students, alumni, employers, and society through quality education, scholarship and community engagement. AU develops well-rounded graduates who are professionally competent, socially responsible, innovative and active contributors to sustainable development of the UAE and beyond.

2. Vision Statement

Ajman University aims to be internationally recognized as one of the leading universities in the Arab world in terms of cutting-edge learning, impactful research and responsible outreach and community engagement.

3. Core Values

- **Excellence:** All AU activities are conducted with strong emphasis on international quality standards.

- **Integrity:** AU adheres to the principles of honesty, trustworthiness, reliability, transparency and accountability.

- **Inclusiveness:** AU embraces shared governance, inspires tolerance, and promotes diversity.

- **Social Responsibility:** AU promotes community engagement, environmental sustainability and global citizenship. It also promotes awareness of, and support for, the needs and challenges of the local and global communities.

- **Innovation:** AU supports creative activities that approach challenges and issues from multiple perspectives in order to find solutions and advance knowledge.

III. Strategic Goals, Objectives and Actions

Strategic Goal 1: Ensuring excellence in teaching and learning

Objectives	Actions
• To enhance the effectiveness and relevance of existing academic and continuing education programs to meet international standards • To ensure that teaching approaches are up-to-date and in line with international best practice and standards • To regularly explore launching new programs that reflect global trends and cater to local and regional market needs • To regularly evaluate learning tools in line with the latest development in flexible learning design • To promote academic integrity across AU • To enhance AU positioning vis-à-vis MOOCs	• Regularly update existing programs to ensure their continuous currency • Attract and retain highly-qualified faculty members • Adopt a competitive salary structure • Support faculty members in the use of innovative teaching approaches • Support faculty development programs • Establish a Teaching and Learning Center • Launch a unit for academic assessment which will be responsible for developing and implementing holistic and inclusive assessment processes including "closing the loop" • Organize workshops and seminars to train faculty on international accreditation processes and assessment methodologies • Finalize the development of a high-quality Medical College as well as launching new programs such Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Psychology, an M.Sc. in Arabic Language Studies • Launch Ph.D. programs that cater to local and regional needs • Obtain international accreditations for the University and its colleges • Improve faculty-to-student ratio • Undertake the formation of a "Learning Space Committee" to evaluate and roadmap a move towards flexible learning spaces in different AU Colleges; e.g. blended learning labs, multi-platform mirroring-enabled teaching rooms, AR and VR-enabled learning spaces, node chairs, Squiggle Glass®, and flexible-moveable furniture. • Put more focus on developing students' skills, especially the soft skills • Incrementally introduce digital learning approaches • Ensure implementation of academic integrity policy and procedure • Undertake the formation of a "Digital Curriculum Committee" to propose, and later implement, an AU plan for launching and participating in existing MOOC-based courses

Strategic Goal 2:
Enhancing the quality, relevance, and impact of research and intellectual contribution

Objectives	Actions
• To promote a productive research culture • To produce and disseminate high-quality research • To align research activities with the UAE strategic objectives, address global problems and regional needs • To increase the number of faculty members publishing in peer-reviewed, prominent journals • To increase the number of external research grants • To promote interdisciplinary research	• Attract high-caliber faculty members with very promising research agendas • Provide concrete incentives and networking opportunities for faculty members to conduct high-quality research outcomes in collaboration with other academic and non-academic institutions • Revisit and assess policies and procedures pertaining to scholarship to meet international standards • Recognize and reward faculty with research publications of a high impact factor • Appoint a Dean for Research and Graduate Studies • Form a research council at the University level to promote and oversee research activities • Facilitate visits of well-known international scholars to AU for joint research work and publications • Organize international scientific conferences • Organize workshops and hold intercollegiate meetings to establish interdisciplinary research groups.

Strategic Goal 3:
Recruiting, supporting and fostering the development of a bright and diverse student body

Objectives	Actions
• To attract a blend of local, regional and international students • To produce innovative and effective support services to AU students • To strengthen the focus on hands-on learning approaches in the curricula • To improve students' readiness to effectively market themselves • To enhance the diversity of co- curricular activities and the participation of students in a full and rich student life program • To enhance effectiveness of strategies for improving student success • To enhance the international exposure of students	• Set up a professional marketing team for developing and implementing a focused, targeted recruitment plan to increase the intake and diversity of students • Increase the diversity of faculty and staff • Improve academic and career advising as well as placement services • Provide more opportunities to students for their personal development • Increase the number and quality of internship opportunities • Secure funding for the provision of scholarships to talented students experiencing adverse financial circumstances • Engage students in organizing events and activities • Develop and implement effective communication channels with students to receive their feedback on a regular basis • Encourage students to launch student associations and clubs to support the AU mission • Support innovation and commercialization of projects through Innovation Center Ajman (ICA) • Enhance the performance of existing student clubs and open new clubs to cater to the needs of a multicultural student population • Establish a Student Success Center for developing well-rounded students • Increase the number of study-abroad and exchange opportunities

Strategic Goal 4:
Enhancing the visibility and the positioning of the University

Objectives	Actions
• To reposition AU on the regional and global map of higher education • To attain higher ranking in the UAE and the Arab region • To strengthen alumni engagement • To develop strong ties with parents	• Revamp the AU website in line with cutting-edge developments relevant to the maximization of engagement and conversion marketing • Significantly improve media coverage of AU activities, especially in English language newspapers and media channels • Substantially enhance social media activities and coverage • Build and strengthen relationships with AU alumni, employers, national and international academic institutions • Enhance AU ranking • Develop geographically diverse strategic partnerships with prominent universities • Develop long-lasting relationship with AU alumni and engage them in University activities • Increase support to talented students to develop their innovative ideas and participate in regional and international competitions

Strategic Goal 5:
Building impactful and long-lasting ties with the external communities

Objectives	Actions
• To join forces with the public and private sectors in Ajman to strengthen the positioning of the Emirate of Ajman as a destination for learning • To increase collaboration with industry • To increase community service activities • To extend community outreach • To promote research collaborations with the external communities • To seek external funds and resources required to satisfy the needs and expectations of the external communities • To play an active role in various leading local and regional initiatives	• Launch an Office of Development • Develop strong ties with public and private institutions in Ajman and the UAE • Develop and implement strategies for increased collaboration with industry in academic and continuing education programs, as well as co- curriculum activities • Expand the scope of Continuing Education Center (CEC) in providing training to the private and public sectors • Further involve the external communities through public events and teaching • Develop effective mechanisms to capture and implement feedback from the external communities • Promote awareness of and support for active faculty and student involvement in voluntary community service • Encourage and support faculty to acquire research funds from the external communities • Approach leading private and public entities to explore cooperation opportunities with AU colleges, faculty, staff, students, and alumni

Strategic Goal 6:
Promoting cutting-edge and innovative support services

Objectives	Actions
• To increase the reliance on innovative and sustainable solutions in all areas • To introduce smart and technology-based services • To maintain a green and paperless working environment • To focus on Artificial Intelligence in managing campus facilities • To enhance continuous improvement and innovation approaches as key success factors in doing business	• Recruit, retain and develop highly qualified staff members • Nurture a culture of continuous improvement by rewarding impactful initiatives, creativity and innovation in a collegial and productive environment which develops staff and promotes the highest quality standards. • Develop a more robust digital infrastructure and culture • Invest into smart and efficient student information systems including recruitment, admission, advising, and registration • Invest into smart and efficient operations and facilities including managing parking slots, procuring supplies, building and grounds maintenance, marketing, as well as safety and security operations • Eliminate paper-based and manual processes • Set clear bylaws and protocols for paperless internal and external communications • Promote the use of online services by all stakeholders • Replace the paper-based textbooks with digital books (E-Books) • Launch of smart-phone based applications that satisfy student needs. • Introduce e-Procurement and e-Payment channels • Cooperate with strategic partners to provide innovative financing solutions, sponsorship and financial aid to students • Equip AU buildings with the latest high-tech building management solutions • Set regular targets for innovative ideas from all AU community members