

***Fulfilling the Promise***  
**A Strategic Plan for**  
**The American University in Bulgaria: 2010-2015**  
**Approved by the Board of Trustees**  
**October 2009**

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## ***I. Background to the Plan***

### **A. History of the University and Founding Mission**

The American University in Bulgaria (AUBG) was founded in 1991 by an act of the Bulgarian Parliament as a cooperative venture among the Republic of Bulgaria, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the City of Blagoevgrad, the University of Maine, and the Open Society Institute. It took vision and boldness to propose a traditional American-style residential liberal arts university as an investment in the future of Bulgaria. The mission of AUBG has always been ambitious: first, to bring harmony to a region with a fractious history by educating young people to think for themselves and consider government, the economy, and social relationships in new ways; and second, to prepare these individuals to provide leadership through managerial positions in both private and public sectors with a full commitment to serving the needs of the region.

From the outset, faculty aimed to provide an education that gives students a broad and integrated vision of contemporary society, enhances their ability to understand emerging issues and place them in context, and encourages students to take responsibility for working together to find creative solutions to the problems at hand. The curriculum, the diverse student body, and the international faculty represent the evolution of the University and its adaptability. AUBG offers students an education characterized by strong academic programs, close student-faculty engagement, English-language instruction, first-rate learning resources, and a residential experience. As the institution has matured, we see how important the founding values are and how important it is to endorse publicly the foundation we hope all student carry with them from the AUBG experience—integrity, cross-cultural understanding, and social and personal responsibility.

Like all institutions, AUBG's history is one of vision, challenge, and much good fortune. This Strategic Planning process aims to provide direction to continue the journey and engage the AUBG community in further developing the University. No matter how successful we are today, we are not complacent. Indeed, we know we can be better, and we must be better. Given the unprecedented financial challenges facing the world economy, and in turn the University community, planning for 2010-2015 is even more important. Drawing upon the title for the Comprehensive Campaign that will provide the necessary resources, the Strategic Plan is similarly organized and also called *Fulfilling the Promise*.

### **B. Milestones for Success**

In order for AUBG to claim success as a high quality University, it has to meet three significant measures: full accreditation, financial sustainability, and its own campus facilities. The first two have been accomplished, and the latter is well underway.

#### Achieving Full Accreditation

Accreditation is the accepted mark of quality in higher education. AUBG achieved full institutional accreditation in the United States by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in March 2001 signifying independence from the University of Maine. This was a momentous accomplishment for the first decade—there are other American-style universities abroad that have not been able to meet this standard. AUBG's second institutional

accreditation by NEASC in March 2006 was an even stronger endorsement as the University was granted the longest period—ten years—before its next review.

AUBG achieved full institutional accreditation from the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) in August 2006 with the highest rating of Very Good and for the longest period of six years. In addition to institutional accreditation, AUBG is subject to individual program accreditation by NEAA. This rigorous process of external review brings visiting teams of academics from other Bulgarian universities to verify the quality measures outlined in the self-studies. The process gives us a clear vision of how we are regarded by others. During the period 2006-2009, each of the academic programs has been accredited based on quality criteria that include: management, curriculum, library resources, student outcomes, faculty accomplishments, technology, and facilities.

### Financial Sustainability

When AUBG opened its doors, considerable support from the U.S. and Bulgarian governments and private donors made it possible for AUBG to offer its education at a fraction of the actual cost. By providing almost full support, AUBG attracted outstanding Bulgarian students. The uncertain direction of the East European countries and the unsettled political situation in the Balkans made support for the democratization and normalization of Bulgaria a high priority for U.S. foreign policy, so AUBG could count on consistent official U.S. government political and financial support. The economic circumstances of the region at the time made it implausible to imagine that a private university employing expatriate faculty and administrators could ever be self-supporting on the basis of tuition payments.

This combination of significant resources from USAID and the Open Society Institute launched the University, but were not expected to sustain it indefinitely. With the last tranche of USAID funding given in December 2006, a new era began. Aided by scholarships, loans, and the summer work and travel program, students are now paying a significant share of the cost of their education. A coordinated development effort is raising funds for scholarships, facilities, and programs. Through conscientious measures to contain costs, invest wisely, and protect assets, the University has had four years of balanced budgets and unqualified external audits. We have in place measures to forecast revenues and control expenses throughout the budget year and budget discipline is excellent. This careful long-term financial planning is essential as the world economy has entered an unprecedented period of turmoil that affects revenues from tuition, donors, the endowment, and auxiliary activities.

### Building a Campus

AUBG opened its doors in facilities provided through the generosity of the City of Blagoevgrad. Over the years, AUBG has renewed its agreement with the city, and continuously adapted the building for classrooms, faculty offices, dining facilities, meeting rooms, administrative offices, a library and more. As one of the largest employers in the city, AUBG makes a significant impact on the city economically, culturally, and socially. Consequently, our location on the central plaza remains both practical and symbolic. At the same time, the dream has always been to create a campus with facilities comparable to the best residential liberal arts institutions in the United States and to serve a growing student body.

Residence halls, a new academic building, and a library have been built as resources have become available, including grants from the American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA). Plans are underway to complete the rest of the Campus Master Plan which includes a Student Center,

additional classrooms, administrative offices, parking, and sports and recreational space. Co-locating all aspects of the University is of critical importance as we face the daily challenge of maintaining a sense of common purpose without common space. Equally important, because campus facilities express the fundamental values of a campus—in our case, open, inclusive, aesthetically pleasing, and up-to-date—we must pursue this goal of a fully developed and modern campus.

### **C. Institutional and Environmental Challenges in 2009**

This section of the Strategic Plan is based on a survey of the environment in which AUBG operates, an assessment of what has changed since the early years of the institution, and an analysis of what changes are underway that affect AUBG as it strives to fulfill its mission. Clearly, the natural evolution, adaptation, and maturing of the University has its own effect. At the same time, some of the external and internal changes over the past 18 years are more dramatic and more challenging, calling upon the University to be strategic, innovative, and nimble in order to adjust and continue to thrive.

#### Changes in Bulgaria

AUBG faces today a very different environment from even a few years ago, economically, demographically, and politically. According to 2008 data, Bulgarian per capita income stood at only 39.2% of the EU average. After registering impressive growth in excess of 6% per year during 2005-2008, Bulgarian economic growth has slowed down and is projected to be below 2% in 2009. At the same time inflation and currency fluctuations impact the University, its employees, and its current and potential students. Depending on the duration of the global economic crisis, the Bulgarian economy in the next two or three years could slow down more.

The demographic trend in Bulgaria shows continuing population decline. Triggered first by the mass impoverishment of the population, rising costs of living, high unemployment, general insecurity of life, and intensive emigration after the collapse of communism, there has been a significant population implosion. With little improvement in the birth rate in recent years, the impact on university enrollments can be felt not just by AUBG, but also by the other Bulgarian universities. Entrance into the European Union has added specific challenges for AUBG. Students have more options for low cost education in Western Europe and are drawn by mobility and opportunity to explore beyond Bulgaria. Ultimately, our recruiting efforts have a more significant impact than demographics as we draw only a fraction of the qualified Bulgarian applicants.

#### Recruiting Students

Recruiting students is the most significant challenge the University faces as it affects both the quality and financial well-being of the institution. At the outset, the University was almost entirely Bulgarian and, with generous financial aid and no real options abroad, admission was very selective. The student body at AUBG remains well qualified and is increasingly diverse, and AUBG is committed to attracting top students from both the region and new markets. The more competitive and open environment allows students to compare options and ask questions about value for their investment, especially in terms of immediate career opportunities.

The current enrollment is approximately 64% Bulgarian and the rest come from over 30 countries in the immediate region, Europe, and the U.S. The current first-year student body scored, on average, 1165 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) entrance exam (taken in English – the student's second, and sometimes, third language). These results are comparable to those of

students entering selective liberal arts institutions in the United States and are well above those at other American-style institutions abroad. The ability to continue to recruit high-quality students whose tuition payments largely cover the cost to educate them is vital to AUBG's financial sustainability. Understandably, outstanding students have many choices and financial aid is an important part of our recruitment strategy.

The progress made by AUBG from annual operating deficits in the millions of dollars to balanced budgets was made possible largely through recruiting a greater number of qualified students to come to AUBG. This allowed for greater efficiencies in the delivery of academic programs and divided fixed costs across more students, reducing the average cost per student. Further efficiencies can be gained by continuing to increase the size of the student body to 1200-1400. Fulfilling this goal requires recruiting 300 to 350 new first-year students each year – a recruiting success well beyond what has been accomplished in the last few years. However, numbers alone cannot be the goal—our surveys confirm that selectivity must not be sacrificed for growth.

### Recruiting Faculty

Hiring first-rate faculty will continue to be a challenge and a priority for AUBG. In the early years of the University, expatriate faculty had to be adventurous and willing to make sacrifices for a cause they believed in. Even though Bulgaria is no longer a “hardship” post, AUBG is still not feasible for most mid-career faculty members who also need to consider a spouse's career and children's education. AUBG is successful in recruiting faculty for longer terms when there is a match between the candidate's professional or personal interests and working in Bulgaria. Turnover will always be a factor for expatriate faculty, and for disciplines where there is global demand.

Joining the AUBG faculty in the beginning was also a risk for the regional faculty. Teaching at AUBG meant giving up an academic position at an established state institution with a more guaranteed future. Salaries were higher at AUBG, but so were expectations. Most faculty had strong personal and professional ties to Sofia and have continued to commute for years. Turnover among full-time Bulgarian faculty is low but mobility is increasing. In recent years, the faculty composition has transitioned from being distinctly American and Bulgarian to being international as AUBG has benefitted from the mobility of faculty throughout the world. A diverse faculty, drawn from five continents, is an asset for our diverse student body.

The University's U.S. accreditation and our identity as an “American” institution requires that we retain a significant American element to our faculty, however, this does not mean only American faculty. This goal is easily achieved as we have faculty who are not U.S. citizens, but who bring an American perspective because they earned advanced degrees in the U.S. or have U.S. teaching experience. Our challenge is to continue to attract and retain dynamic faculty who can integrate the principles of liberal education with disciplinary expertise to produce effective teaching and quality research.

### Recruiting Staff

AUBG also needs high-quality bi-lingual staff at virtually all levels in order to provide excellent education and service to its students. With turnover among faculty and administrators, staff often provide the institutional memory and continuity that might otherwise be lacking at AUBG. In order to attract and retain well trained staff, AUBG must offer competitive salaries, desirable working conditions, recognition for performance, and opportunities for advancement. There are three challenges that impact staff recruitment and retention – increased mobility to join the open

EU job market, which offers higher salaries; Bulgarian inflation in both prices and wages, which makes it difficult to keep salary levels competitive; and the discrepancy between local salaries and those in Sofia, especially for high-skill positions. AUBG has experienced enough turnover to see the importance of thoughtful investments to attract, retain, develop, and promote staff and is systematically addressing these issues.

### Attracting Financial Support

As a private institution, AUBG must further develop its ability to attract support from foundations, individual and corporate donors, and alumni to offset the University's reliance on tuition revenues and the reduction in U.S. government support. Raising money requires investment. For every category of gift-giver, there is an effort and expense that must be undertaken to cultivate and generate the gifts. Every institution tries to match its investment in fund-raising with the likely results of those efforts to generate the highest possible net support for the institution. Given the environment and circumstances of AUBG, the necessary effort and expense to raise funds may be high relative to the short-term return. Philanthropy is not well developed in the region, most potential donors are overseas, we lack the number and high net-worth profile of alumni that other institutions have, Eastern Europe is no longer a high-priority for the U.S. government, and EU funding is often focused on a narrow agenda. AUBG is putting into place the necessary infrastructure to support its fundraising program and address these challenges.

The overarching challenge AUBG faces is that we are attempting to raise the profile of our fund-raising efforts at the very moment when the global recession may make donors of all sorts more cautious. Even established organizations are dealing with a decline in contributions from individuals and corporations. Many donation-supported organizations have made contingency plans for scaling back their activities despite intensified fund-raising efforts. Others have encouraged early payment on pledges or redirection of committed funds to higher priorities. This may be the worst timing possible for attempting to establish contact with new donors or to raise the contribution level of existing donors. However, without resources our plans cannot be realized. Despite what many concede is a gloomy outlook, there is much we can do to tell our story, increase the visibility of the University, and strategically pursue external support.

## ***II. Envisioning AUBG in 2015***

The foundation of a university strategic plan consists of three closely related parts: a statement of *values*, a statement of *mission*, and a statement of *vision*.

### **A. Enduring Values that Guide our Activities**

The values of the University do not change over time but are fundamental to our identity, to who we are. Both our vision and our mission are informed by the values that were shared by the University's founders and which have guided the University since its inception in 1991:

- We believe that all of our programs and activities must be characterized by the highest standards of **excellence**.
- We are committed to the values of a **diverse and inclusive** campus community.
- We believe that all of the University's activities must be characterized by the highest standards of **integrity**.

- We embrace the values of **open, democratic, and participatory governance** both within the University and in the broader community.
- We are committed to the values of **freedom of thought and expression**.
- We understand that the most effective way to prepare students for successful and meaningful lives is through a rigorous academic program characterized by **active and engaged learning** within the context of the American liberal arts tradition.
- We are committed to the quest for new knowledge and support faculty and students in their process of **discovery and creativity**.
- We believe that the University has a responsibility to contribute to the welfare of the broader community and to promote **social responsibility** among all its constituents

## **B. Our Mission**

Our mission describes in a succinct way what we do--why we exist--and it is based upon our core values:

**The mission of the American University in Bulgaria is to educate students of outstanding potential in a community of academic excellence, diversity, and respect and to prepare them for democratic and ethical leadership in serving the needs of the region and the world.**

## **C. Vision: Our Aspirations for 2015**

The **vision** describes what the University will be, what it will look like, at the conclusion of the planning period:

**We envision a community of diverse and creative students of outstanding potential living and learning together in an engaging and rigorous academic environment on a campus which offers world-class academic, recreational, and residential facilities. Mentored by internationally respected faculty committed to the liberal arts tradition, graduates will be fully prepared for lives of professional achievement, personal fulfillment, and service.**

## ***III. Strategic Priorities***

This plan is based on recognizing the gap between the vision we aspire to and where we are now. The plan is a guide and explains how we will get to where we want to be in five years—how we will achieve the vision. Each section has the same format and includes a statement of **what** we will do (Strategic Goal), **why** we want to do it (Rationale), **how** we will do it (Initiatives), and **when** we will know we have succeeded (Five Year Measures). For each year of the period from 2010 to 2015, an Annual Action plan will set priorities, establish what actions will be undertaken, indicate who is responsible, and track our progress in a report at the end of the year.

### **A. Academic Excellence**

#### **1. Strong Liberal Education Linked to Careers**

##### **a. Strategic Goal: Greater Appreciation for Liberal Arts Education**

Help students develop a stronger appreciation of the nature and merits of liberal education so that they can take fuller advantage of the opportunities provided by AUBG.

#### Rationale:

Under the influence of the higher education traditions in their native countries, many students still regard the purpose of their AUBG education mainly as specialized career training. If they develop a stronger appreciation of the advantages of liberal education, its characteristics, mission, uniqueness and goals throughout their years at AUBG, they will strive harder to acquire the transferable skills and broader knowledge applicable beyond the specific tasks related to their intended career path. They will also be more willing to invest effort in General Education courses or other courses outside their majors, which can help them develop broadly applicable abilities and understandings. The true sense of a Liberal Arts Education relies, indeed, on helping students to build a “grid” useful to understand the world and life, so that they may start to “fill the squares” of such grid while at college, and continue to fill such a grid throughout their lives.

#### Initiatives:

- Revisit the learning outcomes for an AUBG undergraduate education and the specific goals of the General Education program so that faculty and students understand them.
- Underscore the mission and advantages of a Liberal Arts Education in presenting AUBG to prospective students in admissions materials, brochures, and presentations.
- Stress the importance of the General Education Program during orientation week and support with ongoing co-curricular activities to demonstrate the relevance of liberal education, especially within the context of career goals.
- Introduce first-year seminars or concurrent courses in which students examine in relatively small groups a set of broader issues from different disciplinary perspectives.
- Draw first year advisors from faculty who teach these new options and General Education courses so that they can guide students in understanding the relevance of the liberal education opportunities.
- Introduce the option of an interdisciplinary seminar for seniors so that they can reexamine and appreciate the links between specific skills and knowledge associated with their major and the transferable skills and broader understanding developed through liberal education.
- Develop assessments of the General Education program outcomes to provide information to departments about how to link major courses to the liberal education goals and skills and highlight the relationship of the outcomes to those of the major.
- Consider renaming the General Education Program so that it conveys its significance rather than sounding either general or marginal.

#### Five Year Target Measures:

- Entering first year student survey indicates choice of AUBG due to the type of education.
- Senior survey confirms understanding of the value of a liberal education.
- Alumni surveys and employer surveys confirm the value of a liberal education and transferable skills for career success.
- Faculty continue to refine the purposes of the liberal education curriculum based on annual learning outcomes assessment data.

#### **b. Strategic Goal: Add Majors and Minors**

Broaden the choice of majors and minors, in some instances by developing new cross-disciplinary majors and minors, that meet the interests of students and emerging career opportunities.

#### Rationale:

Alumni and student surveys over several years suggest that AUBG should have a broader array of majors and minors ranging from traditional disciplines such as Psychology to interdisciplinary areas such as Conflict Resolution. Throughout higher education, interdisciplinary work is expanding in recognition of the fact that the social and professional issues that students will face in their careers and personal lives require a greater understanding of the methodologies and connections among different fields of inquiry in order to analyze new problems and consider alternative approaches to resolution. Currently 45% of AUBG students double major, often linking a pre-professional major with a liberal arts major, and 35% graduate with a minor. More intentional program design that links disciplines, guided by faculty expertise, would strengthen student learning. In addition, curricular development initiatives can provide additional opportunities for faculty who want to engage in collaborative research.

#### Initiatives:

- Develop current majors to include more related courses or cross listed courses from other majors with the aim of strengthening not diluting the attainment of outcomes and quality of the program (e.g., Media and Politics, European Business Law).
- Conduct additional market research on student demand and career opportunities as the basis for curricular development and seek resources to initiate new programs.
- Create new cross-disciplinary majors using courses from several disciplines (e.g., a Graphic Design major could use current JMC courses, COS courses, and Art courses along with a few additional new courses).
- Develop new cross-disciplinary minors in areas where insufficient demand warrants a major but where we have faculty resources and student interest (e.g., Philosophy and Religion, American Studies, Media Studies, International Development).
- Organize faculty workshops through departments to explore links between issues and approaches in their respective disciplines, for example, theories of economic development, in order to introduce interdisciplinary perspectives on complex issues into current courses.
- Committee on Learning and Teaching (COLT) hosts faculty seminars on developing interdisciplinary and cross disciplinary courses. (A current example is the Cross Cultural Management course taught by an anthropologist for the Business program.)
- Develop faculty led intentional advising program for a select number of academically strong students who wish to develop a self designed major based on coursework from at least two disciplines complemented by interdisciplinary independent studies.
- Encourage the development of cross-disciplinary faculty research projects.

#### Five Year Target Measures:

- Increase in the number of majors that include cross-listed, cross-disciplinary, or interdisciplinary courses
- Increase in the number of graduates who double major or have a major and a minor
- Development and full functioning of new majors and minors where current resources already exist
- Addition of new majors and minors as resources become available
- Increase in the number of cross-disciplinary faculty research projects, including those undertaken with students

### **c. Strategic Goal: Raise Academic Standards**

Introduce clearer and higher academic standards for the various levels of courses (100-400), and, for each course, set requirements and grading standards to match the level of challenge.

Rationale:

Although the academic catalog does provide some academic standards (e.g., grading scale, academic honesty, final exam requirements), more can be done to ensure high standards. Currently, students report considerable variability in expectations for both the quantity and quality of work in different courses. Among the questions students ask are: “Should a 100 level course be easier than a 400 level course or different in approach?” “What is an A at any time and for any professor?” “Is a course at AUBG more challenging than the same course at another university?” There is no intention to give instructions to faculty on how to grade or teach their courses, nor do students believe varying levels of expectation indicate that a faculty member is a “good or bad” teacher. Rather they believe that greater attention to the coherence of the curriculum and rigor of courses will encourage better development of skills and knowledge over a sequence of courses and set high yet realistic expectations for student performance. Conveying high expectations and clear standards with regular feedback will motivate students to higher levels of performance.

Initiatives:

- Recommend a certain minimum amount of reading for a course, depending upon level, discipline, and course goals.
- Recommend that faculty grade students against a standard (“Let’s call it the perfect AUBG student.”) not against the students that are in the class at the moment.
- Recommend that faculty use more controversial and challenging reading materials to increase critical analysis, as appropriate to the discipline.
- Design exams that require writing and analysis as well as carefully constructed multiple choice and closed-ended questions, where appropriate.
- Include students as active participants in the learning process (in the classroom, as work-study and research assistants, etc.) and designers of the course.
- Improve feedback to students by distributing assessment activities throughout the course and providing explanatory comments.
- Review the hierarchy of course levels (e.g. 100 level courses introductory, 200 based on main concepts, theories in the field, 300 and 400 level highly-specialized, advanced courses, and research oriented).
- Encourage writing assignments in all 300 and 400 courses, not just the Writing Intensive Courses, as appropriate.
- Grade all assignments except exams on quality of oral and written expression, as well as content, to reinforce skills developed in the English and Writing Intensive courses.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Each course has specific objectives and assessments aligned with those objectives
- Where appropriate, use master syllabus and/or common final in multi-section courses taught by different faculty
- Departments develop refined curriculum maps that include both objectives and the standards for performance
- Pre-requisites, course levels, and requirements for all courses are regularly reviewed by departments

- Faculty in the next course in a sequence report students are well prepared
- Standards for reading, writing, types of exams clear for all courses and programs
- Evidence of high academic performance is publicized as constituting part of AUBG's brand name

#### **d. Strategic Goal: Honors Program**

Increase the opportunities for students to achieve at the highest academic level through a University Honors program characterized by specially designed courses, interaction with other high achieving students, and close mentoring relationships with faculty and alumni.

Rationale:

Model honors programs contribute to both recruitment and retention of outstanding students. A University Honors program would complement not replace the current honors work and serve as an attraction for high ability students who have many choices for where to go to college. Currently, AUBG student receive graduation honors (cum, magna, summa) recognizing high achievement in all courses as measured by the overall GPA. Departmental recognition is given for exceptional performance in the major based on GPA and an extensive independent research project. What is missing is the enriching environment that a cross-disciplinary University Honors program would provide through which students would be stimulated to excel because of their interaction with others of high motivation and courses of a different nature lead by challenging faculty mentors. The program at full functioning would probably include approximately 10% of the student body. Students would apply for the program after the second year at AUBG based on interest and achievement. Every effort should be made to avoid creating an environment where the students or faculty in the program believe they are an elite.

Initiatives:

- Offer honors seminar versions of selected General Education courses so that students can meet the requirements of the University Honors Program while also completing General Education.
- Offer honors version of required courses in a major so that students can meet the requirements of the University Honors Program while also pursuing the major.
- For programs too small to sponsor their own honors course, such as mathematics, design an interdisciplinary honors seminar with another discipline such as Computer Science or Economics and through careful scheduling ensure enrollments.
- Include independent study as an opportunity to meet Honors Program requirements.
- Identify a faculty member to be the primary advisor for the Honors Program to ensure enough seminars are offered, students are selected appropriately, co-curricular opportunities are scheduled by the students, and mentoring is available with alumni.
- Hold regular meetings of all faculty who are interested in teaching an Honors course to share information on what is different about course design, pedagogy, and expectations of students.
- Promote the Honors Program in recruiting materials in the same way we promote Study Abroad and other enriching academic options.
- Design co-curricular opportunities, including interactions with alumni to enrich the overall experience.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Honors program is fully developed.

- Additional numbers of students of high ability who are seeking a challenging academic experience choose AUBG for this opportunity, as measured by number of students with high SATs and applicants to the program.
- Increase the number of students participating in select summer schools, competitions in their field, and other highly competitive experiences for university students worldwide
- Recognition by graduate schools of the quality of students graduating with University Honors.
- Increase in the number of theses and independent research projects completed.

## **2. Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy**

### **a. Strategic Goal: Relevant and Practical Education**

Strengthen the concept of liberal education as practical and relevant through opportunities in courses and programs for real-world application of knowledge and skills, such as projects, simulations, and internships, in order to support the development of transferable skills, life-long learning, and student appreciation for the value and currency of their AUBG education.

Rationale:

Liberal education is a relatively unknown model of education in the region and, even in the United States, is sometimes considered a luxury with limited practical application. Both alumni and employers praise the outcomes of liberal education but also clearly state that courses and programs need to be more relevant and practical. If courses and programs are designed to integrate a variety of types of challenging experiential learning, including analysis of current problems, live and virtual simulations, internships, service learning, community action projects, and the like, students will more readily recognize the applicability of their current expertise as well as their capacity for inquiry necessary for life-long learning. One of the most often seen student comments on course evaluations is the call for less theory and more practical application. Among the most often praised aspects are good examples, engaging course activities, and guided practice. Conscientious attention to course design, selection of materials, and engaging pedagogies is consistent with our goal of active, engaged learners.

Initiatives:

- Support faculty development activities on teaching with cases, using simulation, conducting service learning, managing community projects, etc.
- Engage the Coordinators of the Advising Center and the Career Center in helping to build contacts with the community so that faculty can consider service learning, community projects, and internships.
- Develop long-term relationships with companies, government agencies, international organizations, municipalities, and NGOs to facilitate opportunities for students to apply learning both on and off campus.
- Make it easier for students to receive academic credit for internships conducted away from the AUBG campus.
- Identify guest lecturers, alumni, and community resources who can coordinate practical projects.
- Recruit practitioners as adjuncts and visiting faculty.
- Develop a “Sofia Experience” for either a semester or a summer that allows students to do an internship (paid or unpaid but for credit and supervised) and also take courses at the Elieff Center in order to complete academic work toward the degree.

- Establish an office on campus funded by employers in Sofia who want to have students work for them off site with carefully designed contracts, standards of performance, and payment plans.

Five Year Target Measures:

- All courses include practical applications
- Increase in the number of majors that provide opportunities for community engagement and real-world experience.
- All students engage in an applied learning activity: an academic internship, professional internship, service learning project, community project, independent study focused on solving a real problem—could be either in the curriculum or outside the curriculum.
- Increase in the ratings of the curriculum as “relevant” on the Senior Survey.

### **b. Strategic Goal: Undergraduate Research**

Increase the opportunities for students to conduct high quality research in an area of their interest by providing a well-designed mentoring program, academic credit, and grant support for students to conduct and present their research.

Rationale:

Research is a significant element in a liberal arts curriculum aimed not only at helping students understand the disciplines and how knowledge is created, but also at encouraging them to practice and improve their critical and analytical skills. AUBG students currently have the opportunity to write senior theses in most majors, as well as major research papers in some upper-level, seminar designed courses. The research opportunities need to be sequenced through courses, expanded, and further developed to involve a greater number of students in significant research to reflect the level of academic excellence AUBG strives for. Quality undergraduate research can be a credible indication of the level of academic rigor and excellence of the student body. Good mentoring by faculty and greater integration of independent projects in majors will lead to more students willing to conduct a senior thesis project. Undergraduate research will significantly benefit students interested in pursuing graduate studies.

Initiatives:

- Implement research projects/papers in more AUBG courses after ENG 102.
- Offer a sophomore level seminar on how to do research to encourage more student research especially at the senior level.
- Extend Information Literacy training program and integrate research support into courses.
- Organize workshops for faculty who are working with students on research projects.
- Provide course credit for faculty who supervise theses.
- Provide mentoring and coaching to advance thesis research to the stage of submission for publication in professional journals and presentation at conferences in the US and Europe
- Add to the Student Travel funds to support students who wish to attend special advanced academic programs, present their research at recognized conferences, and attend international meetings with faculty.
- Continue to develop the AUBG Research Conference “The Fellowship of the Mind.”

Five Year Target Measures:

- Increases in research opportunities in every major in the 300 and 400 level courses

- Increase in the number of theses and independent research projects
- Recognition of student research through publication in undergraduate research journals, presentation at international conferences, and joint publications with faculty
- Increased visibility of AUBG student research through expansion of the Annual AUBG Research Conference through cooperation and participation from other universities

### **c. Strategic Goal: Creativity and Innovation**

Design more opportunities for students to challenge prevailing ideas, use their imagination, try out their creativity, and undertake projects that require innovative as well as analytic thinking.

Rationale:

Creativity in all its forms and manifestations underlies the human experience. Nurturing, encouraging, recognizing, and actively engaging in the promotion of creative solutions in turn promotes outcomes that are “both original and of value.” Creative problem-solving, not just in the curriculum but across AUBG (e.g., administration, recruitment) and in life beyond AUBG, is becoming a key element of success in an increasingly competitive and uncertain environment. Recent forums on the uncharted global challenges of this century, such as climate change and the economic downturn, argue that transfer of knowledge is not sufficient—that education must stimulate human ingenuity, collective innovation, and talent development in order to respond. The ability to approach any task “creatively” will ensure that AUBG graduates are not only better prepared for a future, but highly valued as well.

Initiatives:

- Engage faculty in workshops and discussions to understand and promote creative approaches to teaching and curriculum development (e.g., less structured courses and assignments, a different approach to grading, student suggestions on how to stimulate creativity).
- Share resources on creativity and innovation in all fields (build online resources).
- Hold conference to showcase classroom successes and student projects with colleagues.
- Introduce new courses, modules, and assignments in courses that focus on creativity, entrepreneurship, new methods and help students understand that finding the “right” answer may mean taking some risks, visualizing something new.
- Create a dynamic community dialogue that stimulates new ideas by inviting innovative speakers to campus, especially in areas not currently represented in course offerings.
- Develop new platforms for sharing information (e.g., use video-conferencing to create bridges with other institutions, individuals).
- Encourage students to add their talents to the University in creative ways including software applications, websites, photography, etc.
- Facilitate regular competitions that encourage students to use creative thinking, such as the annual Computer Science programming competition

Five Year Target Measures:

- Include creativity and innovation as elements in evaluation of excellent teaching
- Employer survey identifies AUBG students as being creative and innovative
- Curriculum map for every major identifies where and how creativity and innovation will be developed
- Students participate in conferences and competitions focused on innovation

#### **d. Strategic Goal: Social and Personal Responsibility**

To complement the effective work AUBG does in developing students' academic and intellectual skills, intentionally help students understand that career success is not a sufficient measure of their education—they must also have a strong sense of purpose in order to lead satisfying lives.

##### Rationale

The General Education program plays a central role in helping students focus on issues of citizenship, ethical development, and acceptance of responsibility for actions through courses that satisfy the Moral and Philosophical Reasoning requirement. In addition, many courses in the majors present students with challenging perspectives on both public and private moral, ethical, and legal issues. Classroom discussions aim to help students understand themselves and their judgments as they are introduced to competing values and the perspectives of others. AUBG provides many additional opportunities for students to develop their sense of personal and social responsibility, including a wide variety of co-curricular activities such as the Peace initiatives, AIDS Campaign, Anti-Racism Campaign, Environmental Week, and community projects. More intentional pedagogies and course design can strengthen this aspect of an AUBG education and raise its importance in the understanding of students and alumni who want to lead lives that make a difference.

##### Initiatives:

- Include issues related to social responsibility and ethics in more courses in addition to those required as part of the General Education program, as appropriate to the discipline.
- Offer more opportunities in courses for students to deal with complex and controversial issues (e.g. by using newspapers, case studies, and similar sources in class).
- Sensitively engage students in discussions of current political, social and economic scenarios, especially for crisis situations where the “right” answer about what is responsible or ethical is not clear.
- Help faculty develop pedagogies that go beyond free expression of different points of view to well argued and serious discussions about the meaning of these perspectives and the criteria by which individuals might make their own judgments.
- Achieve more coordination in the work of professors who deal with different topics related to social responsibility, including class visits and sharing resources.
- Inventory faculty and staff activities outside the University to develop more visibility for models of how individuals carry out different forms of social responsibility.
- Invite provocative speakers to deliver lectures and discuss social issues with our students.
- Encourage students to be interested in social responsibility from their first year at AUBG onward through courses, co-curricular activities, and forums that present social and personal responsibility as a necessary element of human development and personal success.
- Publicize co-curricular activities and speakers to involve more students and integrate some of the activities into courses to provide time for discussion and reflection.
- Connect AUBG and the local community more actively through a structured relationship benefitting both sides: AUBG not only has to contribute to the community, but should also allow the community to contribute to AUBG.

##### Five Year Target Measures:

- Senior Survey indicates greater involvement and attention to civic life

- Review of syllabi at department level shows integration of appropriate topics, readings, and issues into courses in addition to the General Education courses
- University sponsor at least two major projects with the community each year that involve students and faculty
- Reduction in academic integrity violations and conduct council cases

### **3. Outstanding Teacher/Scholars**

#### **Strategic Goal: Excellence in Teaching**

Recruit, support and reward faculty who are committed to excellence and innovation in teaching.

Rationale:

Excellence in teaching has been a hallmark of AUBG and is reflected by the reputation of the University. The University's reputation for high standards in turn has an impact on recruiting new students. We need to meet or exceed the standards at our competitor institutions. As AUBG recruits a more diverse student body, what is deemed good teaching is interpreted in different ways. The expectations for full involvement in the classroom or reading in preparation for class mean different things to different students. The expectations of faculty must be clearly defined for the benefit of students so that they may play their part in attaining the goal of excellent instruction.

Initiatives:

- Offer more seminar-style classes that encourage students to read and lead discussions
- Create a forum for faculty to discuss efficient teaching methods, especially for new faculty.
- Encourage faculty to attend professional conferences in order to remain current in their fields.
- Provide professional development support including course-releases for teaching projects
- Improve the use of the student evaluation system.
- Encourage visits to other professor's classes to learn about new and different methods and styles of teaching.
- Encourage the use of field trips, guest lecturers.
- Open a university archive for faculty and student work.
- Maintain a low faculty-student ratio in classes.
- Use junior and senior students as teaching and research assistants.
- Implement a mentoring program for new faculty to assist in syllabi construction, and peer review and advising during the new faculty member's first semester to help new faculty start successfully.
- Provide training for faculty in the use of online materials and classroom technology.
- Reinitiate "faculty retreats" to promote and encourage discussion and debate on relevant education issues.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Open a university archive in the library to retain significant faculty and student work.
- Create an endowed fund to provide continuous funding to support field trips
- Encourage more faculty to attend teaching related conferences.
- Recognize outstanding teaching .

- All professors are encouraged to make appropriate use of classroom technology, the W drive and .LRN for disseminating course materials.

### **b. Strategic Goal: Support for Scholarly and Professional Activities**

Support faculty in the design and implementation of an active program of research, creative work, and scholarly activities that contribute to their profession and discipline and fulfill AUBG's commitment to the creation of knowledge and creative expression.

#### Rationale:

Research and creative work is an important component of excellent teaching. There are many faculty with established research agendas and involvement in their field, as well as new academics beginning their work. To ensure good support, the Faculty Assembly approved in April 2007 a Strategy for Academic Research and Artistic and Creative Activities that outlines the variety of types of work that are encouraged and the structures and resources available. As faculty increase publication, especially in international venues and strengthen relations with other universities and faculty for joint research projects, the visibility and vitality of the University will also increase.

#### Initiatives:

- Strengthen the role of the Research Committee in implementing the Research Strategy.
- Research Committee prepares an annual plan on faculty research and makes recommendations on how to improve the climate for research.
- Implement program for new faculty to assist them in establishing research programs and collaborations.
- University Relations give greater visibility to faculty members in the print media, in on-line venues, and through a directory of faculty experts for interviews and commentary.
- Departments sponsor research colloquia to bring faculty together, provide feedback on work in progress, and stimulate productivity.
- Support faculty committed to professional advancement through promotion.
- Give course releases to active researchers and consider variable teaching loads depending upon research activity.
- Consider revisions in teaching schedules based on research plans and consistent with student needs.
- Utilize strong record of current academic projects and strengths to attract additional grants, research funds, and fellowships.
- Provide administrative support to faculty who participate in grant funded research projects.

#### Five Year Target Measures:

- Measure and track the quantity and quality measures of faculty research output
- Establishment of formal links between departments and colleagues at other universities and research institutes to promote research and scholarship
- Increase in research grants and external sponsorship of research (e.g., fellowships, computer hardware, access to databases, etc.)
- Establish fund to support interdisciplinary research projects that encourage faculty to explore and start new lines of inquiry that extend beyond their disciplinary boundaries.

### **c. Strategic Goal: Recruit and Retain Top Quality Faculty**

To fulfill AUBG's strategic objective to be distinguished by excellent faculty, AUBG must be successful in recruiting and retaining faculty members who have the potential to excel both in terms of teaching and in scholarship.

#### **Rationale:**

In AUBG's founding years, faculty were attracted by the opportunity to teach and conduct research in a part of the world that had been closed to academics from much of the world. In addition, faculty were inspired to teach students eager to obtain an education modeled on different principles than the traditional regional institutions offered at the time. Now that Bulgaria is an established democracy and European Union member, AUBG needs to compete for faculty with different motivations, namely to be accomplished academics in a high quality international liberal arts institution. To compete for top quality faculty we must offer professional opportunities and remuneration that is competitive with other comparable institutions seeking to recruit the same faculty members.

#### **Initiatives:**

- Identify the competitors for faculty we are trying to recruit in all regions and markets.
- Establish a comprehensive review of recruiting procedures to expedite the faculty search process without compromising inclusiveness.
- Explore alternative methods for identification of job candidates, including conference recruitment, professional associations, referrals from colleagues, and maintenance of a recruitment database.
- Develop faculty recruitment materials to support recruitment as an ongoing activity for all current faculty.
- Train faculty search committees for year round work and both August and January hires.
- Establish guiding principles for determining faculty compensation and benefit packages that will allow AUBG to compete effectively for the faculty it most wants to attract.
- Evaluate factors that may make AUBG more competitive (e.g., tenure, research support).
- Identify factors related to faculty retention (e.g. social support, faculty development, support in teaching excellence and research, professional networks).
- Strengthen faculty engagement in the AUBG community including work with student organizations, service on committees, and leadership roles.
- Strengthen faculty engagement in the country and region through opportunities to work with professional associations, business organizations, and other universities.
- Publicize notable accomplishments of faculty both as good advertising for AUBG but also a place of choice for scholars.

#### **Five Year Target Measures:**

- Improve AUBG's relative performance in all measures of faculty quality in comparison to both comparison group and aspirational group norms.
- Improve faculty compensation and benefits when measured against comparison group and aspirational group using CUPA salary data and EU data as standards.
- Ensure that searches for full-time faculty positions begin early in the fall semester, produce ranked short-lists of top candidates by the end of the fall semester, and result in hires.
- Reduce reliance on faculty with fixed-term appointments.
- Maintain appropriate mix of high quality adjuncts and visiting faculty for flexibility.

## **B. Engaged Students and Alumni**

### **1. High Quality and Diverse Student Body**

#### **a. Strategic Goal: Selective Student Body.**

Continue to attract students with both ability and motivation, as demonstrated by their test scores, academic record in secondary school, and participation in competitions and co-curricular activities, who are capable of achieving in a challenging and dynamic academic environment.

Rationale:

AUBG offers a demanding and challenging education to students of great promise who can make a difference through lives of service and leadership. The overall quality of the University depends on well prepared and highly motivated students working with excellent faculty. Students with high aspirations will be attracted to a University if they are assured that there will be other students of equal ability for them to work with and learn from. In a deep global recession, students and their families can be expected to become far more cost-conscious thus financial aid will be an important part of our strategy to attract the best..

Initiatives:

- Attract external resources that will allow us to increase scholarship aid based on merit.
- Refine our brand and message so that they are effective in all forms of marketing media.
- Emphasize the value of our broad multi-disciplinary curriculum with a variety of elective courses complemented by co-curricular activities.
- Strengthen admissions activities to recruit high quality students by building long term personal relationships with students and teachers.
- Involve faculty in the recruiting process both on campus and for travel to demonstrate the quality of the academic environment.
- Use SAT score reports, international competitions, Olympiads, and other resources to identify the pool of the best students in all countries.
- Assess quality continuously in relation to the success of AUBG's students, faculty and programs and highlight the factors that make AUBG "unique" in relation to competitors.
- Use the English Language Institute to develop students with potential to meet AUBG's academic standards.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Average SAT of above 1200
- Attract more students who are in the top 10% of their high school graduating class
- A valedictorian in high school from each country or a gold/silver medalist in national or international Olympiads in fields that AUBG offers
- Increase minimum admissions criteria

#### **b. Strategic Goal: Diverse Student Body**

Attract a student body reflecting all aspects of diversity (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, religion, academic interests, social class, etc.) in order to provide a rich educational and social experience

that will prepare graduates to participate in the world with cross-cultural competence, empathy, respect, and understanding of others.

Rationale:

Every group surveyed regarding AUBG's strategic advantage identified its multinational and multicultural student body as one of the key strengths and identifying characteristics that must be preserved. We have used recruiting efforts and financial aid to shape a class of unusual richness that contributes to the education of all. Both US universities and the EU understand the importance of internationalizing higher education and improving access. Not only is this important for the quality of education, expanding recruiting to other markets can offset changes in some of our traditional markets.

Initiatives:

- Revise AUBG's mission statement to emphasize its international character rather than regional focus.
- Adapt recruiting messages and all materials to different recruiting markets.
- Provide better analysis of full cost so that students can compare AUBG to EU institutions on not just tuition but also housing, food, and incidental costs.
- Analyze the price sensitivity of the prospective students in relation to competitors' tuition and living costs.
- Strengthen efforts with donors to provide additional financial aid.
- Administer an institutional SAT to reduce this barrier to applying.
- Host conferences, competitions, sports programs and the like to bring prospective students to campus.
- Stress AUBG's unique character as comparable to the best residential liberal arts institutions with a good location, high academic profile, excellent faculty, extracurricular activities, and successful alumni.

Five Year Target Measures:

- International student body enrolling students from over 40 countries
- Recognition in recruiting materials and the curriculum of diversity as an educational asset
- Increased financial aid for outstanding students in all geographical regions

### **c. Strategic Goal: Increase the Size of the Student Body**

Grow to 1200-1400 students in order to achieve economies of scale, support greater diversity in the curriculum, and further develop the overall vitality of the institution while still retaining the selectivity of the student body, personal attention to students, and sense of community.

Rationale:

More is not always better—AUBG will always be a small liberal arts university. However, small institutions (below 1000) are far less resilient financially than somewhat larger institutions (1200-1400) and face challenges with even a small decline in enrollment. At 1200 to 1400 students, AUBG would achieve efficiencies as the current level of staffing, library resources, and technology resources are sufficient for more students. An increase in the student body would reduce operational costs per student and help keep AUBG affordable. In addition, a slightly

larger student body can support a more diverse faculty, richer curricular offerings, more fully developed facilities.

Initiatives:

- Improve recruitment materials, and conduct longer recruitment trips with more faculty involvement and more contacts with local schools and alumni.
- Seek an increase in financial aid from external sources to support additional students.
- Expand into alternative new markets such as China and Turkey and promote AUBG through experienced local educational advisors.
- Use activities such as summer programs to bring potential students to campus and cultivate interest at an earlier age.
- Improve communication about how good AUBG is to both internal and external audiences highlighting what makes the experience transforming.
- Emphasize affordability with more information on the availability of financial aid, work study, work and travel programs in the US and student loans.
- Evaluate the options for different types of payment plans other than full payment at the beginning of each semester.

Five Year Target Measures:

- 300 to 350 new first-year students each year
- 1200-1400 full time students by 2015.
- Reduction in the average cost of operations per student
- Reduction in tuition dependency
- Reduction in tuition increases

#### **d. Strategic Goal: Recruit the Best Bulgarian Students**

Compete for top students in an order to maintain our commitment to making a difference in Bulgaria and serving the needs of students who want to remain in their home country.

Rationale:

The entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the European Union has increased the access to and level of interest in European universities offering instruction in English. Students with high aspirations who once equated “American education” with the advancement of their careers now think “European education.” This shift is indicated by the steady decline in the number of SAT test takers in Bulgaria. Thus we must adapt the recruiting messages to target the most important values of Bulgarian students and increase financial support to be more competitive. For many students, AUBG is the best match for their interests now and in the long term because of its Liberal Arts character, challenging curriculum and international student body. Students who want to stay in the region will have an edge because prospective employers value AUBG.

Initiatives:

- Get the message out about the perceptions of employers about AUBG to help regional students understand that their career opportunities are enhanced by the University.
- Offer a free institutional SAT to Bulgarian applicants to AUBG, as we do with our international OSI scholarship pool applicants, to reduce the barrier to applying
- Address cost issues in comparison with EU-based universities, particularly in Germany and the UK with better information about total cost to off set the appeal of low tuition

- Develop PR and marketing campaign based on the target audience in Bulgaria in order to educate potential applicants about the indicators of quality education
- Publicize actively the scholarships, financial aid and other ways to help Bulgarian students finance their education
- Undertake special scholarship development initiatives with potential employers to encourage investment in young people as an investment in their business
- Increase the effectiveness of the word-of-mouth advertising making sure that AUBG professors are frequently quoted in the news media and students success is highlighted.
- Organize prospective students' weekend in its campus with the aim of bringing perspective Bulgarian students, parents, and teachers to campus to get a real feel of the University through campus tours, simulated lectures and class exercises.

Five Year Target Measures:

- 150-175 Bulgarian students enrolled each year
- Increase endowed scholarships for Bulgarian students
- Maintain regular recruitment activities with every Bulgarian feeder high schools

## **2. Dynamic Living/Learning Experience**

### **a. Strategic Goal: Pride in the University**

Increase school spirit, pride, and loyalty to the institution on the part of students, faculty, staff , and alumni to create a stronger sense of community and commitment to the future of AUBG.

Rationale:

School spirit, pride, and loyalty motivate all parts of the university to contribute to the institution and its well-being while they are here and also after they have left. These emotional attachments assist in recruiting new students, faculty and staff and raising both friends and funds for the University. Evidence of a deep commitment to AUBG from all members of the community can enhance the University's reputation among its peers and in the wider world. Without the conscious, constructive encouragement of school spirit, pride and loyalty, the well-being of the University community can sag and opportunities in everything from admissions and marketing to the classrooms and athletic fields can be lost. School spirit, simply put, also makes the University more fun.

Initiatives:

- Create a sense of place on the Skaptopara campus with outdoor furniture, patios, benches, formal entrances/gates, and permanent signs at either end of the land.
- Encourage the beginning of school spirit at orientations and opening events for new students, their parents and new faculty and staff.
- Welcome all new students to the University with an AUBG gift that identifies them as part of the community.
- Institute a Parents Weekend to show undergraduate life and accomplishments at the University to build loyalty.
- Institute an annual "AUBG Day" when members of the public are invited to campus to help celebrate the University.
- Foster intercollegiate and club team athletic competitions as well as intercollegiate intellectual competitions such as debating and Model UN to strengthen University spirit.
- Celebrate faculty and staff years of service to the University at an annual event.

- Develop a history of AUBG and distribute it among students and parents.
- Strengthen alumni relations with current students to show long term sense of pride.
- Emphasize the school mascot, including the commissioning of a griffin statue for the Skaptopara campus.
- Produce and sell a full range of high quality, AUBG logo items ranging from clothing and office products to recreational items and toys.
- Plan 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events

Five-year targets:

- A welcoming campus with entrances and signs at either end of the Skaptopara campus.
- A mascot statue in place on campus.
- An annual Parents Weekend and information site on the webpage
- An annual AUBG Day with the campus open to visitors.
- Annual recognition events for all members of the community
- Increase in the sale of wide variety of logo items on campus and in local stores
- Celebration of 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and 20<sup>th</sup> graduating class

## **b. Strategic Goal: Integrate Academic and Co-curricular Experiences**

Enhance and coordinate co-curricular and academic activities outside the classroom to maximize their potential as both social and learning opportunities for the whole community..

Rationale:

The University is noted for the rich environment of lectures, plays, workshops, special events and more. Too often members of the campus community miss out on opportunities to attend these events due to lack of notification, inadequate advance planning, and limited coordination for events. Speakers are not used to the optimum. With advance planning, speakers could have additional interaction in classes, in seminars or workshops, or at special meetings in addition to the scheduled open presentation. With good publicity, faculty can send their classes to specific presentations that complement class activities and instruction. Better publicity and a reduction in scheduling conflicts will further support the overall intellectual vitality of the campus. With careful planning, events can also be made more accessible to the Blagoevgrad community.

Initiatives:

- Create a regular schedule for film series, distinguished lectures, interest nights, and club presentations for each semester
- Improve the use of the web calendar to announce and promote events.
- Send out weekly event calendars every Friday for the upcoming week with color-coordination for kinds of events.
- Adjust the scheduling of events to reduce the overload in April.
- Set up a way to subscribe to the updates using RSS feeds.
- Coordinate clubs and other events and conduct training on how to organize clubs, how to introduce a speaker, etc.
- Set annual dates a semester or year in advance for major events including the Olympics, Research Conference, Honors Convocation, and Musical.
- Prioritize room scheduling based on use group size and wide appeal of the event.
- Advertise appropriate events to the Blagoevgrad Community.

- Plan at least one major speaker per semester who would be of special interest to the Blagoevgrad community.

Five-year targets:

- Calendar includes all traditional major events of the University throughout the year.
- A regular and predictable schedule of both athletic and intellectual competitions.
- One or two major (paid) speakers each semester planned at least a year in advance.
- Coordinate all theatre, art, and music performances on a semester basis so that they can be offered at accessible evening hours

### **c. Strategic Goal: Development of the Whole Person**

Provide an encompassing living/learning environment that encourages good health habits, proper etiquette, and life skills such as money management and conflict resolution.

Rationale:

The majority of students live on campus, away from the type of environment that can continue to guide their personal development. The student culture they are immersed in is one of technology replacing face-to-face relations, social networking as a measure of friendship, expectations for immediate service and immediate gratification. To provide a full education that will help them fit into a larger world that is different from the student milieu, we must understand both the expectations of the changing student body and also societal expectations. We would like AUBG alumni to be distinguished by their confidence, decorum, adaptability, and competence in managing their personal lives. It would be a disservice to them to let them graduate without fundamental skills, manners, and the personal attributes essential for functioning harmoniously in their communities and careers. We recognize that this initiative must be addressed with sensitivity to differences in cultural norms and social conventions, but also know we want our students to be successful in any country or culture where they choose to work and live.

Initiatives:

- Provide an ongoing series of programs on diversity and appreciation of cultural differences for both faculty and students.
- Host a series of informal meetings with faculty to discuss student norms and expectations in order to integrate greater awareness of standards for personal behavior into their interactions with students.
- Create more health, wellness, and exercise programs to encourage better lifetime behaviors.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of Student Services with regard to programming related to personal development (e.g. interviewing skills in Career Center)
- Provide workshops on life skills on topics such as money management, time management, and negotiation.
- Create a sample of AUBG e-mail visual appearance and teach e-mail and electronic etiquette to faculty, staff, and students.
- Review Sexual Harassment and Student Conduct procedures and training to ensure that interpersonal problems are being addressed appropriately and resolved

Five-year targets:

- Provide programming for all students on nutrition/health/stress/exercise/etiquette
- Hold etiquette and protocol training dinner for all graduating seniors

- Students recognized on employer surveys for their positive personal attributes

### **3. Connecting the Campus to the Community**

#### **a. Strategic Goal: Outreach Programs in Sofia**

Broaden the portfolio of certificate programs, courses, and seminars delivered to business and other professionals by developing expertise in new areas and competing successfully for project funding.

Rationale:

The globalization of the economy and the demand for enhanced competitiveness of the Bulgarian economy require constant qualification and requalification of the labor force. Market trends in Europe show that new skills and new specializations need to be developed for a knowledge-based economy. Financial resources from the EU aim to invest in development of human capital in the region. AUBG Sofia is already recognized by the business community, by the public institutions and international organizations as a provider of high quality training, mainly in areas, related to EU policies and financial instruments, as well as in business administration. The Elieff Center is an excellent venue for these programs. New areas can be developed as market demands are identified. The financial resources provided by EU programmes could be a valuable tool for strengthening our capacity to serve the needs of the region.

Initiatives:

- Continually seek information about the market needs and the new economic environment in the different sectors in order to provide up-to-date, market oriented “products” to respond to current economic changes.
- Actively search for international organizations and individuals who share the values of AUBG, thus creating a wide network for strategic partnerships for both current and new projects.
- Sustain and further develop long-term relationships with companies, government agencies, international organizations, municipalities, NGOs to facilitate opportunities to provide trainings and other forms of knowledge transfer.
- Strengthen contacts and relations with previous outreach alumni in order to promote the new initiatives and projects through their networks and receive valuable feedback in order to improve and develop.
- Follow closely the calls for proposals under EU programmes, in which trainings and re-qualifications are supported, and look for new opportunities.
- Coordinate with other AUBG departments, faculty and students to involve them in outreach activities and training programmes both as lecturers and initiators of new projects.
- Use IT platforms for some elements of distance learning, forum of participants, project management tools, etc.
- Promote the uniqueness of AUBG as an academic institution, closely connected to the business networks and public institutions, which can develop specifically tailor-made programmes and invite high-level speakers and lecturers.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Continue to offer at three editions of long-term Certificate Programmes per year
- Develop one big project (above 100,000 Euro) annually.

- Sustain 50% share of EU projects in the CEP annual budget each fiscal year
- At least ten trainings organized annually jointly, or alone for the needs of the market

#### **b. Strategic Goal: Promote Graduate Education**

Strengthen AUBG's commitment to the needs of the region by further developing the EMBA, considering additional selected graduate programs, and providing support for AUBG alumni who wish to pursue graduate studies.

##### Rationale:

AUBG continually updates and revises its academic programs to provide the high-quality education required for entry into today's job markets and to maximize the employment prospects of its graduates. Increasing our attention to changes in graduate education, especially the competition with the formats in Europe, ensures that we meet the needs of current students and remain attractive to potential students. Among the options we can explore are: a regular MBA; a 4+1 model at AUBG offering both a baccalaureate and a master's degree, partnerships with U.S. graduate schools; dual degree programs; and endowments like the Tchaprashikoff Fund to provide financial assistance to alumni who gain admission to the best American and European graduate schools. Careful consideration of graduate education should be considered with a focus on how it strengthens the University rather than detracts from its core mission in undergraduate education. Strengthening our commitment to graduate education could enhance the academic reputation and visibility of AUBG, make AUBG more attractive to faculty, and help provide specialized training in disciplines that are gaining popularity in terms of job market opportunities both regionally and internationally.

##### Initiatives:

- Stay responsive to market demands and continue to develop the EMBA program to meet the highest standards, including selectivity of students and curricular offerings.
- Conduct study of graduate programs in the EU and Bulgaria to understand competition and identify niche where AUBG could compete.
- Work with alumni and employers to determine what programs would meet the aspirations of our students and the needs of their employers. Follow the procedures for development of Graduate Programs to ensure broad faculty support, quality standards, and integration with undergraduate programs.
- Evaluate strategic alliances such as dual degree or partnership programs with U.S. European, and regional institutions.
- Develop initiatives to attract external funding to support graduate education for AUBG alumni.
- Follow the procedures for development of Graduate Programs to ensure broad faculty support, quality standards, and integration with undergraduate programs.

##### Five Year Target Measure:

- Trend analysis based on an annual review of competing models of graduate education.
- Increase in number of AUBG alumni pursuing graduate education.
- Stable cohort enrollment in the EMBA with selective student body.
- Approval for any new graduate program through accreditation processes

### **c. Strategic Goal: Elieff Center- Conferences and Events**

Ensure the sustainability of Elieff Center services by providing competitive, flexible and market oriented services, sustaining the existing customer relationships, and building new partnerships with external parties for conferences and events.

Rationale:

The Elieff Center for Education and Culture is located in a dynamic and strongly competitive market, yet Sofia also offers a large number of potential customers. The dynamic economic environment requires careful consideration of the market trends and strong planning and execution processes for promotion of the services in order to maintain or increase market share. Through effective market scanning and segmentation, we defined that our most promising target groups are the segments of HR, education, government, IT and PR companies. By providing highly flexible and affordable conferencing facilities to our customers, we create strong business relations. Our commitment to providing one-stop-shop services is part of our competitive advantages.

Initiatives:

- Integrate marketing activities with overall effort to position AUBG's brand in Sofia and position Elieff Center as a strategic unit of AUBG.
- Use personal approach to customers, instant reporting and data analysis, which will help us get to know the customers of the Elieff Center, providing information on their needs and preferences.
- Enhance program development through cross-selling and creating opportunities for new business contacts.
- Provide high quality services through a strong event management system, strong technical support, and good logistical support with AUBG offices.
- Exchange information and know-how with AUBG Conference Office in Blagoevgrad and look for opportunities to collaborate.
- Promote Elieff Center as an excellent venue with conference facilities.
- Continuously analyze the market in order to compete with attractive and flexible pricing.
- Keep relationships with customers and build on past experience to develop current activities.
- Provide opportunities for feedback in order to improve services.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Attract two new customers every month
- 15 % annual growth in conference activities, as a result of diversified Elieff Center services, such as marketing, promotion and business development
- Develop new renting offers for the "low seasons"
- Develop one new long-term relationship per year with a customer in the sphere of IT technologies, who is organizing a great variety of computer trainings, and who could provide us with high occupancy and solid incomes

## **C. Facilities and Technology that Support Excellence**

### **1. Providing Support for Research and Teaching**

### **a. Strategic Goal: Develop the Library**

With a new building, the largest English language collection in the region, and a highly trained staff, the AUBG library will continue to develop and maintain its excellence in support of teaching, research, and learning and serve as a model in the region.

#### Rationale:

Rapid changes in the role of libraries call for adaptability and continuous change. The most pervasive trends are changes in technology, more full text electronic resources, more open access to information, consortia relationships, and increased demand for immediate access and service both on-site and off-site. Collection development, management, and staffing are continuously adapting. Membership in the American International Consortium of Academic Libraries (AMICAL), Bulgarian Information Consortium (BIC), and participation in the National Academic Library Information System (NALIS) project, which aims to provide a common cataloging platform throughout Bulgaria, will allow staff to keep up with change and provide service and leadership to others. To ensure the best use of our resources, additional training for faculty and students in search, selection and attribution of information is essential.

#### Initiatives:

- Develop greater visibility for the library and its resources through training integrated into the academic programs and coordinated with faculty.
- Strengthen the role of the Library as a social space through programs, exhibitions, trainings, poetry readings, and more.
- Explore new opportunities and improve technology services including wireless, remote access, e-books, and reference support.
- Selectively migrate from paper to electronic formats to better manage space, resources, and access to information.
- Evaluate the opportunities that an integrated learning resources center in the Library/NAB would offer students including information literacy training, tutoring services, Writing Center activities, and other support services.
- Provide ongoing training for all library staff to keep up with new developments and opportunities through consortia such as AMICAL, NALIS, and Bulgarian Information Consortium.
- Offer more intentional training for all faculty and students in accessing, evaluating, and presenting information, with a special emphasis on intellectual property standards for print, visual, and sound materials under copyright.
- Continue to develop initiatives to bring external support through gifts, grants, and the “Friends of the Library” program.
- Develop an archive for faculty and student research and historical documents of AUBG in formats that will be stable overtime and searchable.

#### Five Year Target Measures:

- Increase in monograph and electronic resources
- Special initiatives result in increased in usage both on-campus and off-campus
- Regular hosting of library professionals, one conference or major meeting per year
- Library staff complete advanced degree and engage in professional development
- Assessment of information literacy training shows integration into academic program

## **b. Strategic Goal: Invest in Information Technology Services**

Provide a quality, working IT environment of high availability, productivity, flexibility and security for all faculty, students, and staff by making strategic, service-oriented investments in technology, training and support.

### **Rationale:**

IT at AUBG should fully support the mission of the University and provide adequate and efficient services (anytime, anywhere) for faculty and scholarly excellence, and student success. Advanced information technology capacity is a strategic asset for the University and an investment that brings returns in both effectiveness and efficiencies. AUBG has maintained a fairly high level of technology integration with limited resources, yet each success inevitably raises new expectations for an environment in which people feel valued and can do their best work. Therefore, the IT focus and priority at AUBG is to develop such customer-centric and service-oriented computing and communication environment providing 24/7 accessibility, and reliable services, anytime and anywhere. Three areas: Service and Organizational Excellence; Security and Intellectual Asset Protection; and Communications and Collaboration Infrastructure define the scope of the initiatives to pursue this strategic goal.

### **Initiatives:**

- Use the Information Resources Committee and Office of Communication and Computing to provide client-focused leadership in institutional IT planning for computing facilities and their expansion, centrally-managed storage and backup, and business continuity and disaster recovery.
- Strengthen services to users through both on-line and in-person support by delivering applications, a front-line help desk, self-service data center, and continues training.
- Evaluate standards for funding ongoing maintenance and support costs
- Improve integration of administrative information systems and invest in their further development and evolution
- Develop a uniform way to provide identity management and authentication and ensure security in accessing all information resources and services at AUBG
- Prepare a functional IT disaster recovery procedures and business continuity plan.
- Review standards for maintaining integrity, confidentiality, availability and persistence of institutional data and services
- Develop an emergency monitoring and communication system
- Collaborate on development of campus-wide work anywhere tools and solutions
- Monitor changing uses of social networking tools so that they contribute to the learning environment
- Consider outsourcing as an alternative solution for Internet, e-mail, and entertainment services
- Seek partnerships with companies to attract funding and equipment
- Actively pursue open-source options

### **Five Year Target Measures:**

- Users satisfaction of IT services environment
- Replacement standards met each year
- All classrooms with multimedia - complete and further developed
- Front-line help-desk and self-service data center implemented

- Assessment of the quality of the working environment in terms of its availability, productivity, flexibility and security.

## **2. Integrating Academic, Creative, and Recreational Activities**

### **a. Strategic Goal: Build a Student Center**

Build a Student Center to provide facilities for athletics, recreation, artistic performances, dining, student services, and meetings as an essential component of the campus build-out.

Rationale:

Currently, AUBG has limited types of spaces for social and recreational activities. The split of the campus has reduced use of the Canteen, once the most used social space on campus. Space off campus is rented to support athletic activities. Planning meetings with students, faculty, and staff have identified a variety of needs that can be met in a Student Center including a main dining facility, a theater, various meeting rooms and studio spaces; and flexible recreation space for indoor sports including a gymnasium. In addition, relocation of Student Services from the Residence Hall would open up opportunities for integrating many support services. All facilities on campus should be considered learning spaces.

Initiatives:

- Select architect for the Student Center and work together on refining the concept into the design.
- Develop funding plan to support construction, probably in two segments.
- Design spaces for maximum flexibility such as gymnasium to convert for indoor commencement, use of landscape furniture arrangements to enhance natural light in spaces rather than building internal walls.
- Develop dining facilities to meet daily student needs, including funding options, as well as to meet catering needs of the University.
- Analyze the options for locating all of Student Services as well as other relevant offices such as Registrar, Financial Aid, and Cashier in the Student Center.
- Involve students in selections of furniture and equipment.
- Develop space migration and moving plans to make optimal use of vacated spaces in Skaptopara 1 and 2 and in the Main Building.
- Plan for summer programs and community programs to fully utilize the Center and bring income.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Completed Student Center fully furnished and operational
- Complete the migration of Dining Services to the new facility
- Complete the migration of Student Services to the new facility
- Extensive programming to meet variety of needs
- Revenue stream from food service, bookstore, rentals, etc. to offset facilities costs

### **b. Strategic Goal: Fully Develop the Campus**

Complete all stages of the Campus Master Plan in order to co-locate functions of the University, have ideal space for all campus activities, and facilitate the unification of the campus community.

#### Rationale:

From its founding, the dream has been to have a fully developed campus comparable to the best liberal arts campuses in the United States. The Campus Master Plan recognizes that location, space, facilities, landscaping, and amenities all have a significant impact on the way in which individuals relate to each other and the efficiency with which services are provided. The goal from the first plan to the present has been to co-locate all activities on the Skaptopara site in purpose-built facilities that reflect the values of the University—open, modern, aesthetically pleasing, and safe. As each stage at Skaptopara has taken shape, we have seen how the facilities enhance activities. However, until the campus is complete, we will live with the challenge of not being able to completely develop the learning community.

#### Initiatives:

- Reconfirm Campus Master Plan and adapt, as appropriate, to changing priorities.
- Develop a campus migration plan to allow change in stages, make optimal use of all facilities, and continuously evaluate facilities.
- Establish a long term plan for use of the Main Building in partnership with the community of Blagoevgrad.
- Complete the third residence hall as the student body grows or retrofit current residential buildings to add living space under the roof.
- Design the Main Administrative building for administrative and faculty offices, classrooms, and other functions
- Undertake financial and legal plans essential to support the full build-out of the campus.
- Achieve the right balance between openness to the community and security both in Blagoevgrad and Sofia.

#### Five Year Target Measures:

- Campus migration plan developed with priorities for spaces
- Complete design “program” for all remaining buildings on Master Plan
- Conduct bids for architectural services
- Secure funding and timeline for remaining campus construction

### **3. Improving the Environment and Campus Image**

#### **a. Strategic Goal: A Model Campus Environment**

Increase the aesthetics of the campus and the University’s commitment to environmentally sound practices in all its operations so that AUBG becomes a model in the region.

#### Rationale:

As an American-style residential campus, AUBG is committed to expressing its mission in the way in which we build out the campus and integrate it with the environment. A park like campus is unknown in this part of the world, but clearly conveys our commitment to openness, integration of living and learning, and respect for both individuals and the environment. AUBG can serve as a model for other institutions through attention to landscaping, integration of private and public areas, and commitment to a low carbon footprint. Aesthetics and environmentally sound practices not only improve the ambiance of the University and the surrounding area, enhance quality of life, and add to the University’s reputation in the community, but also save money and resources. Engaging students in aesthetic considerations is part of our commitment to developing the whole

person and encouraging greater sensitivity to individuals and surroundings. Engaging students in addressing issues such as recycling and energy savings is part of our commitment to social responsibility and a sustainable environment. The visual identity of AUBG will establish a clear impression with all members of the community about what we value.

Initiatives:

- Develop clearly defined campus entrances, boundaries, and building entrances with fully developed and maintained landscaping of public spaces.
- Provide underground parking facilities, bicycle racks, and walking paths to integrate the campus and community in a non-intrusive way and limit car access.
- Develop the internal environment of buildings with plants.
- Emphasize commitment to the environment through inclusion in the University's public statements and curricular goals.
- Support a variety of activities highlighting the importance of protecting the environment – a theme week; academic courses; increased recycling, the use of green materials in construction projects, etc.—for year round attention.
- Conduct regular environmental audits to monitor environmental impact (e.g., energy and water consumption, paper use, un-recycled trash, and the like).
- Recycle materials used and consumed at AUBG (e.g. computers).
- Begin an AUBG art collection to be displayed in all buildings.
- Educate Blagoevgrad community to responsible access and use of the campus.

Five-year targets:

- Defined entrances to the campus and delineation of its boundaries
- Established, regular environmental audit shows improvement from year to year
- Increased attendance at a variety of new environmental efforts including an annual theme week, academic courses and the like
- Recognition through awards, publications, etc., that the university is a beautiful and environmentally responsible institution

## **b. Strategic Goal: Visibility of AUBG through Web and Print**

Strengthen the brand of AUBG through visual and print expressions of the AUBG experience, quality, and contributions as an essential component of student and faculty recruiting, fund raising, and alumni relations.

Initiatives:

- Continue to develop the University website to reflect the key messages of quality, diversity, achievement, etc.
- Develop department websites as resource bases to showcase faculty and student achievements and highlight distinctive activities of the programs
- Keep individual faculty websites up to date and in consistent format
- Conduct branding exercise on campus before developing new print materials
- Maintain consistent and distinctive image for AUBG publications
- Develop strong marketing expertise to take advantage of new tools including internet and other technologies that directly reach potential students
- Develop video clips for the web and a longer video telling the AUBG story
- Investigate applications of social networking to connect with more constituencies
- Review language, terms, and context that makes AUBG accessible and searchable

- Review images used in all media for appeal to target groups
- Provide regular information to parents and community to connect them to the campus
- Develop, with the help of consultants, a communication strategy to increase visibility and interest in order to support recruiting efforts.

Five Year Target Measures:

- Analytics show more targeted and sustained connection to web
- Tailored messages for many different audiences included in print and electronic media
- Increased number of articles, coverage, formats throughout the region
- Recognition through market survey of AUBG's excellence

## ***IV. Implementing the Plan***

### **A. Annual Action Plans**

For the past five years the University administration has developed an annual action plan based on the 2002-2004 strategic plans. It serves as an important discipline for focusing on the important activities of the year. As positive as this process has been, it has not engaged units and individuals at all levels of the University and has remained primarily an activity for the administration. The result is a more top down development process than desired with only limited accountability of individuals for contributing to the whole enterprise.

In order to begin to implement this strategic plan, an overall institutional annual action plan will be prepared and, in turn, each unit will be asked to prepare an annual action plan consistent with the overall institutional plan. Each unit will file an annual report on accomplishments related to the Strategic Plan noting progress toward specific measures. These unit reports will also be expected to note what has inhibited progress or where there are goals or strategies that need to be revisited and revised. These plans and assessment reports will serve as the foundation for an on-going planning and institutional development effort.

Ultimately, we would like to shift the planning cycle to calendar year reports due in January to serve as the basis for annual budget requests, due in February, and to inform the development of the University budget due in April. In this way we can advance the planning process at AUBG to make it more intentional, more accountable, and more closely linked with resource planning.

To achieve the levels of excellence outlined in this Strategic Plan, it will be necessary to align activities at all levels with the strategic priorities and increase the level of accountability for all members of the community to support the University's progress. We have no illusions about the immediate effectiveness of this approach but know that it is an important part of the maturing of the University. We believe that by the end of five years, the University will have a fully developed planning and budget process and a stronger assessment program.

### **B. Funding the Plan**

AUBG is working hard to develop a coherent and robust fundraising program to support the three major priorities outlined for the Comprehensive Campaign and for this Strategic Plan: invest in students, invest in faculty and academic programs, and invest in the campus facilities. To our current donors—alumni, friends, faculty and staff, foundations, governments, corporations—we are seen as a good investment. Our challenge is to increase the number of donors in all categories

and to increase the size of their gifts in order to provide the resources necessary to for the long term development of the University.

### Alumni Giving

Every private university relies on alumni to form the core of its private donors making significant gifts. AUBG has efforts underway to cultivate its alumni, and a few have been extraordinarily generous in recent years. In general, however, we are handicapped by the youth of our institution as the oldest alumni are only now entering their peak income-earning years. It will be some time before we have alumni who may leave part of their estates to AUBG in their bequests, a source most private institutions in the US can count on. Private institutions also count on a continuous flow of small gifts from alumni, starting first at graduation and continuing in response to annual fund drives. Hereto AUBG is challenged as it is only in recent years that the idea of giving back to ones alma mater has begun to develop among alumni. There is a senior gift program in place as a foundation. The alumni organization is developing and raising small amounts for scholarships. We can expect these efforts to grow over time as we develop a culture of giving back to AUBG, host alumni events, maintain connections with alumni through e-mail and publications, and make it easier to give through various payment options.

### Friends of AUBG

Individual private donations have been an important source of funding for scholarships and other activities starting with the major and continuing support for international students by the Open Society Institute founded by George Soros. Other major gifts supported the construction of the Elieff Center in Sofia, the development of the Dimi Panitza Library, the Anna Tchaprachikoff scholarships for graduate education, the Zamphiroff scholarships for Bulgarian students. All of these major gifts show a desire to invest in the future of Bulgaria by investing in young people. Careful cultivation of donors with specialized interests in the region, especially Bulgarian-Americans, can continue to make a difference to AUBG. Many donors continue to give year after year, and relationships with those who were supporters in the past are being re-established.

Board of Trustees and University Council support continues to be an important component of Friends giving. The resource of networking with colleagues and friends produces valuable new prospects for AUBG. Board members have been particularly successful in attracting others to support the University who may not have been familiar with Bulgaria's needs or with AUBG, but who have a deep commitment to young people and education. Students are the direct beneficiaries of these gifts as they are primarily used for scholarships. The leadership provided by the Board of Trustees and University Council has been, and will continue to be, critical to the success of the fundraising effort.

### Faculty and Staff

The support through giving from Faculty and Staff has continued to increase in significant measure. The implementation of a formalized Faculty/Staff campaign, with salary deductions for periodic payments, has enhanced the giving options for faculty and staff. Beyond the financial support itself, the gesture of giving by faculty and staff represents an institutional commitment rarely found and speaks again to the uniqueness of AUBG. Offices with 100% support are awarded certificates and all donors are honored at an annual social event.

## Foundations

Foundation gifts and grants are an increasingly important source of support for AUBG, and advancement staff will continue to search for foundations whose programs and funding criteria are consistent with the needs of AUBG. Entry into the European Union has opened up new possibilities and extended others. Faculty have received grants through the Jean Monnet program to develop new courses, AUBG participates in the Erasmus exchange program that funds about 25 student exchanges and 4 faculty exchanges each year, and the Center for European Programs successfully competes for grant funding to support a variety of training programs in Sofia.

Grants from the America for Bulgaria Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, Nando Peretti Foundation, Citi Foundation, Salgo-Noren Foundation, Starr Foundation, Sallie Mae Fund, and the Open Society Fund have provided critical support for scholarships, new campus development and other programs. We expect that foundation support will play an increasingly important role in enabling AUBG to achieve the vision outlined in the strategic plan.

## Government

The political upheaval in the Balkans in the early 1990's made support for Bulgaria an important focus of US policy, thus USAID was a founding source of support for AUBG. The major USAID support necessarily ended with Bulgaria's entry into the European Union but we continued to be eligible for American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) program for capital projects. Over several years we were fortunate to receive grants that covered part of the cost of significant capital projects such as the residence halls, new academic building, and the library. The application process is highly competitive and AUBG's application is considered relative to applications from other institutions all over the world. AUBG has a good relationship with the Fulbright Commission and Individual faculty have been successful in receiving Fulbright awards.

AUBG maintains good relations with the Government of Bulgaria, but is not eligible for direct support. The recently established scholarship and research support program give modest stipends to students. There are ongoing discussions about a guaranteed student loan program. At the same time, new opportunities are opening up with EU funding for research and program development. In most cases, the projects must be co-financed and involve partners from other EU countries. The Center for European Programmes takes the lead on designing projects and writing proposals to support various types of training programs in Sofia and is also a resource to faculty in Blagoevgrad seeking research support and fellowships. Faculty have received grants through the Jean Monnet program to develop courses and AUBG participates in the Erasmus exchange program that funds about 25 students exchanges and 4 faculty exchanges each year.

## Corporate Donors

Developing corporate partners with AUBG is an ongoing initiative. With new international corporations locating regional offices in Bulgaria, the corporate program is seen as an area of positive potential development. Corporations are being visited individually on a regular basis. A major annual event in Sofia for regional corporations planned for fall 2009 in cooperation with the Bulgarian-American Chamber of Commerce and participation from AUBG Board of Trustee members. The Development Office staff have been particularly helpful to student groups seeking funding for their activities from companies in the Blagoevgrad region.

### Major Comprehensive Campaign

The most significant revenue initiative in AUBG's history will take place over the next 5-7 years with the university's first major Comprehensive Campaign. The campaign entered the "silent phase" in 2007 to begin assessment of support, develop prospects, design the overall strategy, and seek lead gifts. Given our unwillingness to compromise on quality, we anticipate that our need will exceed what we will be able to raise in one campaign. Nevertheless, making the full need clear to potential donors is important, because it signals the level of quality we seek for the University and the priorities we have established for AUBG. We will state clearly to supporters that in this "growth and build-out" phase of the University our needs are in the range of \$100,000,000 dollars: \$50 million to complete the build-out of the campus, \$25 million for support of faculty, research, and academic programs, and \$25 million for financial aid and student services. It is expected that our campaign goal will be between 30% and 50% of the overall identified needs. Significant gifts in the past two years have put us on track for launching the campaign.

### **C. Updating and Revising Our Goals**

No strategic plan remains "strategic" if it is put on a shelf and does not guide both everyday decisions and long term perspectives. A common phrase is "Strategy is only the start—making it happen is what counts." Similarly, good strategists know that they can never stop scanning the environment for challenges and opportunities. The Strategic Plan aims to provide direction without being a straightjacket. Consequently, key administrators and the Board of Trustees will conduct an annual review of progress toward the established goals and make recommendations for continued efforts or when necessary modification in the goals and the plan.