



## **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN BULGARIA**

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### **FIFTH-YEAR INTERIM REPORT**

*January 2011  
Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria*

## **Introduction**

In spring 2010, the Provost distributed data information sheets and the outline of the fifth-year report requirements to members of the Accreditation Advisory Committee so that they could begin planning the collection of data with the support of relevant administrative offices, including Institutional Research, the Registrar, and Business Affairs. During the summer, the Committee held several discussions based on the standards of accreditation, the projection sections of the Institutional Self Study submitted in 2006, and the University Strategic Plan approved in October 2009 in order to identify key issues to be included in the report.

Early in the Fall Semester of 2010, a new Accreditation Committee was appointed by the new Provost and small task forces of faculty and administrators drafted sections of the report. The outgoing Provost provided a draft overview of many sections which was edited by the incoming Provost. Informational briefings were held with the Faculty Assembly and Student Government prior to submitting the final draft of the report.

The Accreditation Committee is chaired by the Provost and has two sub-committees, one which is chaired by Professor Dimitar Christozov and handles the Bulgarian accreditation, and a second, chaired by the Provost, which addresses US Accreditation. Membership on both committees includes representatives of majors and the core curriculum, as well as faculty, staff and students. The American Accreditation sub-committee included the following individuals:

Cyrus Reed, Provost – Chair

Vladimir Elezov, Associate for Institutional Research

Tanya Papazova, Assistant to the Provost and Accreditation Coordinator

Steve Sullivan, Dean of Faculty and Professor of Economics

Alex Alexandrov, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Lydia Krise, Dean of Students

Pavlina Stoicheva, Director of University Relations

Latchezar Filtchev, Director of Communications and Computing

Iordanka Melnikliiska, Director of Admissions

Sophia Katzarska, Director of Library

Filitsa Mullen, Assistant Professor of English

Allen Hickman, Associate Professor of English

Ms. Papazova drew information from around the university to populate the data first forms and provided all other individuals with relevant materials for their drafts, including copies of the standards which they were to address and copies of the 2006 report and the strategic plan. When the drafts were completed, they were reviewed first by the Provost and later by other members of the Committee. The final report was approved by the Committee and then presented to the Faculty Assembly for discussion.

## **Institutional Overview**

Founded in 1991, the American University in Bulgaria had as its original mission to prepare a new generation of leadership for Bulgaria as the country emerged from the long period of Soviet domination and embarked on transition to market economy and democratic governance. AUBG sought to offer a high quality American liberal arts education to students who previously had no access to Western higher education. While the University sought to model the values of integrity, tolerance, openness, and democratic governance, it faced tremendous challenges. Following an early enrollment surge, student numbers fell after the accession of Bulgaria to the EU in 2007. AUBG also faced chronic budget deficits before FY 06, scant external fundraising, and operated out of facilities that were rented. In the past five years, the University transformed many of its challenges into accomplishments and, responding to the changes in the environment, broadened the focus of its mission from the region to the world and shifted the emphasis of its mission from leadership to excellence, with a focus on educating students of outstanding potential.

In the Fall of 2010, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education released the results of a ranking system that it had commissioned to an outside consulting firm to measure the quality of all of the country's 52 universities. AUBG was ranked number one in student outcomes— virtually none of our graduates is unemployed and moreover they receive the highest salaries of graduates from any university in the country. Perhaps this is because all of our academic programs were ranked either the best in the country, were tied with those of Sofia University, or came in second only to Sofia University. In one fell swoop, AUBG has been transformed in the eyes of Bulgarian educators from a small experimental institution to one of the major players challenging the status of the oldest, largest, and best funded research universities in the region. In many ways we outshone Sofia University even in their areas of strength: AUBG has more books per student and spends more per faculty on research than any other university.

In addition, over the past five years, AUBG's chronic fiscal deficits have been transformed into modest surpluses, our fundraising has increased, we have built three new buildings and our net asset value has increased from \$15 million to \$45 million. We have recently received two gifts from the America for Bulgaria Foundation totaling \$10 million, \$2 million for scholarships and \$8 million towards the construction of a new student center. In the fall of 2010, declining freshman intakes were reversed and the incoming class grew by nearly 32%, while the average SAT scores increased to just under 1200—including six students who had perfect math scores. The composition of the freshman class has also shifted from being largely Bulgarian to including students from 40 different countries ranging from Albania to Central Asia and from Zimbabwe to Europe and to the US. AUBG has emerged as a highly selective, sustainable, international liberal arts university unlike any other in the world.

This has been accomplished with a tuition level of \$8,800 and, given the recruitment footprint within which we operate, a high financial aid policy. Some 90% of our students receive financial aid and our average net tuition discount is 45%. Funding the needs of our students while funding the needs of the institution remains a major challenge for the University.

The Board of Trustees has indicated that they would like to see enrollment grow to 1200-1400 over the coming years, but have also set caps for student faculty ratios (17:1) and average class size (23). We have reached these caps already. Thus, the only way to accommodate the projected growth in the student body is to expand the faculty, something that is taken into consideration in all of our financial planning. Until now, AUBG has operated on the basis of a limited number of majors that are rooted in the humanities (history), social sciences (economics, political science, European studies), and professional areas including business, computer science/information science, journalism/mass communications, and math. All of these rest on a base of general education curriculum and focus upon critical thinking and effective

written/verbal communication. To explore curricular options open to the institution, in the Fall of 2010, the newly appointed Provost appointed a Faculty Task Force on New Program Development.

The faculty at AUBG is diverse. Approximately one third of the 57 full-time members comes from the US, about 40% are from Bulgaria, and the rest (25%) are from Europe and other countries — including Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the UK, and Columbia , New Zealand, and Pakistan. The bulk, though not all, of the part-time faculty come from Bulgaria. The diverse backgrounds, interests, and intellectual orientations of our faculty mirror the diversity of the student body and enrich the intellectual debate in the classroom. Diversity is more than a demographic concept or necessity at AUBG. It has become our hallmark—a value integrated into the classroom, residential living, and student life to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. Students learn to address differences through constructive processes of open discussion and debate resulting in cross-cultural competence.

The facilities, library, technology, and other support services have also evolved over time. In the past five years, AUBG has developed the “Skaptopara” campus further, with the construction of the Panitza Library, the Balkanski Academic Center, and one more dorm. This is also the site where the new America For Bulgaria Student Center will be constructed that will house student services, admissions, the registrar, a café, a dining facility, theater, and comprehensive athletic facilities adjacent to new athletic fields. A recent ASHA grant will enable us to establish video conferencing facilities between the AUBG facility in Sofia (the Elieff Center), this campus, and the main building, which was originally constructed as the headquarters of the regional Communist Party of Bulgaria and has been AUBG’s home since the founding of the University nearly 20 years ago.

The ASHA Grant will also enable us to upgrade faculty computers and to establish remote access for the University library and the enormous number of databases to which it subscribes, its card catalogue, the inter-library loan system, and soon, a comprehensive union catalogue of all books in Bulgaria, a project in which the AUBG Library is playing a leading role. AUBG has first rate technology resources with multimedia classrooms, a course management system, and Internet services available in residence hall rooms and classrooms, via wired and wireless networks. Learning support also comes from Student Services which include an Advising Center, Career Center, Counseling Center, Learning Services, International Student Services, and Sports. We utilize a civil society model for student affairs, in that we do not have “recognized” student organizations with budgets. Students form groups and then apply for funding from Student Government. Students’ goals are often greater than the funding ability of the Student Government’s budget. Thus, students raise significant amounts of money from outside sources to support their extracurricular activities.

AUBG is located in Blagoevgrad, a community of 80,000 half way between the capital city of Sofia and the Mediterranean beaches of Greece and about 40 minutes from world class ski resorts. The entire center of the town is a pedestrian zone filled with shops, cafes, clubs, restaurants, all of which cater both to the town’s residents, but also to the 20,000 students who enroll at AUBG and South West University, a state-run Bulgarian institution. Recreation facilities including mountain biking and hiking, winter skiing, and a water park are also readily available.

AUBG enjoys the support of the local community and, in turn, has a long history of giving back to Blagoevgrad. One of our former directors of Development was recently elected to represent Bulgaria in the European Parliament and one of our current employees serves on the local city council, which maintains close ties with AUBG. AUBG remains the second largest employer in the city, with over 270 employees who earn some of the highest salaries in the country, amounting to more than \$2.5 million annually. In addition University expenditures for goods, services, and fees amount to some \$1.7 annually. This, combined with the expenditures of our students, makes our financial impact on the city significant.

AUBG continues to evolve as we prepare to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our values remain very much what they were in 1991, while we have broadened our mission from serving the region to serving the needs of the world. We provide life-changing educational opportunities to young men and women at an affordable price in a sustainable manner. The skills and experiences learned at AUBG enable our graduates not only to achieve levels of personal prosperity that they had never imagined possible, but to serve as catalysts and agents of change in their home countries. Data on our alumni show they are leaders in government, business, NGOs, and in academic institutions. Many attend the very best graduate schools in the US and Europe. The most recent measure of their immediate success is through significant giving to the University, especially for scholarships to make AUBG affordable for others.

## **Response to Areas Identified for Special Emphasis**

The May 7, 2007 letter from the Commission noted four areas of concern to be addressed in the future:

- continuing to assure financial stability;
- developing and implementing an integrated approach to institutional planning and linking planning more explicitly to the budgeting process;
- addressing issues related to the recruitment and retention of faculty, including compensation and support for professional development
- implementing a comprehensive approach to the assessment of student learning

### Financial Stability

AUBG has completed five successive years with a balanced budget. As a tuition dependent institution this is not easy to achieve. However, consistent attention to revenue sources including admissions, development, outreach, and auxiliaries as well as prudent management of expenses through both aggressive efforts to contain costs and careful investments that will generate additional revenue has made a balanced budget possible. AUBG has been fortunate to continue to attract external resources from donors with a strong commitment to our mission. The University follows best practices in stewardship including strong budget discipline, managing risk, monitoring the external circumstances with reliable and current data, regularly reviewing revenues and expenditures, preserving both human and material assets, protecting the endowment, and carefully assessing major long term commitments such as new buildings. We have had unqualified audits each of the past seven years. All supporting documentation on the financial circumstance of AUBG can be found in the Data First forms and appendices. (Section 9 of the Narrative provides additional information.)

### Integrating Planning and Budgeting

For many years, AUBG administrators wrote an annual action plan during the summer, after the budget for that year was already established. Its purpose was to continue to execute the main ideas of the 2002 Strategic Plan. The result was not as powerful as it could have been. New ideas and opportunities generated during the summer Action Plan process could not be funded and an initiative from a previous year might not receive an infusion of funds, except through requests for budget transfers out of the contingency budget. Budget development took place from February to May based on both bottom up requests and top down guidelines. The units made their requests based on a limited number of University priorities but unrelated to the annual action plan. The Budget Committee, although called Planning and Budget, did not do any planning. Appropriately, the NEASC visiting team recommended improvement in these important processes.

In 2008-2009, a year long strategic planning process took place to establish priorities and initiatives for the period 2010-2015. The process was community wide, transparent, and collaborative. The Strategic Plan *Fulfilling the Promise 2020-2015* was approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2009 and the Annual Action Plan was established for January to December 2010 to be followed by the budget development process starting in February. As a result, for the first time planning and budgeting can be more closely linked. Initiatives established in January can inform the budget process that begins in February and be included in the July 1 budget. Equally important, throughout the fall, as the annual action plan is being assessed, the Planning and Budget Committee can be involved in reviewing accomplishments and strategy before taking on the responsibility for building the next year's budget. Although, still not perfect as the activities cross two academic years, we expect that the two efforts will be

more closely integrated and will lead to a continuous process of setting priorities and adjusting to circumstances. (Standard 2 of the Narrative provides additional information.)

### Faculty Recruitment, Retention, Compensation, and Professional Development

The quality of the faculty is one of the most important variables in AUBG's success. International searches are conducted for all open and new positions in an effort to attract the very best candidates. Typically, we are able to recruit faculty either at the beginning stage of their career or at the end as limited educational opportunities in Blagoevgrad make raising children here difficult. Potential faculty members are attracted to AUBG because of their interest in the region, the interest in teaching in a highly selective international American liberal arts university, and because of a personal desire to live in Europe and Bulgaria.

Faculty are hired on multi-year contracts and evaluated periodically for contract renewal. Although we do not have tenure, the five year contract after two three-year contracts parallels the commitments of tenure status and the Faculty Handbook suggests that faculty will then be renewed indefinitely, although still subject to evaluation. 52% of both the full-time and part-time faculty have been here for more than six years. A significant cause of turnover is the increasingly high standards both for teaching and for research. The core of the faculty in several departments is quite stable. Hiring for the Business Department continues to be challenging, just as it is throughout the US, as potential faculty have many other options. We are fortunate to be able to attract many short-term faculty, including those from the business world and faculty on sabbatical, who provide new ideas and approaches for our students.

Whereas there were concerns about compensation and professional development support expressed to the visiting team in 2005, the gap between expatriate faculty salaries and local faculty has systematically been closed over the course of three years under the guidance of a Faculty Compensation Committee. The remaining differential recognizes the international market from which expatriates are hired, the extraordinary expenses of travel and maintaining a home outside of Bulgaria, costs to send children to university in the US, and cost of living when faculty return to their home country. The base salary for expatriate faculty is affected by currency fluctuation and may seem low, however total compensation including health insurance that is fully funded by the University, the tax benefits that many of our faculty enjoy by living abroad, a 10% salary increment for retirement, \$3500 for travel, and the low cost of living in Blagoevgrad makes the compensation more competitive. The salaries of the Bulgarian faculty at AUBG is at least double that of their colleagues at Bulgarian universities.

Funding for professional development is available to all faculty through a \$1200 fund each year. In addition they are eligible for travel funds for conferences and research funds for other needs such as research assistants. This year an additional fund for teaching creativity was established. Funds not used in these accounts are not returned to the university budget, but are reallocated for faculty development. Faculty can also ask to have their schedule adjusted to give more blocks of time for research. Both a Committee on Learning and Teaching and a Research Committee are in place to provide mentoring and guidance to faculty.

### Implementing a Comprehensive Approach to the Assessment of Student Learning

AUBG has a long history of assessment of student learning outcomes under the guidance of a University committee. The approved Framework of Assessment includes both direct and indirect methods at the individual, course, program, and institutional levels. Every syllabus includes learning outcomes and indicates the specific methods of evaluation. Faculty members use a wide variety of assessment methods including projects, portfolios, and exams. We do grade report studies to check on grade inflation and have

included in the strategic plan a commitment to maintaining and/or raising standards. Retention and graduation reports provide information on students who are unsuccessful and we have used this information to improve advising, provide tutorial services, and develop other learning supports.

Many faculty have adopted rubrics, such as for oral reports and research papers, in order to give students a clearer sense of the expected learning outcomes and to improve evaluation of student performance. Every major has agreed upon learning outcomes that serve as guidance for developing courses and as the criteria for the State Exam that seniors take. Departments have developed curriculum maps and periodically update them to reflect changes in the curriculum. As on any campus, more intentional work on assessment always pays off. Thus the department faculty and the Dean of Faculty have begun analyzing the results of the State Exam as a basis for improving the program. In most cases, there is a high correlation between the students CGPA and the exam results. Increasingly, students are pursuing a senior thesis.

A few programs have capstone courses that show how well students have integrated learning from across all courses for their thesis, final project, or seminar course.

The Student Outcomes Assessment Committee (SOAC) also works with the Institutional Research Office to design surveys of entering students, graduating seniors, alumni, and employers. The information from these surveys is reported to the Board and to faculty with two aims in mind: continuous improvement and evidence of quality. The University also uses a standard periodic Program Review Process and surveys of the major, and is subject to program accreditation by the Bulgarian Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. These processes give us comparative information on the quality of our programs but not direct information on student learning.

One of the most definitive assessments is whether or not our students are attractive to employers. Here, the recent ranking of AUBG is illustrative. Our students enjoy the highest employment rate of graduates from any university in the country, are the most likely to secure jobs in their chosen area, and earn the highest salaries. Increasingly, we receive anecdotal data from employers, which indicate that teaching our students to think critically and providing them with the ability to express their thoughts are the most important tasks we undertake.

In addition to these forms of assessment, at the end of each semester, every course is evaluated by the students enrolled in it. Faculty receive an analysis of this feedback, as well as any written comments, so that they can incorporate student suggestions to improve the course. In 2005, to prepare for our Bulgarian accreditation, all of our assessment mechanisms were codified into one document, referred to as the Quality Management System (QMS), which was approved and guides our assessment activities. Our next goal is to update the curriculum maps—matrices that link course assessments with learning goals in each course, the major and the institution—to develop more fully assessments of the General Education program, and to translate our institutional mission into clearly articulated learning objectives.

## **Standard One: Mission and Purposes**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### History and Founding of AUBG

Through a partnership of USAID, the Open Society Institute, the University of Maine, and the City of Blagoevgrad, AUBG opened in 1991 with the aim of giving young people in the region a distinct alternative to state-run education: an education in English suited to a region in transition and in need of young people with vision and energy who could understand the requirements of free enterprise and a civil society and help effect necessary reform. Much has changed since 1991 including broad changes in Bulgarian society, new opportunities as a result of the country's EU accession, and the transformation of the University itself.

As we prepare to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is hard to remember just how precarious the journey has been from dream to reality. Indeed, the purposes of the University are now far broader than at the outset and fully ingrained in all members of the campus community. AUBG enrolls students from over 40 countries and has achieved a reputation for excellence far beyond Bulgaria. Alumni are making contributions around the world in business, government, and community life. AUBG is building its own facilities and endowment, clear evidence of its commitment to independence and a secure future.

#### Distinctive Mission

Over the years AUBG has reviewed and updated its mission to reflect changes in the environment. The initial period in our history focused on overcoming the political tensions in the region and preparing future leaders. Our recent strategic planning process reviewed the mission again and, while keeping the core commitments, the new mission statement reflects a less regional focus as well as a clearer emphasis on the enduring values of the institution. The mission as approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2009 is as follows: "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." The mission serves as the standard by which the institution's effectiveness is judged.

#### How the Mission Shapes Institutional Activities

AUBG aims to be a model institution of higher education in the region with its American-style liberal arts curriculum, international faculty, and commitment to integrity in all aspects. The fundamental aims of a liberal education are reflected in all course work: developing critical thinking, understanding a variety of modes of inquiry, appreciating differing perspectives, and understanding the consequences of ideas and actions. Classes are taught in ways that encourage free expression of views and promote lively debate among the students. Faculty are hired based on their commitment to this type of education, their understanding of student learning, and their capacity to serve as mentors to students of high ability and aspirations. This high level of engagement and free expression of ideas is carried beyond the classroom and into co-curricular activities and campus life. At graduation, students note that the greatest impact on their learning and development has been the interaction with a diversity of students and ideas in an environment of integrity. In short, they believe an AUBG degree represents an unparalleled qualification.

## Impact on the Region

From the beginning, AUBG has aimed to contribute beyond the campus. At the outset in 1991, there was a degree of suspicion about the University but a number of projects and programs have overcome those feelings. In addition, the globalization of higher education and the impact of the Bologna process has brought US style education and Bulgarian requirements closer together. AUBG is fortunate that its distinctive character is recognized, indeed admired, so that we can meet both sets of accreditation standards based on expectations for quality and accountability. Thus in addition to modeling quality and integrity in the degree programs, AUBG is involved in numerous projects that share our intellectual resources including participating in the modernization of Bulgarian libraries, involving our students in community projects, teaching English to a wide range of community members and conditionally admitted undergraduates, hosting conferences, and offering both an EMBA and non-degree programs at the Elieff Center in Sofia. All of these activities are consistent with our commitment to outreach.

## **APPRAISAL**

### History and Founding of AUBG

Despite the slower than expected economic growth of the region recently exacerbated by the world-wide financial crisis, there is no doubt that AUBG is fulfilling its mission and purpose. The University has not only survived, but its sense of self is strong, a feeling that has been substantially enhanced by our top ranking by the Ministry of Higher Education. The community and Board of Trustees endorsed the following vision as part of the new Strategic Plan *Fulfilling the Promise* 2010-2015: “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.”

### Distinctive Mission

What has become increasingly clear is that both Bulgaria and its neighbors, as well as the other regions in which we recruit, need a strong work force and informed leaders to bring about change. Thus, the mission of the University to create agents of change is as vital today as it was at the outset. Our graduates are sought after by selective graduate schools and leading employers. Both our surveys of graduates and of employers indicate that AUBG graduates are noted for their communication and problem solving skills, creativity, and ability to work with others. The University faces significant competition as additional private higher education institutions are developing in the region and Bulgarian students now have more opportunities to attend institutions in Europe at low cost. Thus to be competitive, our recruiting efforts must demonstrate persuasively the relevance of a liberal arts education to professional opportunities. If there is one area where we wish students had more career success, it is in finding opportunities in public service.

### How the Mission Shapes Institutional Activities

As the University has matured, the relationships between teaching and learning, the classroom and the community, and formal and informal learning have also matured. Increasing emphasis is placed on

integrating practical applications into the curriculum. Both faculty and students understand that research and scholarly activity is a corollary to teaching and learning. Similarly, student activities model real life. Students form organizations of their own choosing and work with Student Government and outside sources to secure funding. In many instances, such as the choir and the annual musical, the external funds raised reach \$20,000. Thus, students who sing must also know how to budget and because the choir travels, they must learn logistics as well. Other organizations focus upon social services, including one that works with students from the local orphanage. Alumni remain involved in student activities that range from an entrepreneurship initiative, in which students learn to write business plans for their ideas (plans which are then linked with potential investors), to the More Honors Program, whose satire is oftentimes directed at University officials (the Public Enemy #1 Award recently went to the head of Computer Services). A recent Senior Survey indicated that both classroom and co-curricular activities contribute to learning outcomes, and specifically showed unusual progress in the areas of integrity and respect for others. An area that deserves more attention is service and other aspects of social responsibility, for example “green initiatives.”

### Impact on the Region

The original intention for AUBG was to serve as an exemplar and demonstrate an alternative way of providing higher education. To some degree that has happened in that AUBG is seen as a desirable model of higher education. Interaction with other institutions is still limited, though we are in the process of discussing a joint program with a partner institution to deliver a new AUBG graduate degree. Several AUBG faculty teach a course in another institution, and AUBG is active in workshops and other public presentations on modes of learning. We have been most successful in helping other universities with technology and information resources and are involved in major collaborative projects such as NALIS (National Academic Library Information System) and the Bulgarian Information Consortium. The annual Economic Impact Study shows AUBG’s significant contribution to the local economy.

## **PROJECTION**

### History and Founding of AUBG

As part of the strategic planning process in 2008-2009, AUBG conducted two community surveys. The common theme that emerged from the entire process was a continued commitment to excellence and integrity. In 2006 we were concerned that the missionary spirit that had given energy to founding the institution and building it in the early years may have faded. We now know that the core values are clear and our accomplishments recognized not only internally, but externally as well. The impact of the Ministry of Education’s ranking of AUBG as the top university in the country cannot be underestimated. We acknowledge the challenges that face all of higher education, including financial ones, with confidence in our common purpose and a renewed commitment to our ideals. We know we must do a better job of sharing with new students the history and aspirations of the institution and its members, and will do so through the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of celebration.

### Distinctive Mission

With continuous economic, social, and political changes in the region, AUBG will continue to reevaluate its mission and purpose as well as how best to retain its recognized status, achieve its goals, and meet new expectations. As anticipated in 2006, international student enrollment has grown and will continue to do

so. The number of international faculty has also grown. Indeed, the diversity that was a product of necessity has become one of our greatest and most cherished assets. Our alumni have been particularly important in demonstrating that the mission of the University has staying power as they return to the University for alumni events, support the University with donations, share their experiences with current students, and hire graduates to join their firms. We are particularly proud of the number of AUBG graduates who have chosen academic careers.

### How the Mission Shapes Institutional Activities

Just as the environment is rapidly changing, so, too, are our students. They represent the most technologically connected generation, and faculty observe that these students learn differently. Many students were involved in the strategic planning process and we were reassured by their emphasis on personal and social responsibility as well as their insistence on higher academic standards. Both of these areas will receive attention in the coming years through the many initiatives in the plan that include faculty development, opportunities for new courses, and a greater emphasis on helping students reflect on their learning and experiences. In 2005 we were concerned about the General Education program and can now report that the program has been redesigned, courses have been refreshed, and all courses have clear objectives for assessment. Our Student Outcomes Assessment Plan focuses on all aspects of our mission. In 2010-2011, we are initiating a co-curricular transcript to help students see the development and integration of their experiences in and out of the classroom. As we anticipate significant growth in the future, we are carefully considering how new programs can be developed that will sustain the mission of the university, contribute to and draw from current programs, and utilize resources efficiently.

### Impact on the Region

In the coming years, we must continue to work actively to overcome isolation, as being unique can also mean having few colleagues or being out of touch. We have made progress on our relationships with American and European institutions: the number of the outgoing exchange students has increased from 21 to 57 in the last five years, an average of four AUBG faculty travel annually on exchange programs, and we host three faculty from other institutions per year. The Erasmus program has grown to 52 schools and students also have the option of exchange programs at the University of Maine, the State University of New York Fredonia and at campuses of several hundred members of the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP). The next step is to involve staff in the exchanges. We are active participants in AMICAL and AAICU and know that these organizations, designed to support American style institutions abroad, will be a source of guidance in the future. We also continue to be successful in outreach activities, especially with regard to European integration, but may want to build on the partnerships through those projects for other purposes. We have not yet sought projects in partnership with the Blagoevgrad municipality or Southwest University, located in Blagoevgrad and should explore these opportunities.

## **Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Long-Range Planning Process

Prior to our last institutional accreditation, the Board of Trustees approved an update of the 2002 strategic plan to guide institutional development through AY 2007-2008. In 2006, we anticipated a new full-scale Strategic Planning process and saw the self-study for NEASC accreditation as the first step. The last tranche of support from USAID was received in December 2006, thus the timing was right to ensure that the long-range financial plan of the University was also fully integrated with other processes including: annual action plans, curricular plans, capital plans, and annual budget development. The strategic planning process was delayed until 2008-2009 as a new president began his term in August 2007. The planning process was inclusive, transparent, and engaging for faculty, staff, students, alumni, and Board members. All surveys and documents remain posted on the AUBG website. The Strategic Plan 2010-2015 *Fulfilling the Promise* was approved by the Board in October 2010.

The Strategic Planning Process was guided by the President and Provost and involved several task forces on key issues, the most important of which focused on enrollment. An environmental scan confirmed that we had correctly foreseen in 2006 that enrollment of Bulgarian students faced several changes in the environment—including the demographics of the regional student population, changing social and political conditions, the impact of population decline, and Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. The low tuition of institutions in Western Europe made them even more attractive to Bulgarian students in the wake of the global financial crisis. Fortunately, AUBG anticipated most of these pressures and expanded its service region to Central Asia and also successfully sought external scholarship aid for Bulgarian students.

#### Annual Action Plans

AUBG has for many years developed an Annual Action Plan to provide clear guidance for activities for a given year. With this in mind, the Strategic Plan *Fulfilling the Promise* 2010-2015 includes not only goals and initiatives to be undertaken over several years, but also includes specific measures of progress. In previous years, the Action Plan was developed in July and reported on the next June. It was not as closely linked to the overall plan for the University as it could have been. It also could not have as direct of a relation to the budget process because of the timing of the two processes. We noted in our self study in 2006 that “work on the annual action plan will have to start earlier in the academic year so that initiatives incorporated into the Action Plan can be incorporated into the budget framework for the following fiscal year.” We have now accomplished this by shifting the process for approving the Annual Action Plan by six months.

The first Action Plan under the new Strategic Plan was approved in January 2010 and informed the budget process that began in February 2010. The close link of planning to budgeting aims to ensure sufficient resources to support activities. The evaluation of progress each December will enable administrators to adjust plans during the year as they review progress toward institutional goals and focus on the financial and human resources needed for continuous improvement of the University. The Office of Institutional Research and the Office of the Provost coordinate the Annual Action Plan completion report. The Office of Institutional Research in recent years has increased its capacity to collect and

analyze data in support of decision making and assessment of institutional effectiveness. Its many reports and studies are available on the AUBG website. Key reports and findings, including the Annual Report, are shared with the Board, administrators, and faculty.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Long Range Planning Process

Calendar year 2010 is the first year of the five-year Strategic Plan, thus it is too early to report on completion of goals, but we do have evidence of initial progress in many areas. To strengthen the success of the institutional plan, efforts are ongoing to help departments and units develop their own detailed plans linked to the strategic plan. The budget process does require that each unit report on the most important initiatives in the previous year and the goals for the coming year as background for budget requests. This information is not shared widely enough to help the community understand its collective progress. Institutional improvement can also be strengthened by individual faculty more intentionally by integrating their interests and activities with institutional goals. All full time faculty file an annual report in August on their accomplishments for the previous year and their goals for the coming year, but this information is not necessarily reflected in department activities. The elements of strong planning are in place. The administration can work toward fuller integration of these activities and dissemination of the information.

As expected for a tuition-dependent institution, careful enrollment planning must underlie financial planning and ultimately long term planning. Consequently, we cannot conduct an environmental scan only when preparing a strategic plan. Thus we are now involved in continuous scanning of the environment to take into account the economic changes in the region, the increased competition with colleges and universities in the EU, the changing labor market for faculty, the new higher education legislation, and the many other factors that can influence the success of the five year plan. In 2010, we undertook a major study of Bulgarian parents' and students' perceptions of AUBG in order to plan our recruiting efforts more effectively. Although perceptions about liberal arts education are not as clear as we would hope, the overall image of AUBG is one of quality and better career opportunities for its graduates. This image was recently reinforced by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education's high ranking of AUBG (see Institutional Overview, page 2). Our image and reputation are but two of the factors to be continuously reviewed to support development of the University.

### Annual Action Plans

The Strategic Plan includes many initiatives designed by faculty, students, staff, and administrators aimed at accomplishing the goals. The Annual Action Plan is designed to set the focus for the year, and we are realistic about the degree to which all initiatives will be accomplished. Some things move at a faster pace and some are easier to achieve than others. As much has been accomplished in just one year, we are confident that success in many areas, including strengthening academic programs, promoting liberal arts education, encouraging social responsibility, and building out the campus will be achievable in the time period of the plan. The Provost will report at each January Board of Trustees meeting on the progress in the previous calendar year and share the Annual Action Plan for the coming year.

Much of the success of the planning and budgeting process depends upon how carefully the two are linked. The University has long had a Planning and Budget Committee but the emphasis has been

primarily on its budget preparation function. This focus has been particularly important for the last two years due to world wide financial instability, and the committee has had to address issues such as cost containment and currency fluctuations. The 2009-2010 final report from the Committee recommended that the Committee work all year round to provide better guidance to the University. This is consistent with the recommendation from the NEASC visiting team. A new Provost began his term in August 2010, thus it was a good opportunity to review and strengthen the processes.

## **PROJECTION**

### Long Range Planning Process

Although we cannot claim a stable external environment, over the last five years AUBG has achieved a stable internal environment. Policies and procedures have been fully updated, student satisfaction is high, staff cooperation is strong, and administrative changes are few and planned. This is an ideal environment in which to continue to develop processes for sharing and integrating plans and results. At this time in our history we are better prepared to accept that to some degree, AUBG's future will always be affected by forces outside its control. We know that our pursuit of quality and sustainability depends upon the University remaining realistic, adaptable, flexible, and able to take measured risks. Thus we view the strategic plan as a guide for our aspirations but not a straight jacket that would have us overlook opportunities. Among the future developments are additional facilities, curricular renewal, and expanded enrollment.

### Annual Action Plans

Spending time writing plans or preparing reports is never as important as putting energy and time into implementing ideas. Thus over the next several years, we will look for ways to streamline writing the Annual Action Plan and reporting on results. The Board of Trustees is particularly interested in clear priorities. Indeed, they suggest fewer goals. However, we have learned that it is essential to have faculty and staff with a stake in the future of the University. This can only happen when they see their ideas and goals accepted as important elements in strengthening the University. Finding the right balance between a comprehensive strategy and the few priorities that will make the biggest difference will be the challenge, especially for preparation of the next Strategic Plan scheduled for 2015.

The support role of the Institutional Research Office is likely to be even more important in the future. Decision-making will require additional special studies such as enrollment yields, recruitment costs, and correlations between admission test results and academic performance. Much of the data we need is already available through regular reports such as the Senior Exit Survey, Alumni Survey, and Employer Satisfaction Survey. Although institutional research is not common in Bulgarian institutions, our goal is to match the capacity of the US institutions and make use of data for planning and decision-making a standard practice at all levels. AUBG is subject to external review by the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for both the institution and all programs and this keeps us in a continuous cycle of measuring effectiveness according to our Quality Management System. We anticipate some new requirements now that Bulgaria has joined the European Association for Quality Assurance.

## **Standard Three: Organization and Governance**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The American University in Bulgaria is registered as a not-for-profit corporation in the State of Maine and also as an educational corporation for public benefit in the Republic of Bulgaria. Thus, it is regulated by the requirements and provisions for not-for-profit organizations in both the United States and Bulgaria. Similarly, AUBG is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and by the Ministry of Education through the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) of Bulgaria. The organizational design and governance structures are consistent with the requirements of both entities.

#### Board of Trustees

AUBG is governed by a twenty-seven member Board of Trustees. Each Board member is appointed for a term of three years, and Board members are normally not appointed for more than three, three-year terms. In the 2006 self-study, we noted the importance of maintaining the international character of the Board and keeping a good balance in the backgrounds of Board members. We have been successful in doing so, and the current Board includes 13 US board members, 10 Bulgarian board members, and 4 third country nationals. Their expertise in finance, government, higher education, architecture, business, banking, law, and technology is reflected in their contributions to discussions of University matters.

The president of AUBG is an ex-officio member of the Board along with the president of the AUBG Alumni Association. A member of the faculty, elected by the Faculty Assembly, and a member of the student body, elected by the Student Government, are voting members of appropriate standing committees but are not voting members of the Board of Trustees. Opportunities for informal communication with additional faculty and students are included in the Board meetings that are held on campus in Blagoevgrad.

The Board of Trustees meets three times a year, with the fall and spring meetings held in Bulgaria, and the winter meeting held in Washington, D.C. The Board conducts its business utilizing a committee system consisting of the following: Executive Committee, Finance and Property Committee, Educational Policy Committee, Committee on Trustees, Student Affairs Committee, Legislative Liaison Committee, Audit Committee, University Development Committee, and Committee on Investments. Membership on committees has been reviewed recently to reduce overlaps. Regular communication between the chair of each committee and the administrator assigned to the committee ensures a working relationship throughout the year. In addition to his reports to the Board meetings and ongoing communications with the Board Chair, the President sends periodic written updates on campus activities to the full Board. Increased use of e-mail and electronic distribution of materials assures timely and accurate communication to supplement face-to-face communication.

#### Administration and Institutional Governance

The President is the chief executive officer of the institution and is assisted by three vice-presidents—Provost, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Vice President for Institutional Advancement—and the Director of University Relations. All administrators have well defined responsibilities delegated by the President and submit annual goals to the President consistent with the overall mission and purposes for the

University. These goals serve as the basis for annual evaluation of the administrators by the President. The administrative and staff organization of AUBG is typical of other universities of our size.

Policy development and decision-making is facilitated through a variety of committees and governance structures. University Committees made up of administrators, faculty, students, and staff, include, for example, Financial Aid, Admissions, Student Affairs Advisory Committee, Staff Professional Development, Academic Standing, and Budget and Planning. In addition, the Faculty Assembly handles faculty matters such as curriculum and faculty development, and the Student Government represents student concerns. Both organizations meet regularly to provide input into University matters as well as to ensure communication among members and with the administration. Sharing responsibilities among many members of the academic community and involving faculty, staff, and students in issues of particular interest to them has resulted in better understanding of institutional issues.

### Academic Organization

AUBG has a strong tradition of shared governance. In the 2006 self-study, we noted that the academic administration of the University is thin and relies on the Provost and Dean of Faculty for leadership. Each has a broad portfolio and is supported by faculty committees for many matters such as faculty evaluation, curriculum, assessment, and academic policies. In 2006, the department structure that replaced a division structure was new and untested. Now five years later it is clear that the departmental structure works well and flattens the organizational structure. The chairs meet every two weeks with the Dean of Faculty and Provost to address matters ranging from state exams and faculty research to hiring procedures and classroom renovations. The Provost holds regular staff meetings to facilitate collaboration among the reporting units including Student Affairs, Admissions, Library, Computing, Human Resources, Conferences and Institutes, Institutional Research, and the Dean of Faculty and ensures two-way communication on academic issues as well as institutional matters. Written reports from both the Dean of Faculty and the Provost to the Faculty Assembly keep faculty informed. Both administrators have an open door policy.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees functions well, but is also committed to strengthening its effectiveness. In recent years it has held two pre-meeting retreats, one with a consultant with expertise in private institution governance in an effort to review expectations and responsibilities. One of the outcomes is a clearer understanding of the difference between governance and management. The President has developed a strong consultative relationship with the Board and maintains good communication on matters both large and small. Chairs of committees consult with senior management before all Board meetings, to ensure materials contribute to effective committee meetings. With only three meetings per year, it is still difficult to maintain the level of communication that some members expect and, from time to time, the agenda seems to be too full for the time allowed.

During the 2008-2009 year, the Strategic Planning process included strong involvement of the Board and resulted in a new mission statement and a clarification of institutional values. Discussions, both via e-mail and face-to-face, helped new members gain a better appreciation of the history of the institution and deepen their commitment. Having a formal role in the planning process also increased the Board's stake in the

results and facilitated approval of the final Plan. The well developed process of Annual Action Plans should help to continue this level of interest and accountability to the Board. One test will be the degree to which Board members are effective in helping to raise funds during the Campaign to support the goals of the Strategic Plan.

### Administration and Institutional Governance

In 2006 our self study noted concern about the lack of depth in management, the number of unfilled positions, and the heavy reliance on a few individuals. The financial situation of the University has improved and allowed us to fill positions and, as projected in 2006, we have also invested in staff training to strengthen the capacities of individuals at all levels of the organization. The Vice President for Finance and Administration attended the Harvard Institute for Educational Management. Other administrators have attended major training conferences in their field. Staff training has focused on critical issues such as leadership, business communication, time management, and service culture. The full involvement of members of the administration and staff in the Strategic Planning process has also served an important developmental role.

At the same time, even though AUBG is small, it remains difficult to keep students and faculty informed, and even more difficult to meet diverse needs. Faculty are extremely busy not only with teaching and research, but also with committee work and advising. Faculty who want to be involved can be, and many participated in developing the strategic plan and are working to implement the initiatives. So too can student voices be heard on major issues such as the plans for a new Student Center. A review of the student press and minutes of student and faculty meetings shows less criticism of administrative decisions in recent years. Nonetheless, the administration understands that “no amount of communication is ever enough communication” and that major decisions will always be carefully scrutinized.

### Academic Organization

Over the course of the last four years the respective roles of the Provost, Dean of Faculty, and department chairs have been clarified. Recent discussions by a Faculty Assembly Task Force encouraged giving more responsibility to department chairs but determined that the University could not afford to give course releases to all of them. Chairs do now receive a small stipend and a small department development budget. Many responsibilities remain with the Dean of Faculty but with his six-year experience, some matters have become almost routine. This collaborative structure may be the best for this time, especially because many departments are very small. A similar concern that the Provost’s responsibilities are too broad emerged during the search for a Provost who was hired in August 2010 to replace one who served five and a half years. Fortunately, the transition was not difficult as there continues to be considerable stability in other leadership positions. Of particular importance is the strong collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

## **PROJECTION**

### Board of Trustees

Members of the Board of Trustees are important advocates for AUBG's future and with a Comprehensive Campaign underway, their role in fund raising is as important as their oversight role. Thus selection of new members for the Board and orientation to the University are important to engage their interest. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University is a good opportunity to focus on the legacy of those who founded the University as well as its future aspirations.

The effectiveness of the Board will continue to depend on a strong committee structure and some attention will continue to be paid to the membership of committees, the schedule for meetings, and strengthening committee work between Board meetings. It was recently noted that most Board members come just for the meeting and do not spend any time in Bulgaria, thus their understanding of the changing context in which AUBG operates is less than it might be. To address this, prior to the most recent board meeting, members traveled to Plovdiv, one of the oldest cities in the world and the ancient capital of Bulgaria.

### Administration and Institutional Governance

A new Provost provides an opportunity to take a fresh look at committee functioning, reporting lines, and expectations for involvement in decision making. This type of review also took place in fall 2007 when a new President began his term. The Faculty Assembly is currently revising its processes and reviewing its accomplishments in recent years. The Student Government has already revised its by-laws, moved elections to spring in order to ensure a fast start to the year. In 2009-2010 the SG leadership took a new approach to handling its affairs, choosing to solve problems rather than lobby others to do so. Continued attention to transparency, clear communication, and timelines for decision making by all governance bodies would facilitate the work of the campus. At this time, posting of minutes and agendas has become more regularized.

Both the Bulgarian accreditation process and Internal Auditors played an important role in encouraging us to make sure that all policies and procedures are up-to-date. We now have in place mechanisms for regular review, and all documents are posted electronically. As part of its review, the Internal Auditors checked a sample of staff to determine whether there are aware of policies and procedures and issued findings in September.

### Academic Organization

The departmental structure and a Faculty Assembly rather than a representative body of the faculty give faculty considerable direct input into academic matters and facilitate communication. The Committee structure is designed to be sure an issue is examined in some depth before being put to a vote but faculty do not always have time to read materials before meetings. Of some concern is the heavy burden on senior faculty to play leadership roles as department chairs, committee chairs, and mentors to new faculty. Given that senior faculty are not tenured, and their continued employment at AUBG requires them to remain active scholars, makes this role all the more burdensome. Some note that having faculty located in two buildings reduces opportunities to work together and get to know each other. Because communication is so important to overall morale, additional efforts need to be made to find solutions to these issues while also noting that working within the realities of a small faculty requires adaptability.

## **Standard Four: The Academic Program**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Mission and Purpose

The AUBG academic program is an American-style liberal arts four-year baccalaureate program. Its mission 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.”

#### Foundation Skills in English and Information Literacy

Information literacy and technology skills are introduced in the first year. Students arrive with skills in using technology, so the emphasis has shifted to learning how to access, evaluate, and present information as outlined in the American Library Association’s guidelines on Information Literacy. Library staff work in partnership with the faculty to provide direct instruction in information literacy.

#### General Education Program

In addition to the foundation courses in English and Statistics, all students take 36-39 credits of General Education (GE). The GE program is structured with distribution requirements in seven modes of learning.

#### Undergraduate Majors

Nine majors are offered. Each major has a coherent structure of foundation courses, substantial work at the 300 and 400 level, and electives. Most offer a capstone experience such as a senior course, a project, a thesis, or an internship.

#### Graduate Program

AUBG’s only graduate program is the Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA). The curriculum is consistent with graduate business programs in the US. Formal coursework is complemented with guest speakers at Leadership Seminars to provide examples of professional practice and increase the students’ professional network.

#### Integrity in the Award of Credit

All of the majors offer the B.A. degree and are consistent in number of credits and content with NEASC requirements and comparable programs on other campuses. Students often take a second major or complement their major with one or more of the minors.

#### Assessment of Student Learning

AUBG has had a Student Outcomes Assessment Committee (SOAC) in place since 1999, made up of faculty and students and chaired by the Provost. Specific outcomes measures that are in place and handled by the Institutional Research Office include a senior exit survey, an alumni survey, and an employer survey.

### Program Quality Assurance

The formal process for periodic program review includes a financial analysis and external evaluation. All AUBG major programs have successfully completed the Bulgarian program review process. Periodic program reviews, both the AUBG model and Bulgarian Program Accreditation model, are designed to evaluate the quality of the curriculum, faculty performance, resources and facilities, and student opportunities. The Bulgarian Program Accreditation process provides an external and comparative perspective for our programs. AUBG is also subject to post-accreditation monitoring.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Mission and Purpose

In our last self-study, we identified activities needed to confirm AUBG's success in achieving its mission. We needed to track our graduates in order to show us their success in graduate school or careers. The ranking of Bulgarian universities released this year provides external confirmation of the career success of our graduates. The results showed that in all majors offered by AUBG, our graduates are highly valued in the labor market and earn higher salaries on average than graduates of other Bulgarian universities.

### Foundation Skills in English and Information Literacy

High admissions standards ensure that students enter AUBG with well-developed English proficiency. Applicants may also enroll in the English Language Institute (ELI) to prepare to meet the standards. All first-year students take two courses designed to strengthen their abilities to speak and write in English. Writing skills are further developed as students take three writing-intensive courses. We have converted the Writing Center into the Learning Services Center (LSC), now located in one of the residence halls to make these services more accessible to students. The LSC provides individualized support on how to design writing assignments and provides useful feedback to students. Many courses provide ongoing oral communication practice through class discussion, small group work, and formal presentations.

Faculty teaching Writing Intensive Courses use rubrics to evaluate student writing and to provide specific feedback to students on the strengths and weaknesses of each student's writing. In the most recent Senior Survey, students strongly endorse the statement that their writing skills were improved as a result of their work in their Writing Intensive Courses.

We have also been experimenting with ways to increase English language assistance to first-year students. In 2009-10, we offered in each semester an "extra-strength" section of ENG 101 with more contact hours. In the fall 2010 semester, we placed the new students with the weakest SAT-verbal scores in an experimental course focused on grammar. We will evaluate the performance of these students in the follow-up courses to assess whether this experiment was successful.

### General Education Program

In two of the modes of inquiry (literature and history) the requirements are stratified so that students must complete a basic course in the area and also an upper-level course providing a more sophisticated treatment of the subject matter. The cohort of students fully exposed to the new structure is in its senior year in 2010-11. Our survey of exiting students in May 2011 will give us solid feedback on the success of the new structure.

A GE Council was created to mimic the organization and supervision that a traditional academic department would provide for a major program. Each new course or topic must be reviewed and approved by the GE Council before the course or topic can be offered for GE credit. The overall result has been to raise the profile and the importance of the GE program and its learning outcomes.

The initial feedback we received from the May 2010 senior exit survey showed mixed results from the GE program. While many students endorsed the view that they value the learning outcomes from the GE requirements (especially the Writing Intensive Courses) the results were uneven.

### Undergraduate Majors

The new major in Information Systems shows every sign of being successful.

AUBG undertakes a strategic approach to academic program planning and curriculum management. The registration procedure limits students to 17 credits and helps identify where there is demand for additional sections of courses. It also helps students at all levels to have access to the appropriate courses in the right order.

Several majors have introduced practical applications through pedagogies that emphasize research, case studies, projects, and problem-based learning. Capstone experiences with more individual attention to students have been developed for most majors. Ultimately, we want more students to be mentored through undergraduate research, theses, and senior projects.

### Graduate Program

The EMBA program serves a need in the region for advanced professional training in business practices for a global context. The case-study methodology stresses inductive reasoning and practical application. The program is taught mostly by visiting faculty from other universities in the USA and Western Europe. Some courses are taught by regular AUBG Business faculty. The visiting faculty are regularly evaluated according to procedures outlined in the AUBG Faculty Handbook.

The program has been integrated with the academic administration of the Blagoevgrad campus. Currently, the Dean of Faculty, Chair of the Department of Business, and EMBA Coordinator oversee the program according to University policies, procedures, and standards.

The most pressing need is a strong marketing plan. The priority of the Admissions Office in recruitment of undergraduate students, and the recruiting and cultivation of applicants for the EMBA program remains a challenge though enrollment remains strong.

### Integrity in the Award of Credit

Although AUBG has relatively few transfer students, the standards for accepting coursework completed elsewhere are comparable to other selective universities'. All students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average each semester to remain in good standing, and must have a 2.5 GPA in their major to graduate. A committee reviews all academic records each semester to make decisions about academic warning, probation, or dismissal. Students are notified of the reasons for the decision and have the right to appeal. All academic policies with regard to requirements for continuation, readmission, graduation, and academic integrity are published in the catalog.

Faculty have access to the institutional grade profile and can compare their own standards to that of other faculty. The Dean reviews standards with individual faculty members whose grades are at the tails of the distribution. Academic integrity with regard to plagiarism, collusion, and cheating is a problem and standards are consistently enforced. Syllabi carry clear statements of expectations for academic integrity. Faculty are supported by the administration when they report cases of integrity violations. Software for the detection of plagiarism is available to all faculty.

### Assessment of Student Learning

Individual faculty rely on course-based direct assessment to ensure that the outcomes are met. Direct assessment of learning is well developed. Syllabi state clearly a description of objectives and assessment methods, including papers, projects, problem sets, oral reports, and exams. Most syllabi also include the criteria for awarding grades. The distribution of grades in each course shows that faculty discriminate among different levels of performance and give students a clear sense of their achievement. Samples of graded assignments are required in the faculty evaluation dossier as an indicator of faculty attention to the importance of constructive feedback.

We needed a way to link courses with expected knowledge and competencies to identify how programs link to mission and how the majors reinforce the General Education program goals. All of the major programs have refined their guidelines and practices for the Bulgarian State Exams so that the State Exam process can be used as a measure of how well students have achieved the learning outcomes of the major. A comparison of the results of the State Exams with the students' GPA-in-major shows a high correlation between the State Exam scores with the grades the student earned in the major.

AUBG's assessment efforts at the program and overall institutional level are stronger on indirect measures of student learning than on direct measures. Nevertheless, we have received this year a strong external endorsement of the success of our students. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education has sponsored a comprehensive ranking system of all Bulgarian universities, based on a variety of measures of quality including faculty research productivity, quality of faculty qualifications, and comprehensive data on alumni employment and earnings from the social security administration's databases. AUBG's graduates had the lowest unemployment rates and the highest average earnings of any university in Bulgaria. Some of the majors are working on direct evaluation of student learning in the program, but this area is still under-developed.

## **PROJECTION**

### Mission and Purpose

An assessment of students' capacities with regard to civic engagement and community involvement is needed to provide evidence of students' development as leaders and citizens. We are currently preparing to implement a new student information system (Blackbaud) which will allow us to incorporate a "co-curricular transcript" into our data-gathering.

### Undergraduate Majors

The 1998 Academic Master Plan described the curriculum in place and did not attempt to provide a strategic analysis for future program development. In 2010-11, a task force is looking specifically at new academic programs that will broaden our academic offerings. The trustees have already approved criteria for evaluating new program proposals. Another task force in progress during 2010-11 is looking at ways to create a "Sofia semester" for students who wish to combine an internship with academic courses.

### Assessment of Student Learning

AUBG has made a good start on outcomes assessment but there is still more to do. The curriculum maps for the majors need to be refined. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on using assessment information.

## **Standard Five: Faculty**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Faculty Characteristics

AUBG's faculty are divided into the customary categories of rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, and instructor) and contract status (full-time and adjunct), as well as nationality (Bulgarian faculty, expatriate American faculty, expatriate faculty of other nationality). The structure and composition of the faculty (in terms of rank and full-time vs. part-time status) has not changed since the previous self-study. The student to faculty ratio target is 16:1 to 18:1. The actual ratio has remained within or close to the target range for the last 5 years. The distribution of faculty according to rank and nationality is given in the table below:

Number of Faculty-Fall 2010

Rank:	Full-time Faculty				Part-time Faculty			
	Prof.	Assoc.	Asst.	Inst.	Prof.	Assoc.	Asst.	Inst.
Bulgarian faculty	6	8	6	2	2	3	5	7
American faculty	5	5	6	2	1	2	1	1
Other country faculty	2	6	4				1	1

For the EMBA program in Sofia, the faculty consists primarily of visiting faculty members flown in from the US and Europe to teach one course in the program. There is significant continuity among the visiting faculty from one year to the next.

#### Faculty Hiring

The process for recruiting and selecting new full-time faculty members is documented in the Faculty Handbook and is consistent with standards for equal employment opportunity. The faculty search committee recommends its top candidates to the Dean of Faculty, who then checks references before issuing invitations to one or more of the top candidates to visit the campus. The campus visits involve meetings with faculty, administrators, and students, and the presentation of a guest lecture.

Part-time faculty can be recruited in the same manner as full-time faculty (e.g., advertisements in newspapers, web site, phone interviews) and sometimes in a more informal manner when a current faculty member knows whom to contact to meet a specific need.

#### Salary and Benefits

AUBG pays full-time expatriate faculty dollar-based salaries. The benefits lists for full-time faculty are published on the AUBG web page. For expatriates, this includes an annual travel and relocation supplement, and employer-paid health care. Bulgarian faculty are paid salaries in leva and have benefits and withholdings in accordance with Bulgarian law. Salaries are reviewed annually, with increments for length of service and cost of living.

### Faculty Contracts

AUBG does not have a system of tenure. Full-time faculty are employed on contracts which can be renewed following successful evaluation. The normal progression of contracts for full-time faculty is a 3-year initial contract, a second 3-year contract, followed by 5-year contracts if the faculty member successfully completes the evaluation process. One-year contracts are offered for short-term appointments or late hires made when the usual process cannot be completed in the time available.

### Teaching and Advising

Academic advising is a joint responsibility of the faculty and the Learning Services Center (LSC). All incoming students are assigned a faculty advisor, and are required to meet with their advisor during Orientation Week. The LSC also provides academic advising services to students, schedules meetings with students at risk, and provides training to all faculty advisors.

### Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

The AUBG Library houses print and electronic resources to support faculty research as well as student needs. The University provides direct support to faculty research and scholarship through the Faculty Instruction and Research Enhancement (FIRE) account, the International Conference Travel Fund, and the Research Fund. These funds have not changed in structure since the 2006 self-study. The University also provides the opportunity for faculty members to apply for sabbatical leave after six years of service.

### Faculty Evaluation

Evaluation of faculty is conducted on a regular basis according to procedures adopted by the Faculty Assembly. Every full-time faculty member is evaluated in the penultimate year of his or her contract by a Faculty Evaluation Team (FET). The process, timetable, and evaluation criteria are specified in the Faculty Handbook for both contract renewal and promotion. The faculty member is evaluated on each of the three areas of performance: teaching, scholarship, and service. The dossiers and evaluation letters from the FET are sent to the Provost for review and recommendation to the President. Faculty have the right of appeal at all stages.

Part-time faculty are evaluated primarily on the effectiveness of their teaching after the third semester of teaching at AUBG, as a condition of reappointment. A procedure for evaluating visiting faculty was approved in Spring 2006. All procedures and criteria are outlined in the Faculty Handbook.

### Integrity

The University supports the principle of academic freedom in teaching, research, scholarship, and creative activities. Ethical and professional expectations of faculty are noted in the Faculty Handbook. The procedures for faculty appeals and grievances are outlined in the Faculty Handbook. There have been no grievances by faculty in recent years, nor expressed concerns about infringements on academic freedom. AUBG experiences the same challenges with regard to students and academic integrity as many US campuses.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Faculty Characteristics

AUBG employs both Bulgarian and expatriate (primarily American) faculty. The predominance of American and expatriate faculty members is the characteristic of AUBG that provides a robust demonstration of the institution's commitment to providing an American liberal arts education. Bulgarian faculty also serve our mission to bring American educational values and practices to the region through their experience teaching at AUBG and through their on-going contacts with the Bulgarian academic community.

Bulgarian faculty play a critical role through their links with colleagues in Bulgarian institutions and continue to serve AUBG's mission to extend the pedagogy of a small liberal arts campus beyond its own faculty. They are also instrumental in helping AUBG meet the standards for accreditation through the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency.

Careful attention to schedule planning and staffing has led to a better match between course offerings and student demand. We have been able to reduce the proportion of large classes (over 40 students) by simultaneously reducing the prevalence of under-enrolled classes (under 10 students).

The distribution of faculty by nationality has not changed noticeably since the previous report. The data on faculty turnover and retention shows a stable process underlying the turnover. Turnover is concentrated among expatriate faculty and among faculty with few years of service at AUBG. The inclusion of faculty on visiting or one-year contracts among the turnover data contributes to this characteristic. Some faculty do not successfully complete the faculty evaluation process, and leave AUBG for this reason. This turnover is also concentrated in the portion of the faculty population with fewer years of service at AUBG. 52% of full-time faculty employed by AUBG six years ago are still with AUBG.

### Faculty Hiring

AUBG faces the same external challenges in recruiting expatriate faculty as those identified in the 2006 self-study. Blagoevgrad offers no school opportunities for expatriate children, and few opportunities for working spouses. Bulgaria's accession to the European Union made English-speaking Bulgarian academics more mobile and makes the competition for faculty greater. On the plus side, there is an increasing number of Bulgarian nationals completing their Ph.D.s in American or European universities for whom AUBG would be an attractive career option.

### Salary and Benefits

Much has been accomplished in the past 5 years in the area of faculty salary and benefits. Task forces devoted to the salary and benefits issues relevant to expatriate faculty, Bulgarian faculty, and staff all coalesced around forming a compensation system based on the same underlying principles. The most significant progress was made in relation to the salary structure for Bulgarian faculty. At the time of the 2006 self-study, Bulgarian faculty were paid on a step system common to Bulgarian universities: it recognized longevity, gave large premiums for advances in rank, but no recognition for market differences between academic disciplines. The task force recommended basing Bulgarian faculty salaries on the same

principles as those governing expatriate salaries. A 3-year process of aligning the salaries of Bulgarian faculty members with the target salary under the new system was completed in January 2010.

#### Faculty Contracts

The categories and general terms of faculty contracts have not changed since the 2006 self-study. The established structure of faculty contracts with the mix of fixed-term contracts and continuing contracts meets the needs of AUBG for both flexibility and stability.

#### Teaching and Advising

Teaching is carried out according to the University's mission to provide an American-style liberal arts experience to students from Bulgaria and the region. Faculty development at AUBG is faculty sponsored and the Committee on Teaching and Learning (COLT) usually involves students in presenting perspectives on issues surrounding enhancing learning at AUBG.

Faculty receive good reviews overall for their teaching. Students provide feedback through an evaluation system that provides both quantitative responses to standard questions and written individual comments from students. Faculty also benefit from workshops and development sessions, and from peer reviews as part of the evaluation process.

Faculty find support for their teaching institutionally (such as classroom technology, Library resources, etc.) and individually through the FIRE account and an experimental teaching development fund launched this year.

Effective teaching and advising, reasonably small class sizes, and individual attention to the students' social and academic development will continue to be essential components of an AUBG education.

#### Scholarship, Research, and Creative Activity

AUBG provides support for faculty scholarship and professional development. The technological infrastructure and information resources available to faculty are upgraded regularly.

In general, individual faculty research programs are appropriate for a liberal arts college. AUBG will continue its current support for scholarship. The AUBG Library's electronic resources are sufficient to support the research interests of most faculty. The individual FIRE accounts will be maintained. Sabbatical support will continue to provide faculty with the opportunity for a period of full-time research.

AUBG will continue to have research expectations from its faculty consistent with its mission. Faculty who can combine supervision of undergraduate research projects with their own scholarship, or combine their own scholarly interests with their classroom objectives will find satisfactory opportunities for scholarship. In collaboration with Student Affairs, AUBG has instituted a Student and Faculty Research Conference held every spring.

## **PROJECTION**

### Faculty Hiring

AUBG will continue to employ expatriate and local faculty, responding to market developments in several markets. In the local market for faculty, we select among those academics who have strong English-language skills and are willing to relocate or commute to Blagoevgrad. Our salary scale for locally hired faculty is higher than at Bulgarian institutions. However, our expectation for a full-time commitment to AUBG is also more demanding than at Bulgarian institutions.

### Salary and Benefits

The financial stability achieved by AUBG in 2006 has enabled the institution to implement a regular system of salary increments. Each year, a returning faculty member receives an increment for length-of-service as well as a cost-of-living adjustment according to market conditions and the institution's financial resources. Health insurance premiums have been a major source of concern, but AUBG is committed to ensuring that all full-time employees are covered by a comprehensive health plan included as part of the standard benefit package.

### Faculty Contracts

No change in the structure of faculty contracts or performance expectations is under immediate consideration.

## **Standard Six: Students**

### **DESCRIPTION**

The mission of Student Services is to assist students outside the classroom to achieve their highest potential, to support their transition from admission to graduation, and to help them with entry into graduate programs or the job market. Complete information about the nature, extent and availability of Student Services is readily available to students and prospective students through the web site and our on-line Student Handbook found at [www.aubg.bg](http://www.aubg.bg).

Orientation Week is a thorough introduction to all aspects of life at AUBG. Held each semester, it includes introductions to all services available on campus, information on course selection and classroom expectations, diversity awareness training, information literacy training, and much more. A full schedule of events is posted each semester on the AUBG website and is sent to each new student electronically.

The Department of Residence Life and Housing oversees the residence halls through live-in hall directors and resident assistants. These directors and RAs provide regular wellness, community building, and enrichment programs. Located on the residential campus, the Learning Services Center (formerly the Advising and Writing Centers) helps students make choices about courses and major programs and works closely with the Career Center and Counseling Center to assist students with career and life plans. It also provides individual and group tutoring. AUBG operates a Health Center staffed by a qualified general practitioner, a registered nurse, and a health educator. All students have regular access to health care and health education programs.

Co-curricular programs are an important aspect of student life and are student-driven. Athletics are very popular and range from basketball and volleyball to tennis and martial arts. Intramural programs are conducted in a fair and well-organized manner under the supervision of coaches and officials employed by the University. Clubs are both recreational and academic. They include, for example, the Chess Club, the Better Community Club, the Model UN, and the Business Club. In addition to support for formal course work, AUBG helps students take advantage of the many co-curricular opportunities available to them. The Career Center provides advice and information on internships, summer employment, graduate school admissions and test preparation as well as employment after graduation. The Erasmus and International Programs Offices provide information on international conferences, study abroad and exchange opportunities, and advise all visiting students to make sure their semester at AUBG is productive. All of these services and opportunities are designed to help individual students achieve their academic and personal goals.

Student Government provides an opportunity for student participation in the University governance process in several ways. Students may choose to run for election as senators or as the student representative to the Board of Trustees. They may also apply to become representatives to all University and most faculty committees, including hiring committees. This involvement is an important part of their education in democratic processes.

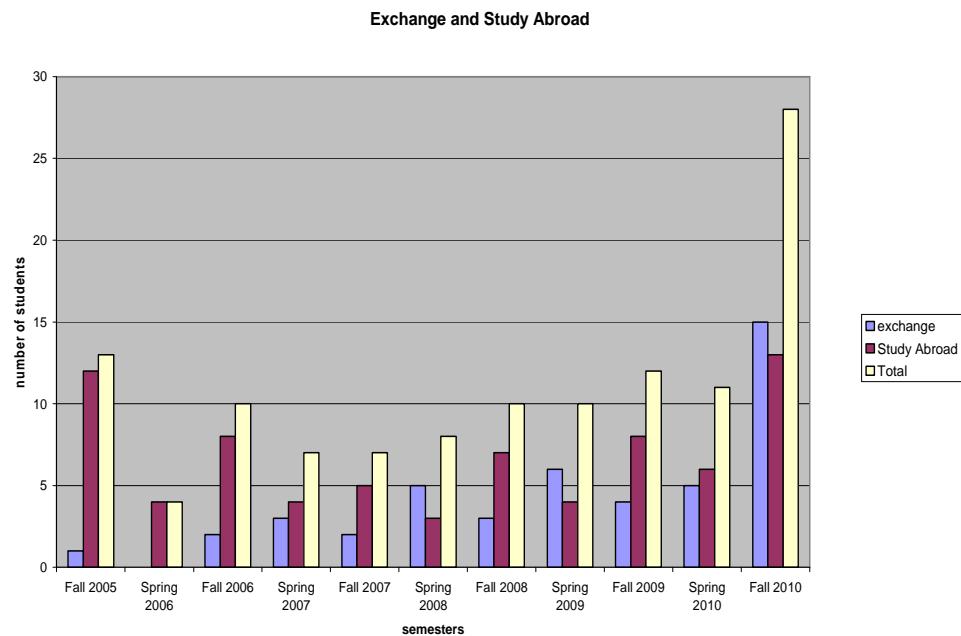
AUBG has clear, readily available policies on student rights and responsibilities, which are first presented to new students as part of Orientation each semester. Policies are published in the on-line Student Handbook and are reviewed and updated regularly. Policies are administered through the Student Conduct Council, the Academic Standing Committee, and the Academic Policies Committee. All committees are composed of

faculty, students, and staff. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) Standards on Good Practices and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guide the University in its admission, retention, and student services practices.

## APPRAISAL

One of the most important aspects of student life at AUBG is the multinational, multicultural student body. Over the last five years, changes in visa regulations (due primarily to Bulgaria's entrance into the European Union) have increased the difficulty of obtaining visas for international students. AUBG's working relationships with the Ministry of Education and the Foreign Ministry are very good, and this has helped the process go more smoothly, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of non-Bulgarian students. This has also meant a need for increased staffing in the International Programs Office to help complete additional paperwork for greater numbers of students. Initially, staff from other areas of Student Services rotated in at peak visa times, but eventually, this detracted from their primary jobs. Hiring temporary staff at peak times has also been helpful, but meant that valuable time had to be spent annually to train a new temporary employee about visa regulations. There is now a plan in place to advertise for and hire a new fulltime staff member before the next major visa period. This will help insure the student visa process will continue to go smoothly.

As the number of Erasmus students continues to increase, we will need to increase staffing in that area to meet the requirements of the national Erasmus Agency. The number of Erasmus partner schools has increased from an initial four to the current sixty-one. This has provided additional opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to participate in both semester-long and short term exchange programs.



The Diversity Team, comprised of staff, faculty, and students, continues to provide training and programming on diversity awareness issues for the campus community. In 2009, the decision was made to no longer work

as a chapter of the National Coalition Building Institute, but rather to develop our own materials and programming because a sufficient number of staff and faculty were now qualified to lead our programs. This team has done a good job in the last year, but attention must be paid to insure that team members continue to be well trained and that resources are made available to them if their programs are to continue and grow.

In 2009-2010, the Advising Center and the Writing Center were combined into one program (Learning Services) and moved into new, larger facilities. There are now offices, a conference room, and a large multifunctional learning center located in the Skaptopara II residence hall. This has allowed better cooperation between the programs as well as better use of resources. Programming provided in both areas has doubled and the peer tutoring program has also grown, now that there is dedicated space available for its programs. Learning Services staff members have worked hard to increase student usage of programs. Advertising has been highly visible, both electronically and in hard copy, tutoring information has been widely disseminated, and the faculty have been trained to refer students for assistance. Now a better assessment program must be put in place for these services.

The Career Center has also reviewed, modified, and expanded its services to assist current students and alumni in this time of world financial crisis. There is a new four-year program for incoming students to help them get the most out of services available on campus and to aid them in planning for their future. The first introduction to the Career Center is during Orientation, when new students are scheduled to visit the center, take an online interest inventory test, and open a credentials file. This early introduction makes students more likely to visit the Center regularly and to utilize its services. Evaluation of the needs of students must continue on an annual basis and the Career Center programs must continue to evolve to meet those needs.

Co-curricular activities are extremely important in student development, but are sometimes difficult to quantify for a future employer or graduate school. To assist students in showing their achievements, a co-curricular transcript has been created and will become available to students in spring 2011. A process for recording achievements and activities has been developed jointly by Student Services, the Office of the Registrar, and the Office of Communications and Computing. A difficulty for co-curricular activities is that the student body is rapidly outgrowing the space available for activities. An additional multi-use aerobics and dance room has been created in the Skaptopara I Residence Hall and additional hours have also been reserved at the city gym for basketball, volleyball, and soccer, but no additional hours can be reserved in the future and there is no further space for development of on-campus activities when the student body grows. Non-athletic activities have increased as well. Debate tournaments, model United Nations, theatre productions, music practice rooms, and community service events also require space, which is currently at a premium. Good planning and cooperation will make it possible for all activities to continue at the current level until the opening of the new Student Center, hopefully during the 2012-2013 academic year. The completion of the Center will make it possible for more activities to be held and for music, theatre, and sports programs to grow.

The opening of the first block of the Skaptopara III Residence Hall in January 2010 has eased some of the pressure on Residence Life. Nearly all students are now accommodated on campus. A limited number of tripled rooms in other residence halls has been de-tripled and the number of Resident Assistants and Hall Directors has increased. As with any new building, the first semester of operation was a shake-down period, but it has settled down well. The opening of this building also meant that for the first time in the history of AUBG, there was differential pricing for residence halls. This could have been a real source of contention, but good planning and transparency of the deliberations of the Housing Committee ensured that students knew about and approved of the new pricing model.

## **PROJECTION**

The anticipated opening of the new Student Center will lead to some major changes in the operations of Student Services. All offices (except the Health Center) will be moving to a new one-stop Student Services division, located on the same floor as the Registrars and Admissions. This will enable students to receive assistance and services more easily and will enable the departments to cooperate on programs and to utilize resources more effectively. The new Center will also enable AUBG students to participate in more athletic programs, particularly in developing lifelong activities such as tennis, aerobics, and running. Its theatre facilities will also encourage student productions and enhance the Fine Arts academic program. Staff will be needed not only to maintain the facility, but also to manage it. A staffing plan must be developed to best utilize the facility when it opens.

The new Student Center will house a new Dining Facility, and the possibility of creating a meal plan has been discussed. This will need to be evaluated prior to the opening of the facility so that students will know about and understand the value of a meal plan.

As the student body continues to grow to 1400+, additional housing must be built. Additions to existing buildings while they are occupied are not ideal, but can be managed, as they have in the past. And as we add students, we will also need to add residence life and cleaning staff to meet their needs.

As the student body grows, we will need to evaluate our Counseling program and possibly refill the second psychologist's position which was closed after the retirement of a previous employee.

Each area of Student Services has regular annual assessment, but a comprehensive assessment plan is still needed. An in-depth program review will enable the division to develop new programs, initiatives, and services, and to improve those already in place.

## **Standard Seven: Library and Other Information Resources**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Library

The AUBG Library is a modern center for study, reading, and research. The Library's collection consists of more than 102,000 printed books, 280 print periodical subscriptions, and access to 50,000 electronic books and 35,000 full-text electronic journals via 67 electronic databases. The broad variety of resources is sufficient in quality, diversity, quantity, and currency to support the institution's academic offerings and to fulfill AUBG's goals as a quality liberal-arts institution. The core collection covers all subject areas and effectively corresponds to the University's curricula. The selection, acquisition, creation, cataloguing, storage, and preservation of library resources are guided by the collection development policy and are in line with the needs and requirements of the university community. Library services are student-centered and emphasize personal attention even when interaction is not face-to-face. Students and faculty can consult the online catalog to search the print and e-book collection or get research assistance through email and virtual chat reference. To help students and faculty make better use of the Library's resources, an information literacy librarian offers individual and group instruction and hands-on training. 24/7 access to all e-journals, e-books and reference databases is provided to students, faculty, and staff to extend the use of the learning and educational resources beyond the physical space. Furthermore, the Library works towards creatively using technology to support and inspire education and scholarship, and to deliver service to the community of learners where and when they need it.

The physical organization of the library space allows for easy and convenient access to all collections. Information, Reference, and Study zones are visibly differentiated and have comfortable seating, study carrels, and work tables. The Library has flexible working hours and is open 86 hours per week during the terms and 104 hours per week during final exams.

#### IT Resources

AUBG operates and develops modern IT infrastructure capable of providing all required services for normal operations in a rapidly changing and demanding world. The IT infrastructure is based on a high-speed optical backbone at the speed of 1 GB/sec. The backbone interconnects all AUBG Blagoevgrad based buildings and via dedicated VPN connection the Elieff Center for Education and Culture in Sofia. To be able to respond properly to possible disasters, two core high-productive network switches are located in the Main Building and the Balkanski Academic Center. The switches are equipped with redundant power supplies, fiber and cooper modules. Thus a high level of redundancy of the core network is achieved. End point connectivity is provided at the speed of 100 MB/sec via cooper Cat 5/Cat 7 cables. All buildings are designed to provide connectivity needed for more than 1600 personal computers, servers, printers, etc. Access to AUBG IT infrastructure is secure and provides the required level of protection of stored data; free and paid services are also offered. The AUBG network is connected to the Internet through redundant symmetrical connections at the speed of 70 MB/sec international traffic and 70 MB/sec national peering. AUBG authentication is based on MS Windows Active Directory 2008 Services and local implementation of 802.1X authentication protocol. Secure wired and wireless access is provided to all members of the community despite ownership and administrative privileges on connected IT devices. Effective in the summer of 2010, the AUBG storage system was upgraded and extended with additional storage space to

provide secure storage of AUBG's vital data. The storage systems are located in different buildings in case of a disaster and data stored in them are under active replication mode.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Library

The completion of the new Library building in August 2008 was an important milestone in the modernization of the library facility and enhanced its place as a welcoming, supportive, vibrant learning environment. The increased number of comfortable seating for a variety of study styles, the contemporary open-plan layout and architecture, the improved signage, the well-designed furniture and group-study areas, the adequate lighting, ventilation, air-conditioning, wireless Internet, and the compact mobile shelving all contribute towards the goal of providing users with a library space that is a pleasure to use.

In May 2009 the Library was named after Yvonne and John Dimitry Panitza as a sign of gratitude for their continuous support and inspiration. Since 2006 the Library has undertaken several initiatives to modernize its collections and enhance the access to resources and services. User-needs assessment tools were developed to improve the Library's programs and services and to respond to the changing needs of the AUBG community. The effect of these assessments helped to build a more focused collection that supports the current University curriculum. A wide range of print and electronic resources were reviewed or trialed for potential acquisition, including monographs, new databases, e-journals and e-books packages. The number of items in the physical collections increased slightly, while the growth in electronic resources was over 50%. 58% of the materials budget was spent for electronic resources. The increasing prices of scholarly publications have been a challenge to collection development. However the library staff's efforts to increase the resources through seeking external funding, negotiating discounts with vendors, and establishing consortia agreements have enabled Panitza Library to enlarge the collections and add numerous donations from individuals or organizations.

The library staff focused its activities on promoting the library services and resources, thus increasing their usage and visibility. The Panitza Library strengthened its role as a social place and university community center by launching series of presentations of faculty newly published books, poetry readings, and exhibitions. The "Friend of the Library" initiative was organized to collect contributions by offering at a small price not needed donations and discarded library books. The Information Literacy program continued to be of first priority for the Panitza Library and the university as a whole. The IL program has been expanded with a focus on discipline-specific instruction and program assessment. New guides, tutorials, and self-education materials were posted on the website and regularly updated. In the form of orientation lectures and in-class training, patrons were made aware of the information as it exists in its different formats, taught how to locate, evaluate, and use information ethically and thus become information literate and life-long learning members of society.

The Library fostered and maintained its consortia relationship with AMICAL and BIC institutions to provide free exchange of resources and to share ideas and expertise for mutual benefit. The Panitza Library actively participates in project NALIS, whose major goal is to aid the integration of the Bulgarian research and university libraries by creating an online union catalog and to organize professional development training.

In surveys conducted by AUBG the library is placed amongst the top three offices on campus in terms of student satisfaction with available services. This result is a reflection of our ongoing efforts to create a fair, stimulating, and satisfying work environment that in turn enables the library to play a meaningful role in supporting and advancing the university's goals.

### IT Resources

AUBG IT resources are subject to continuous demands from customers. It is not always possible to respond to all requests for technology improvement. Currently the system is able to handle the normal process of education at AUBG. Last summer new computers were installed in all computer labs. The multimedia cubes—standard equipment for all AUBG classrooms—were also furnished with new computers. The AUBG course management system .LRN was migrated to a new version and installed in a new server. The Office of Communications and Computing is in the process of implementation of a new version of Blackbaud, a modern information system designed to handle properly all academic records. The AUBG wireless system was expanded to the Sofia campus so the EMBA students are able to benefit from this type of connectivity and access AUBG IT resources on their own personal computers.

## **PROJECTION**

### Library

The Panitza Library will continue to develop and maintain its excellence in support of teaching, research, and learning and serve as a model of modern library practice in the region. Rapid changes in the role of libraries call for adaptability. The most pervasive trends are technological changes, more full-text electronic resources, more open access to information, consortia relationships, and increased demand for immediate access and service. The Panitza Library is well into this transformational process from conventional and collection-focused to flexible, inspiring, and student-focused. Membership in the consortia AMICAL and BIC, and participation in NALIS project will allow staff to keep up with change and provide service and leadership to others. One of the library's greatest challenges is to ensure that students are aware of physical and electronic library resources and are served well by them. The central goals of the Library's strategic plan are to market the library services, develop greater visibility of its resources, strengthen the role of the Library as a social place, and make online library resources easier to use. Additional on-line training by interactive discipline-specific guides will be developed with an emphasis on intellectual property standards for materials under copyright. Remote access to available electronic resources will be provided to increase their usage. An archive of faculty and student research will be created to ensure its preservation and promotion. The professional growth of the library staff to meet the needs of the changing user environment will continue to be a high priority.

### IT Resources

In the Spring of 2011, the AUBG IT infrastructure will be enhanced with Digital Video Conferencing equipment, additional computers capable of running the new Windows 7 operating system and the new MS Office 2010, and Digital signage system. This upgrade is possible through support from an ASHA grant approved in 2010. The coverage of wireless connection will also be extended. The enhanced AUBG IT infrastructure will make the use of IT resources more efficient and extensive. One of the future tasks of the AUBG IT support staff will be related to the building of the new Student Center, a unique building designed

to focus the major part of student activities in a single space, with sports facilities, student theater, fitness, bookstore, dining area, and academic services such as admissions and registrars. Interconnecting this building to the available infrastructure will be a challenge and will demand a significant amount of resources and effort for the Center's successful integration.

## **Standard Eight: Physical and Technological Resources**

### **DESCRIPTION**

In 2006, AUBG's physical plant in Blagoevgrad consisted of three facilities: a classroom and administration building and two student residence halls. The Main Building housed all of the activities of the campus except Student Services and the English Language Institute, which were located at the Skaptopara Campus in the lower level of the residence halls. Much has changed since then as described below.

#### Physical Facilities—Main Building

Since 1991, AUBG has had the use of one half of a seven-story 24,500 square meter building—originally built as the headquarters of the local Communist Party—located in the center of Blagoevgrad; the other half of the building houses the Town Library, Pirin Ensemble, Southwest University, and the Communist Party Archive. Our use is based on a rent-free agreement that is negotiated for several years at a time. In 2006, we reported a continuing need for both regular maintenance and upgrading to better meet academic uses. Since that time, all administrative offices have been refurbished, fire exits established, elevators replaced, security systems installed, bathrooms modernized, classrooms upgraded, and some furniture replaced. All facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities. The result is a more pleasant and functional environment. In addition, further building on the Skaptopara campus has relieved the overcrowding so that all faculty have private offices and there is sufficient storage space.

#### Residence Halls

In 2006, all students were housed in two University-owned modern residence halls that were specially designed and constructed to reflect US standards for a residential campus. Built over several years, the halls were completed in 2003 as the first stage of the long-term building program of the University. As enrollment grew in 2007 and 2008, living space was insufficient and four person rooms had to be turned into six person suites. Even then, some students had to be permitted to live off campus. In January 2009, the first block of a new three block residence hall, Skaptopara 3, opened and set a new standard for residential life designed around two person rooms with a private bath, study rooms, as well as recreation lounges on each floor. With the additional space, AUBG could once again house all its students.

#### Classrooms

At the time of the self study, all classes were held in the Main Building and every possible space had to be used on an extended schedule from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Administrators had doubled up to turn offices into classrooms. We were looking forward to a new academic building with a variety of classrooms to match room size and furniture to pedagogical needs. The building opened in fall 2007 and a naming gift from the Balkanski family was accepted in May 2010. The most popular room in the Balkanski Academic Center is the Delchev Auditorium with its comfortable seating for 150, high definition multimedia, and well designed lighting and acoustics suited for activities as varied as guest lectures, films, and debate competitions. The building was designed and built to meet standards on energy conservation and ease of maintenance as well as aesthetic considerations. The new classroom building allowed us to take out of service less desirable classrooms in the Main Building. The remaining classrooms have had lighting,

flooring, acoustics, ventilation, and furniture upgraded over the course of several years. All classrooms in both buildings are equipped with multimedia and the teaching labs are upgraded according to our technology schedule.

#### Capital Master Planning and Space Planning

In June 1997 the City of Blagoevgrad and the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Affairs offered a site 10 minutes from the Main Building along the Bistriza River for the University to begin a full campus construction program. The first Capital Master Plan envisioned three areas for the new campus including residence halls, academic and administration buildings, and recreational facilities appropriate for 1000 students. The plan was updated in 2006 as enrollment estimates increased to at least 1200. The Plan has been reviewed regularly by the Board of Trustees and remains the overall concept for the University facilities in a park like setting. The architect for the new classroom building was successful in winning the bid for the Library completed in fall 2008, and again in 2009 for the Student Center. Involvement of students, faculty, staff, and administration in the project design phase of each building has been exciting and assured that the facilities meet the needs of the community. AUBG is also fortunate to have an architect with experience designing for US campuses join the Board of Trustees in 2009.

#### AUBG-Sofia

In January 2003, AUBG completed the Elieff Center for Education and Culture in Sofia, fifteen minutes from the center of the city. The well-designed building includes an auditorium, classrooms, computer laboratories, offices, a café, and public areas suitable for social, cultural, and academic events. It houses academic and training activities, including the Center for European Programs and the Executive MBA. As of 2006, we stated the building was modern, inviting, and well maintained. Now in 2010, we are reviewing the need to update the interior, address some maintenance issues, and review security concerns since the city has now grown out around the facility. Since AUBG program activities do not completely fill the facility, the University has entered into some lease agreements for space.

#### Technological Resources

The Office of Communications and Computing (OCC) is responsible for the technology and communications environment of the University. AUBG currently has 687 staff computers and 903 student personal computers interconnected by means of a local area network. A 1 Gbps fiber-optic link forms the backbone of this network, connecting major areas of the University. Each PC is connected to the network at a speed of 100 Mbps. Internet access is via a terrestrial link—70 Mbps downstream, 70 Mbps upstream.

As so many students now have personal computers, general purpose labs and public computer stations have been reduced since 2006. The teaching labs for computer science, journalism, information systems, business, economics, and foreign languages are regularly updated with both hardware and specialized software, most recently in 2010. The residence halls have computer labs and printing facilities and all residence hall rooms are wired to the campus network. Over the last five years we have been able to improve network security, ensure redundancy of systems, introduce better spam filters, finish all classroom multimedia, set up wireless, and add staff. In 2009 we used a grant of \$171,800 to upgrade the administrative system BlackBaud. In October 2010 we received a \$400,000 grant for technology which will allow us to introduce some new capacities including remote access to library resources, video

conferencing, and a new switchboard. Thus the technology environment of the University continues to develop.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Physical Facilities—Main Building

Even though not designed for its current purpose, we have been able to adapt the Main Building to our needs and learned to live with its idiosyncrasies. We have become bolder in our renovations and recently moved the English Language Institute into a redesigned space that once housed the Library. The ELI serves as many as 1000 members of the Blagoevgrad community in a year, thus the location in the center of town is ideal. What is not ideal, however, is that as the Skaptopara site is developed, the center of gravity for undergraduates moves there. Even though only 10 minutes away, faculty and staff housed in the newer campus are reluctant to come to the Main Building. The impact is most severely felt on Canteen revenues. Meetings and other activities are planned to alternate between sites to promote more interaction but this is still not sufficient to strengthen the divided community. Proximity is important.

### Residence Halls

The residence halls are comparable to the high quality residence halls found on US residential campuses and are an essential element in AUBG's success in building mutual understanding among diverse students. Skaptopara 3 allowed us to de-triple many rooms which also resulted in a calmer quality of life in Skapto 1 and 2. We were unaware that overcrowding had such a negative impact. Moving ELI to the Main Building has also had a positive effect as it takes community members out of the residence halls. The vacated space allowed Student Services to move some of its offices to Skaptopara 2 and open up the remaining ones to provide better support to students. A new Learning Services Center includes a 24 hour study room and all tutoring and writing center services are readily available to students on location and for extended hours.

### Classrooms

The renovations and interior modifications to the classrooms in the Main Building have improved the spaces since 2006, and annual review of facilities by the Dean of Faculty ensures inclusion of upgrades in the instructional budget. Because of their cost, we have not created more advanced classroom environments, such as tiered rooms suitable for teaching business cases or rooms equipped for clicker technology. The most important change since 2006 is in the class schedule which now starts at 9 a.m. and provides 30 minutes between classes. The primary reason for the schedule change was to provide time to travel between the two classroom buildings, but for most faculty and students, the later hour and 30 minutes between classes has created more informal interaction, reduced stress, and given students additional time to ask questions and set up appointments.

### Capital Master Planning and Space Planning

The University is well on the way to realizing its long-term goal of a self-contained modern campus. The Skaptopara site is small and does present some challenges as Blagoevgrad changes, other buildings encroach, land ownership remains unclear, and costs for the right to build increase. However, the University has always maintained close contact with municipal officials with regard to the development of the campus and recently has been able to negotiate the purchase of the land. Although a stretch financially at this time, owning the land provides security well into the future. Raising sufficient resources to build out the campus in a timely way remains a challenge. Two large gifts for the Student Center as well as continuing support from ASHA make us hopeful about the future. Campus development is one of the three major goals of the Comprehensive Campaign for AUBG which is currently in the silent phase. We also have the option of debt financing and have recently been approved for a loan from OPIC.

### AUBG-Sofia

AUBG's mission from the outset has included a commitment to the broader community through outreach activities. The USAID Evaluation Committee Report in 1995 suggested that AUBG commit to developing continuing education in Sofia as a strategy for diversifying revenue sources and enhancing financial sustainability. A generous gift of \$525,000 from the Bulgarian-American entrepreneur Mr. Elliot Elieff gave AUBG the opportunity to act on this suggestion. It was not clear at that time that there would be a great deal of competition from other universities and training organizations in Sofia. We have not been able to create a profitable niche in continuing education, yet the EMBA and Center for European Programs do break even. With rental income, the Elieff Center is not a drain on resources and we are actively exploring ways in which the Center can be more fully utilized by Academic Affairs for advanced studies and lecture series, and as a bridge to other institutions in Bulgaria.

### Technological Resources

In keeping with its mission to promote freedom of information, open exchange, and independent learning, computer access at AUBG is universal. AUBG is also well ahead of other Bulgarian universities in terms of resources and services for faculty and students. Many administrative functions are very efficient; for example, applying to the University, registration, student evaluations of faculty, and distribution of grades can all be handled electronically. The greatest pressure is on the stability and speed of the Internet connection. No matter how much OCC does, it is never quite enough as expectations rise faster than capacity. Fortunately, we have in place a stable staff that regularly enhances their skills and level of service. The Information Resources Committee made up of faculty, staff, and students helps set priorities and make budget recommendations. All policies have recently been updated to address growing concern about issues such as peer to peer sharing, and AUBG policies and procedures conform to standards of both Bulgarian and US law.

## **PROJECTION**

### Physical Facilities—Main Building

As an American University located in the headquarters of a now defunct Communist Party, AUBG's presence in the Main Building is highly symbolic and embodies the University's mission in the region.

As the campus develops, it will be necessary to decide what functions stay in the Main Building and which move. With its wide halls, open staircases, poorly fitting windows, the building is monumental, but inefficient.

### Residence Halls

The University's goal is for all students, except those who are residents of Blagoevgrad, to live in campus residence halls. Residential life is an integral part of the learning experience. Thus plans for the other two wings of Skaptopara 3 are ready and contingent on funding. Because the newest residence hall has amenities the others do not, students approved differential pricing. Over time this will need to be reviewed to be sure that the result does not separate students along economic lines and work against our goal of an inclusive community.

### Classrooms

AUBG is committed to quality teaching and variety in pedagogy, thus classrooms are equipped with multi media and flexible furniture that can easily be rearranged.

### Capital Master Planning and Space Planning

Given the pace at which the campus build-out is proceeding, it is appropriate to complement that planning with a migration plan to ensure optimal use of space. We have experience with the library move to a new facility, followed by ELI moving into the old library space, and then Student Services moving into the former ELI space. However, completion of the Student Center presents even more options and affects more buildings. As decisions are made about what offices and activities should collaborate and which ones should stay in the Main Building, adjustments in how we do our work, as well as where, are inevitable. Whatever choices are made with regard to facilities, we are committed to being good stewards and following green standards, maintaining the park like setting at Skaptopara.

### AUBG—Sofia

As of 2010 we are reviewing the plan for the Elieff Center and have hired a new Director of the Center. In addition to serving the professional community of Sofia, we also believe that a more prominent role in Sofia would help the institution to fulfill its mission. We are also exploring expanded continuing education and for-credit programs in Sofia.

### Technological Resources

Technology is an integral part of all University activities and was one of the focal points of the Strategic Planning Process. We had noted in 2006 the need for a multi-year technology plan and a task force developed a strong statement for the University Strategic Plan 2010-2015. The Office of Communications and Computing will always be challenged to stay up-to-date on new advances in technology in order to take advantage of new opportunities while also pursuing realistic plans for both academic and administrative needs. Key areas for additional work are planning for business continuity, supporting faculty and staff training, and ensuring security and privacy.

## **Standard Nine: Financial Resources**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Financial Sustainability

The progress in the area of financial resources since our last accreditation has been remarkable. AUBG is now poised to have its sixth consecutive year with a balanced operating budget. Total net assets have tripled since FY 2003 to \$44 million. AUBG stands today on a sustainable financial footing—able to meet its current needs, and with an asset base and quasi-endowment sufficient to contribute to future development.

This was not always the case. For the first 14 years AUBG experienced deficits. In the last five years, the University has made remarkable progress in generating revenues to cover educational expenses and in maintaining academic quality simultaneously with strict cost control. Operating revenues have increased 37% since FY 2006 (see data table below) and all of the increase has been directed to enhance the educational and campus experience for our students. AUBG is now preparing for significant increases in enrollment, with a modest increase in average net tuition. Growing enrollments will allow the University to exploit economies of scale through more efficient use of its physical and human resources.

	<b>FY 2005</b>	<b>FY 2006</b>	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>	<b>FY 2010</b>
<b>Revenues</b>	6,655	8,335	9,308	10,111	10,864	11,410
<b>Expenses</b>	8,289	7,994	8,944	9,853	10,021	11,074
<b>Operating Surplus (deficit)</b>	-1,634	341	364	258	843	336
<b>Net Assets</b>	22,840	30,486	36,166	39,150	38,045	44,053
<b>Net Assets per Undergraduate Student</b>	27	32	36	36	35	42
<b>Total Endowment Fund Balance</b>	9,625	8,832	17,118	18,397	16,526	17,037

Note: all numbers are in thousands of US dollars

AUBG has received all four tranches of the \$20 million cooperative agreement with USAID, and signed contracts for additional \$10 million from the America for Bulgaria foundation—the first \$2 million, earmarked for scholarships, are already received and the \$8 million for construction of a Student Center are committed. In addition, AUBG received approximately \$7 million from two bequests from Bulgarians, and \$1 million from an alumnus.

The University's improving financial health is also reflected by the change in its net assets and net assets per student. Total assets include the quasi-endowment and the value of the new buildings built on the Skaptopara campus site—the Balkanski Academic Center, the Panizza Library, and the first wing of the third residence hall. The trend of net assets is positive both in absolute terms and as net assets per student.

### Financial Planning and Budgeting

AUBG's financial planning and budgeting framework is both top-down and bottom-up. The top-down planning process ensures that all unit plans and budgets are aligned with the University's mission, support approved institutional goals, and further strategic initiatives as outlined in the institutional strategic plan. The collaborative bottom-up planning and budget development process allows new academic priorities and new ideas from other units to help shape University goals and initiatives. These priorities are then reflected in the strategic plan, annual action plans, and the rolling five-year financial plans.

A five-year, rolling Long-Range Financial Plan is prepared to outline the financial parameters of AUBG's plans for the next five years. The key assumptions established in the past have been met and surpassed. According to the 2001 Long Range Plan, AUBG was to become financially self-sustaining by 2008, a goal actually accomplished in 2006. The management of the budget process at AUBG for the past six years has been both prudent and flexible. Our financial performance did not suffer due to the global financial crisis of 2008.

AUBG's revenue sources have remained relatively stable. Undergraduate tuition revenue remains the single biggest source of funds, representing 47% of total revenues. Contributions and Grants stands at 26%, with more than half of that earmarked for external scholarships. An additional 5% is provided by the Endowment Income Distribution. Auxiliary revenues contribute 11%, and other revenues (EMBA, Outreach Activities and other) add 11% of the total unrestricted revenue.

### Financial Management

AUBG maintains a financial accounting system that provides a basis for executing the budget as well as for providing accurate and timely comparative reports on budgeted vs. actual variances in revenues and expenditures. Financial controls and a set of managerial reports support monitoring revenues and ensure that expenditures are made in accordance with the approved budget.

AUBG meets all external standards for financial management. Best practice internal control mechanisms such as separation of budgeting, accounting, and treasury management functions, separation of duties within each of the functions, and the use of an internal auditor ensure the integrity of the finances and financial reporting. Annual and Quarterly reports are available on the 25th of the month following the end of the period.

Administrators regularly review the budget with the budget managers under their supervision to help them anticipate problems before they develop. All budget managers prepare variance reports on the semi-annual and annual budgets, which give them a better sense of where budget controls were needed and will continue to review variances in the future.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Financial Sustainability

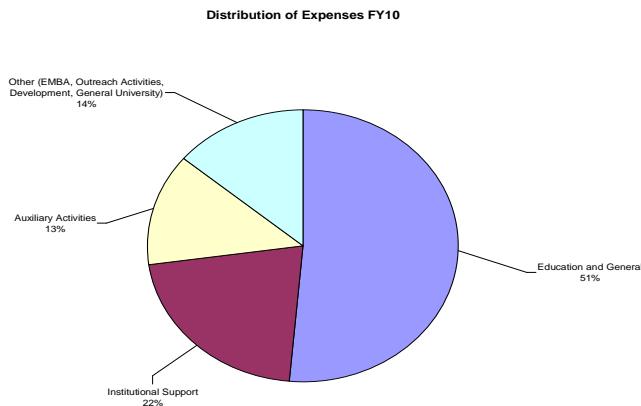
Since 2006, AUBG's finances have undergone rapid and consistent improvement. We are poised to meet a sixth consecutive year of modest operating budget surpluses, fundraising is increasing, and financial aid has increased significantly.

AUBG has increased its endowment fund balance ten-fold since June of 2003. AUBG has sufficient funds to mitigate unforeseen financial difficulties. The annual draw-down of endowment funds has been eliminated except for the Board-approved endowment income distribution calculated according to the Yale formula. The new challenge is to balance the need for revenues sufficient to cover the cost of education with AUBG's goal to attract the very best students.

### Financial Planning and Budgeting

AUBG has taken steps to link the budget and planning process to the Annual Goals and the Annual Action Plan. The timing of the Annual Plan has been moved to allow congruence with the budgeting process. AUBG is planning to increase its enrollment to a new target of 1500 students. This size will support additional economies of scale with regard to many support services, such as library materials, registrar, and student services staff, and also will allow for greater variety in the curriculum.

The financial resources of the institution are allocated in a way that reflects AUBG's mission and purpose, with the largest allocation to academic purposes.



AUBG's allocation of institutional financial aid based on both need and merit is working well. The overall financial profile of enrolled students fits nearly exactly the budgeted profile and there are insignificant budget variances in the projected tuition dollars. In the last three years AUBG's annual budget has included a tuition reserve of 3-5% of tuition, designed to cushion the institution from shortfalls in enrollment or net tuition.

AUBG's budget development process is well-organized, collaborative, and transparent. Given the experience of the past five years, AUBG is confident that it will manage its budgets in a consistent and predictable manner.

An internal assessment of risks shows AUBG has no outstanding debts or legal actions that threaten its activities.

## Financial Management

The last five completed years have reinforced AUBG's confidence in the future. The AUBG community and stakeholders have witnessed five consecutive years with budget surpluses. AUBG has budget and financial management processes that are able to deal with unforeseen circumstances. All budgets since FY 06 were realistic, and there were no surprises requiring revisions to the annual operating budget.

AUBG finances have been made more transparent, to ensure a consistent view of the financial picture of the institution. The financial reports and audits are available on the AUBG website. The Board materials (including budget data) are sent to all students, faculty, and staff. The viability of the institution is no longer in question, and the prospects for the future are bright. Once AUBG achieved operational self-sustainability, the rate of increase of revenues was almost precisely matched with increases in expenses. All of the additional revenues generated have been re-invested in educational programs. Staff and faculty salaries were raised and increases in average tuition have been reduced to single digits. In the last five years, no AUBG staff were laid off or furloughed. AUBG has provided small increases in pay in each of the last three years.

## **PROJECTION**

### Financial Sustainability

Our conceptual view for the future has not changed since our last report; it only became more demanding. Over the next five to ten years, AUBG will continue to consolidate and strengthen its gains in terms of both quality and sustainability. The University must continue the efforts to have the necessary physical, human, and financial resources to accomplish its mission. In the last report we wrote "Since AUBG tuition is between 10 and 15 times more expensive than Bulgarian (and regional) public and private education, the only way for AUBG to command the high tuition prices is to be recognized for providing the best education in the region." This recognition is already a fact. A national ranking of Bulgarian Universities (commissioned by the Ministry of Education) ranked AUBG as #1 or #2 in all of the majors that it offers. The rating system is available (in English as well) at <http://rsvu.mon.bg/> AUBG graduates have the highest starting salaries and the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

AUBG is in its last "teenage year"—this year we will turn 20. In this short period AUBG was able to establish a "brand name" for its students among parents, applicants, and the business community. At the same time we have developed and proven long range budget projections that are conservative and realistic extrapolations of what has already been accomplished.

External funding has been and will remain a high priority. AUBG has built and is building relationships with private and corporate donors and working with alumni to strengthen their commitment and giving to the future of AUBG.

Even with a successful fund raising program, like most private liberal arts institutions, AUBG will depend upon tuition for its future. As opportunities increase for students to attend colleges and universities in the US and Europe, it is essential that dependence on tuition revenue is balanced with resources from other sources, especially private fundraising. Based on recent information, AUBG expects continuation of the scholarship aid from the Open Society Institute and the America for Bulgaria Foundation that enables AUBG to attract outstanding students from the entire region.

### Financial Planning and Budgeting

AUBG has a sound budgeting and planning framework. The results of the past six years (minimal budget to actual variances) are the best testimony of this. Each year, we ask budget managers to link their budget submissions to strategic goals that are established at Board and Presidential levels. The Budget committee then evaluates the budget requests against these overarching goals in order to recommend resource allocations. Budget managers are encouraged to review their operations to determine if there are any activities that can be discontinued in order to reallocate resources internally to self-fund new initiatives for the coming year.

### Financial Management

At the time of our last report, we recognized that Budget managers need additional training and materials to guide their decisions about how best to use resources and to oversee expenditures. For the past six years, we have utilized a budget management handbook that continued to be developed. In addition, we held annual budget managers' training as part of the budget preparation process. With a stable organizational structure and comparable year-to-year data, more reliable information and trend lines are now available to guide decisions.

To help in the budget management process, more complete institutional information is being provided. A new Institutional Research Handbook is being used to guide our planning and reporting. It includes financial and non-financial Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Management is using these for planning, benchmarking, and performance management purposes.

AUBG is confident that it has the processes, people and resources to ensure sound financial future. It has the agility to meet unforeseen circumstances without negatively affecting its academic quality and reputation.

## **Standard Ten: Public Disclosure**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Electronic Information

At the time we submitted our self-study in 2006, a new website was being launched. Now five years later, we have already had two major revisions of the website designed to ensure a well-structured, lively, and up-to-date presentation of the University with easy navigation for different constituencies. There is no question that the web is of central importance in providing comprehensive and accurate information to prospective students to enable them to make informed decisions about their education. Consistent with NEASC requirements, all information on admissions, financial aid, academic programs, student services, co-curricular opportunities, faculty, resources, and educational outcomes are readily available and up-to-date. The University Relations Office coordinates this dynamic medium and regularly evaluates it.

#### Print Materials for Both Internal and External Audiences

Despite significant changes in communication in the last five years, print materials still play an important role for both internal and external audiences. All publications are now designed in a similar style to give a strong visual identity to the University, a goal identified in our projections in 2006. The designs are fresh and personal in order to appeal to future and current students as well as alumni and potential donors. All materials conform to all NEASC requirements. Two core publications are both in hard copy and on the web: 1) the Undergraduate Catalog, which provides comprehensive information with regard to the University's mission, accreditation status, admissions requirements and procedures, tuition, fees, financial aid, academic policies, degree requirements, programs, student outcomes, course offerings, faculty, and student services information, and 2) the Student Handbook which provides students with up-to-date information on residence life, security and emergency information, clubs and organizations at AUBG, the Student Government, a Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities, and procedures of the Conduct Council.

#### Public Relations

In support of the important goals of increasing enrollment and contributing to the community, the University Relations Office prepares and disseminates information and stories about the important people and activities of the University. In 2009-2010, AUBG appeared 1,200 times in print and electronic media, an increase of 400% over 2005-2006. Two faculty members have had regular radio shows while many faculty volunteered to be part of an experts group who help us respond to media requests for expert opinions on topical issues. The media coverage presents to the general public our undergraduate and graduate programs, admissions information, success of alumni, community service, and achievements of faculty as well as public events, lectures, and concerts, thus raising awareness and sustaining AUBG's positive image.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Electronic Information

The website is important as a repository of consistent and accurate information as well as a medium for communicating new and changing information. It was named best educational website in Bulgaria in both 2006 and 2010. In 2009-2010, we worked with an external consultant to understand the image of the University in Bulgaria, focusing on perceptions of both parents and prospective students, what forms of information they regularly used, and which of AUBG's communication modes were most effective. Our primary language is English but we have recently included additional languages in the Admissions section of the website. Perhaps the most challenging section of electronic communication is keeping the campus calendar up-to-date as this requires cooperation from sponsors of activities across campus. All other information ranging from graduation and retention statistics, to policies and procedures, to financial statements are up-to-date as managers are tasked with review and signing off on changes according to the content management plan.

In order to respond to changes in our target groups' preferences, we have developed a short film about AUBG, available on DVDs, flash drives, and on the web, and an electronic application package uploaded onto flash drives and posted on the web. These changes ensure easy access to information about AUBG and allow more frequent updates to assure information accuracy.

### Print Materials for Both Internal and External Audiences

The Office of University Relations is responsible for the oversight and coordination of all campus publications, website, public relations, and University events. As mediums for communication change, new ideas are developed. Two years ago, the contract for print materials was put out for bid and resulted in the opportunity to look at fresh design options. The winning company was founded by AUBG graduates and is also the company that was hired earlier for the Website design. The result is consistency in look as well as content. Some print publications are now being put into electronic formats, and slide shows, a short film, and materials on flash drives for prospective students have been introduced. Current students rely more and more on electronic communication.

### Public Relations

A special initiative is underway as of fall 2010 to support the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University. Members of the campus community will coordinate a variety of activities under this rubric including for example a lecture series, photo exhibits, essay competitions, and success stories of alumni. This is an important opportunity to extend the awareness of AUBG through all possible mediums—the web, publications, television, and newspapers. We function in a very competitive environment and must make every effort to attract positive press and advance the strengths of the University. Our public relations efforts have been particularly successful in almost eliminating any negative references to the University. Yet success has its price: a major donor to the University suggested that he might have given the funds elsewhere because AUBG is doing so well.

## **PROJECTION**

### Green Initiative

As part of our effort to “go green,” we will be making decisions about the most appropriate forms for our communications. Already we are making more use of the web and flash drives and reducing the number of color brochures, one-time-use publications, and materials sent by mail. Admissions now works with a video and slide show on a flash drive given to prospective students. Students, faculty and staff have become used to checking the web first for definitive information on the University. These new forms allow for faster updating and the ability to tailor the material to a specific audience. Information of interest to parents is now available in several languages. We continue to publish *AUBG Today* magazine, which is distributed to the families of current students, alumni and friends, the media, international corporate contacts, the diplomatic community, and educational and other institutions. The magazine is published twice a year in 6,500 English-language copies and 3,000 Bulgarian-language copies, while an online news section built into the University’s main website and updated almost daily gives our readers the opportunity to stay informed. We might be considering whether to give our readers the opportunity to opt for an electronic version to reduce both printing and postage costs.

### Fundraising Communication

External Fundraising has been transformed at AUBG. Initially, the institution relied upon the support of the US Government to meet its external fundraising needs. While that source has disappeared, the institution has cultivated a far wider network of donors, in spite of the fact that there is a scant tradition of giving to one’s alma mater in Bulgaria and our most senior graduates are young—the oldest ones graduated in 1995! We have been able to cultivate a strong alumni network, especially in Sofia, and have profiled many of them on AUBG.BG. The Alumni magazine continues to be robust, and we have also sought out direct contacts with more senior individuals of means who believe in our mission. In the past five years, we have raised more than \$27 million and this year we initiated a \$50 million campaign, which was kicked off at the home of George Soros, the honorary chair of the initiative. To spearhead this, AUBG has, with the assistance of Isaacson Miller, initiated a search for a new Vice President for Development who will work with a new Chair of the Board committee on development, whose own background is in development at Dartmouth.

### Social Networking

Social networking is changing the way in which individuals and institutions communicate. Thus we need to review the forms of our communication to build on word of mouth and social networking opportunities. We are already making extensive use of Facebook for event announcement and interest groups. Facebook tools are also being used for recruitment and advising of potential students while the Google-owned YouTube channel features AUBG student-produced videos. These initiatives complement, and are not meant to replace, officially managed sources, such as the AUBG website and other mediums, in order to ensure that information is accurate.

We will continue to review and update the website content to ensure that user requirements are met.

We will undertake an overhaul of the library website, adding new interactive features, easier searches, and remote access, in order to ensure that students, alumni, and faculty have the most comprehensive resources possible for conducting research.

## **Standard Eleven: Integrity**

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### Standards for Integrity

The Self Study submitted in 2006 noted that “AUBG subscribes to high ethical standards in the management of all its affairs and has both policies and procedures in place to protect the rights of all members of the academic community and to encourage responsible behavior.” Given the region in which we operate and the countries from which our students come, it is essential that we model integrity in every aspect and engage all members of the community—faculty, administrators, Board members, and students—in discussions of our values and standards. In October 2009, the University mission statement was updated and reflects this commitment: “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.”

In 2006, we also noted in our projection section the commitment to finishing the review of all University policies and establishing procedures for regular updating and dissemination of all policies. The University Policy Manual, covering matters such as conflicts of interest, is now posted on the AUBG website in both English and Bulgarian in order to be readily available to all members of the community. It is revised as needed at the May Board of Trustees meeting, the most recent addition being a Whistleblower Policy. The Faculty Handbook—also reviewed annually—outlines rights and responsibilities, for example, the commitment to AAUP principles on academic freedom, the Code of Conduct for faculty, and grievance procedures as called for in the NEASC standards. A Faculty Manual is being developed that will outline procedures with which faculty are likely to come into contact during their day-to-day life, while an additional handbook on living in Bulgaria will outline some of the mechanics of day-to-day life. All academic policies and student policies are also updated annually and are readily available in both print and electronic format, either in the Catalogue or in the Student Handbook.

#### Reinforcing a Culture of Integrity

Although AUBG is proud of its commitment to non-discrimination, one issue that was raised in 2006 was the matter of perceived inequality in faculty salaries. With the guidance of a faculty Compensation Committee, the Provost and Dean of Faculty revised the principles for compensation, which were then approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2007. In the subsequent three years, significant adjustments to Bulgarian faculty salaries were made to reduce the gap with expatriate salaries. However, we still adhere to two compensation systems, as is typical for overseas campuses, international organizations, and international businesses that seek to recruit from the US and European markets. Procedures are in place for annual review of salaries and benefits with a commitment to fair compensation according to approved principles.

In the last five years AUBG has also made progress on increasing students’ understanding of integrity and personal and social responsibility. From the first week on campus, students learn about academic integrity and expected behavior standards, including those for residential living, use of technology, and interactions with their peers and faculty. The Dean of Faculty collaborates with faculty as they develop strategies for

prevention and not just policies on punishment for infractions. Faculty orientation and regular reminders throughout the year are designed to make sure that faculty are aware of the standards for professional behavior in matters ranging from intellectual property and student privacy to good practices in hiring and use of University resources. Concerns about faculty behavior are usually handled informally; however, procedures are in place to address matters that need a formal review.

## **APPRAISAL**

### Standards for Integrity

We believe academic integrity, just as in the US, will continue to need our direct attention in order to understand how our students view academic integrity and whether we are making progress in this regard. The Senior Survey included questions on integrity that revealed students change both their views and their behaviors over their time at AUBG. Additional data from a survey of a quarter of the student body as to what actions they believe are dishonest and whether they are likely to engage in dishonest behavior, reveal we must continue to include statements on academic integrity on all syllabi and hold discussions with students. As noted in our last report, cultural norms are such that students do not take it upon themselves to monitor another student's behavior and collectivism is more important than individualism. For example, AUBG students agree that plagiarism or cheating on an exam is inappropriate, but they are not willing to condemn asking for help on homework or learning about exam questions from someone in another class. Faculty efforts are increasingly designed to reduce opportunities for inappropriate actions, such as, scheduling the exam for all sections of the course at the same time.

In the last five years, both the student body and the faculty have become more diverse, clear evidence that the University not only does not discriminate, but rather believes diversity is a positive factor and strives for an inclusive University community. All hiring is conducted without regard to nationality and admissions activities proactively seek diversity in enrollment. The University by-laws, University policy documents, and undergraduate catalog state clearly the institution's commitment to equal opportunity: "The American University in Bulgaria does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age or physical ability in the administration of its admissions policies, educational programs, employment opportunities, or other University programs." Recognizing that policies are not the same as practices, and committed to moving beyond tolerance to acceptance, the University involves students and faculty in diversity training to promote greater sensitivity toward the differences that create an inclusive environment.

### Reinforcing a Culture of Integrity

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the University was engaged in a strategic planning process involving all constituencies. Committed to transparency and candor in addressing our challenges and opportunities, all surveys and all documents were both posted on the website and addressed in public meetings. All materials were distributed to the Board of Trustees for their discussions. The documents remain available as background to the approved plan and Annual Action Plan. This commitment to transparency ensured both a clearer assessment of our situation and confidence in the plans going forward. This iterative process was first used in developing the self-study in 2005-2006, and it has become standard procedure to use work groups, share data, encourage comments on reports, hold open discussions, and revise documents in an effort to represent the views of the broader community and maintain openness.

We also see progress on matters that seemed challenging five years ago, for example, addressing the needs of students with disabilities. Committed to non-discrimination, the University accepted and supported a blind student and a student confined to a wheel chair and worked with both students and faculty on supporting the students. It is only fair to say that many members of the community for whom this was a new experience doubted our capacity to meet their needs. Facilities adjustments were easier than attitudes, but both students demonstrated their grit and forbearance and graduated in May 2010 with honors. Looking back, we wonder why we were concerned. We are now better prepared to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, an issue that is not diagnosed in this part of the world, but we believe is real on our campus.

## PROJECTION

### Standards for Integrity

In 2006, our self study noted: “Over time, the members of the AUBG academic community have come to take for granted the values that distinguish AUBG and its academic mission and, consequently, are less likely to publicly reaffirm their importance. To preserve what is at the core of AUBG, faculty and administrators need to be as assertive about expressing commitment to these values as they are the foundation of the quality of the AUBG experience.” Faculty suggested broad-based discussions to renew our understanding of core values. The Strategic Planning process was timely in helping in that process and the following values were endorsed in recognition that they have guided the institution 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.

Clearly, the challenge for the plan 2010-2015, is to ensure that these values infuse all that we do and are part of our next self study.

The second major issue we will address in the future is the revision of the Bulgarian Higher Education Law and the accreditation standards. Since our last self-study and accreditation review, the Bulgarian National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency has joined the European Association for Quality

Assurance with criteria similar to those for US accreditation. Further revisions in the law and accreditation processes are anticipated. We will continue to conform to all requirements of both US and Bulgarian law, ensuring that all of our communications accurately and truthfully represent our activities. And we will continue to engage transparently with other external constituencies, including the public in and outside of Bulgaria, the institutions with which AUBG has partnerships and exchange agreements, and the organizations and foundations from which we receive support.

### Reinforcing a Culture of Integrity

AUBG has all the policies and procedures for integrity in place and offers guidance so that faculty, staff, and students comply with expectations and will continue to take actions to ensure their effective dissemination and administration throughout the semester. The Dean of Faculty distributes reminders to faculty on such matters as privacy of student data, protecting exams, and fair use standards for copy righted materials. As required by US law, we inform students of all technology standards, especially with regard to peer-to-peer sharing, though AUBG like other campuses has a difficult time enforcing digital copyright standards. Both Student Services administrators and the Conduct Council (a body of faculty, students, and staff) ensure that students understand expected standards of behavior and receive a fair hearing if there are infractions of any policies.

We are and will remain committed to responsible and honest interactions, rather than focus on punishment. Toward that end the Strategic Plan has a commitment to helping students increase their personal and social responsibility. Formal coursework, co-curricular activities, and faculty development activities address ethical issues as a fundamental part of the University's emphasis on democratic values. The General Education program requires two courses in Moral and Philosophical Reasoning, where classroom interactions are characterized by the free exchange of ideas, and faculty make clear that they expect students to respect the views and values of others. The ultimate goal is that students will go beyond the classroom and integrate these important values into their long-term view of the world and behave accordingly.

## **Plans: Challenges (and Opportunities)**

The central challenge that AUBG faces is growth—in the size and quality of the student body; the size, quality and intellectual diversity of the faculty; in the breadth and depth of the curriculum; in the size and more importantly the flexibility of the fiscal situation; and in the physical infrastructure of the campus. As a tuition-driven institution, careful management of expenditures and the discovery of new sources of revenue are critical to meeting the challenge that growth poses. While the challenges are not small, AUBG has in place a series of strategies to transform them into opportunities.

AUBG's Board of Trustees has set a target size for us at 1400-1800 students, which the institution feels is the size we need to attain to be sustainable, both fiscally and intellectually. To grow beyond our current size presents challenges: our classrooms are full and our student faculty ratio has reached the cap set by the Board. Thus, increasing the size of the student body requires us to expand our faculty. This presents AUBG with an important opportunity: to examine the curriculum and determine how we want to shape the intellectual future of the institution. To pursue this, the Provost has appointed a Task Force on New Program Development and has begun a dialogue with the Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees to insure strong communication links between these two bodies as the discussion of new programs takes place.

Recruiting new students presents its own sets of challenges. Within Bulgaria and neighboring countries that have recently joined the EU, such as Romania, top students have been attracted to the prospects of low cost education in Europe. Recruiting further afield, such as in Russia and Central Asia, is more expensive and incomes are low, though the pool of top students is vast. In both regions, attracting top students requires a generous financial aid program on top of an already low tuition level. The result is a low average net tuition level per student.

Several external circumstances do work to our favor, and we have sought to institute changes to become more efficient in our recruitment activities. Senior administrators travel extensively to meet with students, and the Admissions office has been re-organized into two teams that focus on Bulgaria and its neighbors on the one hand, and the CIS countries and Mongolia on the other. New, talented staff have also been attracted to the office. Externally, the Ministry of Education ranking of AUBG as the top university in the country has generated far greater awareness of AUBG as a top quality institution of choice, both in Bulgaria and beyond its borders. The impact of this ranking, and our ability to capitalize on it, will no doubt be reflected in the composition of the incoming class for Fall 2011. The European debt crisis, and specifically Britain's decision to increase tuition caps by 300% will result in tuition levels in the UK that are much higher than those at AUBG. This, coupled with the far lower cost of living in Bulgaria, may help us to attract those Bulgarians who would have gone abroad, and perhaps others who are priced out of the British market.

Growth in the student body and faculty also places strains on space. Internal studies show that within our existing classroom facilities we can accommodate up to 1400 students. Beyond that, we will need additional academic space. Additional students will place additional stress on our existing residence facilities which will need to be expanded, and our student recreational facilities, which are virtually non-existent at present, also need to be developed. In the Spring of 2011, we anticipate breaking ground on a new Student Center with accompanying athletic fields, which will meet our needs for the foreseeable future. Our most recent residence hall was designed so that it could be built in modules with only the first

of three wings completed to date. Additional dorm space can be completed in the top floors of older buildings.

The greatest challenge is in the area of finance. While we have consistently run budget surpluses, increasing costs and increased revenue run neck and neck. To maintain our preeminence, we need to increase our investments in our faculty by providing additional support for research. With slim prospects for rapid growth in income from the endowment, either through increasing its size or its return, the only option is expanded funding for recurrent expenses. The principal area in which we have sought such unrestricted giving is through external support for student financial assistance, the net effect of which is to increase net tuition revenue per student. Net revenue from tuition is, by its very nature, unrestricted.

In this area, we have achieved significant success. We have received an annual bequest from the Open Society Institute of \$1 million annually for many years, and this was matched by an additional \$1 million for Bulgarian students from the America for Bulgaria Foundation. In the past five years we have raised a total of \$27 million and have just begun our first capital campaign. With a goal of \$50 million, the kickoff for the campaign was held at the home of George Soros, who will serve as the campaign's honorary chair.

Internally, we have begun a search for a new Vice President for Development. Development activities to date have been most successful in generating large gifts from a small pool of individuals. Expanding the giving base is a critical goal. To this end, the Presidents of the Alumni Association have been working hard to draw younger alumni into the Association and its activities. Their results have been successful. The involvement of our younger alums needs to be transferred into engagement in development activities. We believe that our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary provides just such an opportunity and that new leadership in institutional advancement will enable us to achieve this goal.

While the challenges facing AUBG are significant, we are aware of them and have developed strategies to address them and have made strategic moves to transform them into opportunities that will enable us to continue the dramatic path towards excellence on which we have achieved such success to date.

# **ENCLOSURES**

**E-SERIES DATA FORM**  
**OPTION E1: PART A. INVENTORY OF EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS INDICATORS**

CATEGORY	(1) Have formal learning outcomes been developed?	(2) Where are these learning outcomes published? (please specify) Include URLs where appropriate.	(3) Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course, portfolio review, licensure examination)	(4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (e.g. annually by the curriculum committee)	(5) What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence?	(6) Date of most recent program review (for general education and each degree program)
At the institutional level:	In process	Learning outcomes are developed for each major and for General education program. In March 2010 the process was started for articulating the overall institutional goals based on Mission and major and GenEd goals. Due to change in top leadership (new Provost) the process has not been finalized yet.				
For general education if an undergraduate institution:	Yes for each area of the GenEd Program	Catalog	Senior Survey results, May 2010	General Education Council recommends changes to Faculty Assembly	Process was developed for approval of syllabi of courses applying for General Education credit to make sure each syllabus includes clear outcomes aligned with the stated goals for each	2006

					Mode of Inquiry.	
List each degree program: 1. Business Administration	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4416&amp;menu=001001002000">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4416&amp;menu=001001002000</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Capstone Course, State Exam	Department, each semester	The Department proposed (with strong student support) that students must earn a 2.5 GPA in the first 4 Business courses in order to declare the major, and made upper-level courses open only to declared majors.	Fall 2008
2. Computer Science	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4417&amp;menu=001001002001">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4417&amp;menu=001001002001</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Project/State Exam	Department, each semester	The Department introduced a new Information Systems major, updated the curriculum of the existing Computer Science major (changes voted by	Fall 2008

					Faculty Assembly on Nov. 24, 2010), and is working on a graduate level major Master of Software Engineering	
3. Economics	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4418&amp;menu=001001002002">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4418&amp;menu=001001002002</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Thesis/State Exam	Department, each semester		Fall 2007
4. European Studies	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4419&amp;menu=001001002003">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4419&amp;menu=001001002003</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Thesis/State Exam	Department, each semester		Spring 2010
5. History and Civilizations	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4420&amp;menu=001001002004">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4420&amp;menu=001001002004</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Thesis/ State Exam	Department, each semester	Updated curriculum of the major, effective Fall 2009	Fall 2007
6. Information Systems (New major)	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=100452733&amp;menu=001001002005">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=100452733&amp;menu=001001002005</a>	Senior Project/State Exam	Department, each semester		New program
7. Journalism and Mass Communication	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4421&amp;menu=001001002006">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4421&amp;menu=001001002006</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Capstone	Department, each semester	Updated curriculum of the major, effective	Fall 2007

			Project, State Exam		Fall 2010	
8. Mathematics	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4422&amp;menu=001001002007">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4422&amp;menu=001001002007</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Thesis/State Exam	Department, each semester		Spring 2009
9. Political Science and International Relations	yes	Catalog; <a href="http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4423&amp;menu=001001002008">http://www.aubg.bg/template5.aspx?page=4423&amp;menu=001001002008</a>	Alumni Surveys, Employer Survey, Senior Thesis/State Exam	Department, each semester		Spring 2010

Institutions selecting E1a should also include E1b.

## OPTION E1: PART B. INVENTORY OF SPECIALIZED AND PROGRAM ACCREDITATION

(1) Professional, specialized, State, or programmatic accreditations currently held by the institution (by agency or program name).	(2) Date of most recent accreditation action by each listed agency.	(3) List key issues for continuing accreditation identified in accreditation action letter or report.	(4) Key performance indicators as required by agency or selected by program (licensure, board, or bar pass rates; employment rates, etc.). *	(6) Date and nature of next scheduled review.
AUBG holds full accreditation by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) in Bulgaria, including:			NEAA's criteria emphasize on:	
Institutional Accreditation	2006	1) Development of an Internal University Research Strategy 2) Own educational facilities 3) Compliance of a remote teaching location with the Bulgarian Law	Faculty ranks**; faculty research outcomes and student involvement in research; curriculum; quality management	2011: Institutional accreditation; evaluation of the institution as a whole, on-site visit
Program Accreditation: Business Administration	2008	1) Habilitated** faculty 2) Faculty research 3) Quality management	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2013: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit
Program Accreditation: Computer Science; the Information Systems major is under the same program accreditation	2008	1) Faculty research publishing venues 2) Do not increase the number of students in laboratory classes	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2013: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit
Program Accreditation: Economics	2007	1) Habilitated** faculty 2) Faculty research	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2012: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit
Program Accreditation:	2009	1) Elective courses in the curriculum 2) Habilitated** faculty 3) Faculty Research	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research,	2014: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit

European Studies, Political Science and International Relations		4) Student research 5) Number of bilateral agreements	curriculum	
Program Accreditation: History and Civilizations	2009	1) Habilitated** faculty 2) Correspondence of the breadth of curriculum with that at other Bulgarian universities 3) Faculty and student research 4) Bulgarian and European history books in Library	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2014: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit
Program Accreditation: Journalism and Mass Communications	2007	1) Distinction between core and supplemental courses 2) Enrich the scope of offered courses in advertisement and PR 3) Emphasize legal, ethic and deontological issues of the journalism profession 4) Wider dissemination of faculty research results	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2012: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit
Program Accreditation: Mathematics	2008	1) Faculty research and venues for publications 2) Usage of information from alumni and market studies 3) Habilitated** faculty	Faculty ranks**, faculty research outcomes, involvement of students in research, curriculum	2013: Program accreditation; evaluation of the program and on-site visit

\*\*Certain proportion of faculty with Associate and Full Professor ranks are required according to the Bulgarian Law – the so called “habilitated” faculty

\*Record results of key performance indicators in form S3.

Institutions selecting E1b should also include E1a.

## S-SERIES DATA FORM

### Form S1. RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES

Student Success Measures/ Prior Performance and Goals	2 Years Prior	1 Year Prior	Most Recent Year	Goal Next Year	Goal 2 Years Forward
<b>IPEDS Retention Data</b>					
Associate degree students					
Bachelors degree students	96.83%	95.39%	96.76%	96.33%	96.33%
<b>IPEDS Graduation Data</b>					
Associate degree students					
Bachelors degree students	80.21%	83.33%	86.70%	83.41%	83.41%
<b>Other Undergraduate Retention Rates (1)</b>					
a	Retention after second year	93.88%	93.25%	93.09%	93.41%
b	Retention after third year	87.00%	90.29%	92.46%	89.92%
c					
<b>Other Undergraduate Graduation Rates (2)</b>					
a	Five-year graduation rate	75.52%	81.20%	85.84%	80.85%
b	Four – year graduation rate	52.08%	53.42%	63.52%	56.34%
c					
<b>Graduate programs *</b>					
Retention rates first-to-second year (3)		95%	98%	97%	100%
Graduation rates @ 150% time (4)		90%	93%	90%	100%
<b>Distance Education</b>					
Course completion rates (5)					
Retention rates (6)					
Graduation rates (7)					
<b>Branch Campus and Instructional Locations</b>					
Course completion rate (8)					
Retention rates (9)					
Graduation rates (10)					
<b>Definition and Methodology Explanations</b>					
1	A measure of the rate at which students persist in their educational program at the institution, expressed as a percentage. For four-year institutions , this is the percentage of first-time bachelors (or equivalent) degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall.				
2	The rate required for disclosure and/or reporting purposes under Student Right-to-Know Act. This rate is calculated as the total number of completers within 150% of normal time divided by the revised adjusted cohort.				
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
* An institution offering graduate degrees must complete this portion.					

**Form S2. OTHER MEASURES OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS**

Measures of Student Achievement and Success/ Institutional Performance and Goals		2 Years Prior – 2007/08	1 Year Prior – 2008/09	Most Recent Year – 2009/10	Goal for the Future
<b>Success of Students Pursuing Higher Degree</b>					
1			30%	Will be known after May 2011 (next one-year out alumni survey)	30%
2					
3					
4					
5					
<b>Definition and methodology explanations</b>					
In May 2010 for the first time we conducted a one-year out survey with the graduates of the previous year. It indicated that 30% of them were studying for higher degrees at the time of the survey. Before 2010, alumni surveys of all alumni were conducted in 2004 and in 2001.					
<b>Rates at Which Graduates Pursue Mission Related Paths (e.g., Peace Corps, Public Service Law)</b>					
1	<i>Respect to diversity</i> : 82% of the employers responded that our graduates possess to a big extent the ability to work productively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.				
2	<i>Democratic leadership</i> : 82% of the employers answered that our students are willing to listen to different points of view before coming to a decision.				
3	<i>Ethical leadership</i> : 58% of the employers believe that our graduates are committed to ethical practice to a great or some extent.				
4	<i>Creative and innovative thinking</i> : 71% of the employers answered that our graduates possess the ability to use creative and innovative thinking.				
<b>Definition and methodology explanations</b>					
We believe that each of our graduates' career paths is mission related, if the graduate fulfills his or her outstanding potential in serving the region and the world through ethical and democratic leadership, with a respect to diversity, and utilizing the various skills our liberal arts program instills in them, such as critical and creative thinking, communication skills and others. In a recent (2009) survey with employers, we aimed to assess the mission-related personal, interpersonal, intellectual and specific skills and abilities of our graduates.					
<b>Rates at Which Students Are Successful in Fields for Which They Were Not Explicitly Prepared</b>					
1					
2					
<b>Definition and methodology explanations</b>					
We believe that a liberal arts program, which ours is, is aimed precisely at preparing graduates to fulfill their potential in almost every sphere of human activity, so it is difficult to define for what field they were <i>not</i> specifically prepared. And yet, the recent one year-out alumni survey (Spring 2010) indicates that almost 7% of our graduates were successful in finding jobs in fields in which they were not specifically educated.					
<b>Documented Success of Graduates Achieving Other Mission-Explicit Achievement (e.g., Leadership, Spiritual Formation)</b>					
1					
<b>Definition and methodology explanations</b>					
<b>Other (Specify Below)</b>					
1					
<b>Definition and methodology explanations</b>					



New England Association of Schools and Colleges

## COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730

Voice: (781) 271-0022      Fax: (781) 271-0950      Web: <http://cihe.neasc.org>

### AFFIRMATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL REGULATIONS RELATING TO TITLE IV

Periodically, member institutions are asked to affirm their compliance with federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including relevant requirements of the Higher Education Opportunity Act.

1. **Credit Transfer Policies.** The institution's policy on transfer of credit is publicly disclosed through its website and other relevant publications. The institution includes a statement of its criteria for transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements. (CIHE Policy 95)

URL	<a href="http://www.aubg.bg/RapidASPEditor/MyUploadDocs/Academic_Catalog2011_Uptdated.pdf">http://www.aubg.bg/RapidASPEditor/MyUploadDocs/Academic_Catalog2011_Uptdated.pdf</a>
Print Publications	Undergraduate Catalog

2. **Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Opportunity for Public Comment:** The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to notify the public of an upcoming comprehensive evaluation and to solicit comments. (CIHE Policy 77)

URL	N.A.
Print Publications	N.A.

3. **Student Complaints.** "Policies on student rights and responsibilities, including grievance procedures, are clearly stated, well publicized and readily available, and fairly and consistently administered." (*Standards for Accreditation* 6.15)

URL	<a href="http://www.aubg.bg/RapidASPEditor/MyUploadDocs/Student_Handbook_2010a.pdf">http://www.aubg.bg/RapidASPEditor/MyUploadDocs/Student_Handbook_2010a.pdf</a>
Print Publications	Student Handbook

4. **Distance and Correspondence Education: Verification of Student Identity:** If the institution offers distance education or correspondence education, it has processes in place to establish that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit. . . . The institution protects student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity. (CIHE Policy 95)

Method(s) used for verification	N.A.
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The undersigned affirms that the American University in Bulgaria meets all federal requirements relating to Title IV program participation, including those enumerated above.

David Huwiler, President

Date

September 2010