



# **“Our Time is Now”**

## **University Strategic Plan, 2022-25**

updated April 13, 2023

### **I. President’s Message**

I am full of optimism for the future of The American University and for the power of our international learning community to transform students’ lives, both individually and for the greater public good. Having been personally transformed as a student by living and studying abroad, I can think of no nobler or more exciting mission than collaborating with the board of trustees, faculty and staff colleagues, and student leaders to promote and share “The AUR Experience” with as many students as possible from across the globe.

That said, our challenges as a small, tuition-driven institution remain formidable as we attempt to balance three competing considerations: 1) enrollment and revenue growth for long-term institutional sustainability, 2) affordability of tuition and fees to remain competitive and to provide access to a broader demographic of potential recruits, and 3) identifying resources for a range of strategic investments so that AUR maintains its liberal arts foundations while positioning students for optimal choices at graduation, whether that be acceptance at an excellent graduate or professional school or direct entry into a purposeful and satisfying career. At a moment in history when the global pandemic of 2020-22 has accelerated long-standing enrollment declines across the liberal arts sector (due largely to return-on-investment and career concerns), it is urgent that we get in front of these challenges with mission-aligned, data-informed and results-oriented strategies.

Happily, many of the necessary changes have been underway for the past two years, including the launch of a new strategic enrollment plan in 2021 (*AUR Ascends: Strategic Enrollment Plan, 2021-24*), focusing on both short-term turnaround strategies (due to the sudden 50% enrollment loss during the pandemic) and long-term plans designed for incremental growth over the next 5-6 years from the historical average of 500 students (per semester) to approximately 1000. Parallel to this plan we have improved our data collection and dashboards for better decision-making, redesigned our organizational structure and workflows for more efficient delivery on strategic plans, and facilitated cross-departmental collaboration with a laser-like focus on enhancing the substance and quality of the student experience. As a result of these changes, AUR has managed to expand enrollments over the past two and a half years by 20% over historical averages, and we are projecting incremental growth in 2023-24 to over 700 students.

Such results are remarkable in themselves, but they are even more impressive against a backdrop of the recent global pandemic, the miniscule American market from which we draw students (for example, only .25% of American high school graduates seek a college degree outside the US), and the general depression of enrollments in our liberal arts sector.

Let me hasten to say that although meeting enrollment growth targets is extremely important in our current climate, such targets are not ends in themselves and, in fact, are best thought

of as the natural by-product and numerical translation of **AUR's unstinting commitment to the values and purpose of a global liberal arts education in Rome**. In the end, what matters most is not enrollment numbers, but the renewal of our collective will and creative energy to design new and better ways to deliver on AUR's inspiring mission to educate students for lives and careers of purpose—anywhere in the world.

Scott Sprenger  
President  
Rome, October 2022

## II. This Plan in Context

This current university strategic plan, titled *Our Time is Now (2022-2025)*, is the result of nearly two years of market research, university surveys and positioning statements, and campus conversations on a variety of topics, such as new ways to build on our previous priorities and goals, strategies for more effective recruitment and retention, and reshaping curriculum around mission and values, and instruction and advising for improved outcomes.

This document was designed as an extension of AUR's previous university strategic plan, *AUR Reborn, 2017-22*, with minor modifications to mission and priorities, and with a renewal and recasting of the top-line strategic initiatives in response to contemporary (post-Covid) challenges and opportunities. The main difference between the former plan and the current one is a more comprehensive focus and a reevaluation of *how* to deliver on mission and goals in a context of three key considerations: (1) the unrelenting enrollment declines in the liberal arts sector, (2) a fresh analysis of AUR's "right-fit student" and AUR's unique institutional advantages and differentiating features for attracting such students, and (3) the specific challenges and opportunities that have emerged since the 2008-09 financial crisis, the global pandemic, and now a new European war. Gen Z students are highly mobile and are currently voting with their feet across the entire higher ed sector for increased flexibility in curriculum and online access, for a more rigorous alignment between curriculum and personal aspirations or career purpose, more experiential and purpose-driven learning, and more affordability. Some of these global trends align with AUR's traditional educational model; others do not. There is room to rethink institutional modifications that better align AUR with shifting demands and expectations.

When AUR found itself, two years ago, with a sudden 50% enrollment drop, flexibility became the order of the day. We pivoted to online learning in the space of a week, we immediately adapted to Italy's rigorous and ever-changing pandemic rules and regulations, and we re-jiggered our academic calendar to provide flexibility to students without visas (due to consular closures or appointment delays). We also made two important strategic decisions: (1) to prioritize the drafting of a new **strategic enrollment plan** (*AUR Ascends, 2021-2024*) over general strategic planning (given the urgency to address the existential threat to our revenue model), and (2) to reconceptualize all subsequent planning documents, including this one, as strategic "frameworks" within which space is left open to respond to evolving conditions. Our planning approach is now self-consciously dual: we continue to chart a long-term path to a desired future while at the same time embedding within our strategic thinking and operational structures a measure of tactical flexibility.

Given the recent market volatility and the need for enrollment growth to regain financial stability, the new strategic enrollment plan, *AUR Ascends, 2021-24*, served as the university's strategic map throughout the crisis. In parallel, we drafted a new academic master plan to better reflect the interests of AUR's right-fit student around global challenges (political polarization, communication in the age disinformation, climate change and food sustainability,

peace and conflict, cultural heritage, etc.) and global career opportunities, a campus plan to secure, expand and refurbish our current location for the long term (our current lease expires in 2024), a marketing and communication plan for more effective branding and inquiry generation, an updated technology plan to enhance the student and employee experience, and an advancement plan for a renewed focus on building an endowment and identifying funding for AUR-themed scholarships, “centers that matter,” and program enhancements. See this link for more information: <https://www.momentum.aur.edu/>

As we now exit a nearly two-year phase of crisis management, *Our Time is Now, 2022-25* will take center stage with the purpose of (1) renewing our collective commitment to institutional success by focusing on a common vision and set of initiatives for the future, (2) providing a general framework for harmonizing the activity of the various area plans with our top-line, institution-wide priorities and goals, (3) coordinating interdepartmental collaboration for optimal delivery on mission and community values and (4) providing a bridge plan to lay the infrastructure for a full-fledged strategic planning process in the future.

### **III. Brief History & Mission**

**The American University of Rome**, founded in 1969, is a non-profit, internationally recognized liberal arts university in Rome, offering high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs to students from across the globe. AUR is a first-choice university for students seeking an international learning experience in well-established, American-accredited programs taught by outstanding faculty members.

The essence of The American University of Rome’s mission is to prepare students to live and work across cultures as global citizens and professionals in an interconnected and rapidly changing world.

Taking the best of the American approach to interdisciplinary, student-centered, humanistic learning, our international faculty and staff use Rome and its environs as our classroom, and Italy and Europe as invaluable resources. AUR’s innovative, locale-based programs promote academic excellence, personal growth, and an appreciation of cultural diversity while successfully aligning students with high-quality graduate programs and enriching career paths.

### **IV. Key Questions & Assumptions**

This strategic framework is founded on an understanding of the current challenges and opportunities of the international higher education marketplace, and on several key assumptions for AUR’s institutional renewal and improvement. In the spirit of generating ongoing community discussion and idea generation on directions forward, we begin with three, open-ended **strategic questions**:

1. *How will AUR remain true to its liberal arts mission while remaining current – or even a step ahead of competitors – in a rapidly changing global higher education marketplace?*
2. *What are AUR’s competitive advantages and differentiating features, and how can we better promote these to attract and retain an increasing number of students?*
3. *What visible return-on-investment opportunities do we provide students (and their parents or guardians who might be paying)? How can we better deliver on these?*

#### **Underlying Assumptions.**

**1. Enrollment Targets.** The aspirational goal is to grow AUR enrollments incrementally over the next 5-6 years to approximately 900-1000 per semester (for the regular academic school year) while shifting the current 50/50 degree-seeking/study abroad proportion to 60/40,

growing the summer enrollments from the traditional approximately 250 to 400-500, and expanding to at least 20 students in each graduate program.

**2. Right-Fit Students.** The first step toward enrollment growth and improved retention is the recruitment of degree-seeking students who are a good fit for the AUR educational experience. We know from market research, internal positioning statements, and various surveys that the students attracted to AUR are seeking a multi-cultural experience abroad, wish to be pushed out of their comfort zones, have a passion for experiential learning, are in search of new ideas, new people and adventure.

**3. Study Abroad and Partners.** Based on current market conditions, in which the liberal arts sector is in decline and study abroad continues to grow, study abroad will continue to be an important part of our growth strategy. Indeed, because we need to generate significant revenue quickly to recover from the pandemic damage and to seize current investment opportunities for the future, we are willing over the short-term to let the DS/SA balance shift in favor of student abroad. The long-term goal, however, will be to rebalance our portfolio toward premium, higher-paying partners and to shift the balance back to degree-seeking students for greater institutional stability.

**4. Student Expectations.** AUR students expect an educational experience that exceeds what they would get from a large public institution in terms of small classes, excellent teaching, “lateral learning” with student peers, personalized advising from faculty, up-to-date learning spaces and technologies, excellent customer service from staff offices, compelling experiential learning in and around Rome, and more. We need to begin with the excellence of the student experience as our key goal and backward-plan from the desired outcome.

**5. Curriculum (“product line”).** The national enrollment trends - even those at liberal arts colleges - are headed toward majors that visibly signpost career pathways. Given the intense focus on return-on-investment considerations (with career considerations at the forefront), we need to design, advise for, and find more flexible ways to deliver on our global liberal arts mission while featuring curricular options and combinations that align with students’ personal goals and/or aspirations. AUR should strive for visible areas of academic excellence, designed to leverage Rome’s unique locale, network and proximity to institutions and other sites of interest. Our unique combination of international context and a globally diverse student body should be used to infuse our disciplines and pedagogies with comparative methods of inquiry and analysis (localization for international commerce and marketing, cultural arbitrage for entrepreneurship, comparative cultures and arts for design purposes, comparative politics for research and social impact, and so on).

**6. Teaching & Learning Excellence.** Liberal arts institutions are known for and pride themselves on teaching excellence. Assessment and a review of evaluations suggests that we have strong areas of teaching excellence, yet there is room for institutional improvement, more resources for faculty development, teaching technologies, and regular faculty development seminars focused on teaching and learning.

**7. Advising.** To ensure that students graduate in a timely manner, make optimal curricular choices based on aspirations, and align their curricular choices (including electives, minors, alternative courses, etc.) with sound career strategy, AUR must ensure that advising is well-designed and supported, well-resourced, and aligned with best practices. Finding a way to inject career strategy and thinking earlier in a student’s time at AUR is key for student *and institutional* success.

**8. Institutional Sustainability.** To achieve financial sustainability, AUR needs not only to grow enrollments, develop a better housing strategy and improve fundraising operations, we must continuously review budget allocations for alignment with mission and desired impact, use data and benchmarks to improve institutional efficiencies, and find ways to expand the institution without increasing costs linearly. Decisions should be mission-driven, outcomes-based, student-centered, data-informed, and focused on leanness and efficiency.

**9. Parents & Guardians.** Parents & Guardians play a key role in our students' education and can be helpful allies in achieving mutual goals. We are currently working on ways to cultivate relations with parents through a parent portal in the AUR website, a parent newsletter, parental inclusion in orientation and holiday events, combining parents with alumni strategies, possible board participation, and more.

**10. Careers.** In addition to providing excellent academic programs and curriculum, we need to enhance our career strategy, curriculum and services while scaling our internship program. Long term, AUR will live or die based on how well we can deliver on optimal graduate and career outcomes for all students who are seeking careers at graduation. The goal is an ambitious 100% participation by students not continuing to graduate or professional school after their undergraduate degree.

## **V. SWOT and AUR's Areas of Excellence & Distinction**

### **Strengths**

- Commitment of faculty to students as individual learners (small classes, interactive class design, study trips, capstones, mentoring)
- Relative affordability for private sector
- Intense internal focus on Student Success
- Faculty, staff and emphasis on quality teaching and co-curriculars
- Location in Rome as world center, nearby locations and resources
- Interdisciplinary and comparative focus
- Global diversity of student body
- Global focus of curriculum and problem-solving

### **Perceived Weaknesses**

- Financially constrained, historically and especially after the Covid crisis
- Small size brings financial precarity
- Sometimes slow to foresee and adjust to problems and challenges
- Difficulty offering or maintaining competitive salaries
- Limited hiring pool with American university experience in some areas
- Too many initiatives/faculty and staff stretched too thin
- Career function too small and not to level or scale of competitors
- Internal fragmentation and siloing that hinders efficiency and cross-departmental cooperation
- Poor engagement with alumni, including SA

### **Opportunities**

- Increase focus on US market (we have only 1 person there, JCU 4, Franklin 4)
- Open more markets across the globe for student recruitment
- Increase retention and graduation rates
- Reward better current faculty, find ways to bring outstanding short-term faculty

- Improve use of partnerships and engagement with community for resources and brand
- Improve marketing/branding to project better our value proposition
- Increase institutional agility
- Increased use of Zoom for better participation in meetings, both group and one-on-one. Consider some online course delivery in very limited forms to enhance flexibility
- IB Teaching, Localization, Psychology, Social Entrepreneurship, Design
- Open “Centers that Matter” as sites of scholarly convocation, research, curricular development
- Create a new revenue stream in a new housing strategy
- Use of limited forms of online instruction where it enhances learning
- Use department advisory boards with access to networks and resources

### Threats

- Increasing competition by online providers and Italian institutions teaching in English
- Market declines and volatility in the liberal arts sector, enrollment stagnation
- Downward pressures on tuition price affordable for certain recruitment
- Demographic decline in US of college-aged students
- Competing institutions with endowments, housing revenue, access to online options

### AUR's Areas of Excellence & Distinction

- Location, location, location
- Globally diverse student body
- Small, close-knit learning community
- Faculty mentoring of students
- Signature travel study programs
- Archaeology (Aventine Excavation)
- Quiet, safe, beautiful location
- High Quality for Price
- Community engagement/strategic partnerships
- General focus on writing and new media communications

## VI: The Plan: Institutional Priorities, Goals, Initiatives, Costs, KPIs

The institutional priorities were selected as a matter of current areas of focus and were crafted broadly. They have been limited to five in order to align with Middle States best practices.

Each priority and set of corresponding strategic initiatives comes with its own KPIs and costs, but all taken together are designed to contribute to the overall improvement the AUR's unique locale-based learning experience, brand awareness around quality, and institutional growth and financial sustainability.

### 1. Location

**Further leverage AUR's location in Rome, Italy and Europe for optimal, mission-driven teaching & learning**

**Description:** *The location priority seeks to live up to AUR's founding motto, articulated by the university's first president, David Colin: "Rome is our classroom, Italy is our laboratory, the world is*

*our potential.” Compared to American liberal arts universities situated in the U.S., AUR’s Italian location is our major differentiating feature and provides the distinct advantage of convenient and intimate access to Rome’s (and the region’s) world-class cultural, political, commercial and non-governmental institutions and resources. To fully deliver on mission and to leverage AUR’s locale, it is important that the university community continuously improve and foreground on-site learning experiences while projecting AUR’s image as an international learning community that extends beyond the campus and into the city, Italy, Europe and the Mediterranean region.*

#### **Year 1:**

1. Each academic program will develop and continuously improve ways to use Rome and environs as our classroom and provide at least one major “signature” field study experience beyond Rome. *KPI: extend to all programs in 3 years, Cost: labor*

2. The university will fundraise for study trips, with a goal of €10,000 per year, to provide better access to need-based students. *KPI: reach the 10k amount each year. Cost: minimal labor from advancement and marketing departments. Give this fund a catchy brand name. (For the past two years, students have been fundraising over 10k for this cause)*

3. AUR will continue to develop more and better-aligned strategic partnerships for internships, transfer relations, shared programming, research collaboration, networking, and co-branding, external quality reviews. *KPI: 5-6 meaningful new partnerships per year; Cost: labor, consultancy work and/or travel €20,000)*

4. Internship office will continue to develop more Rome and Italy-based internships and professionalizing experiences. *KPI: all students should have at least 1 professionalizing experience before graduation. Verification: survey data. Cost: €40,000 per year for labor to create more robust career center, scale up project-based learning (RealProjects), and build out the Center for Design and Entrepreneurship.*

5. The Marketing, Advancement and Admissions Offices will improve strategic uses of the student experience in marketing, social media and visual brand identity. *KPI: new pieces on all departments that feature value proposition, student experience, at least 2 per department per semester. Cost: minimal labor in photography and print.*

#### **Year 2:**

6. The university will assist in coordinating trips across departments, provide better support, within online selection and payment, with an eye to maximizing efficiency and smooth operations. *KPI: Completion and student satisfaction. Cost: Labor.*

7. To the extent that it enhances the attractiveness of AUR, student engagement and learning outcomes, departmental programs will develop curriculum and/or experiences that reflect globally recognized, Rome-based resources, events and professional networks. *KPI: extend to all programs. Cost: possible course fees.*

8. Student Life will increase volunteerism & community engagement so that larger numbers of students contribute to, and feel part of, the local community. *KPI: align capacity with student demand to engage. Cost: labor.*

9. Academic affairs and student life will find supplementary ways for students to learn Italian and culture in real-world settings. *KPI: align capacity with student demand, but strategize and market to induce demand. Cost: labor.*

### **Year 3:**

Continue to develop and/or complete the above initiatives.

## **2. Learning**

***Continuously improve AUR's academic offering, pedagogies, advising, research, academic services and partnerships to achieve optimal outcomes, academic reputation and attractiveness.***

**Description:** *As a comprehensive liberal arts university, AUR is founded on a definition of academic excellence that is interdisciplinary, international, experiential, and oriented toward graduate outcomes. We encourage students to combine the exploration of different disciplinary methods of interpretation and discovery, unique combinations of majors & minors, and cross-over skill acquisition that will position students academically and experientially for the best possible graduate outcomes, whether that be acceptance to excellent graduate or professional schools or direct entry into an enriching career pathway. To improve AUR's reputation and brand awareness, it is crucial that AUR remain uniquely attractive and relevant to students by regularly reflecting on, and continuously improving, curricular programming, research, teaching approaches and technologies, advising, partnerships and other academic services to meet or exceed student aspirations.*

### **Year 1:**

1. Continuously improve AUR's graduate outcomes so that students at graduation are optimally positioned for one of two options: acceptance to the best possible graduate or professional schools OR entry into a meaningful career path. The curricular structure, substance and learning experiences should be "ack-planned to lead optimally to those outcomes. *KPI: 100% of AUR graduates have found their path within 9 months year of graduation. Cost: labor.*
2. Address the marketability of MA programming so that each program attracts a minimum of 20 students per cohort. *KPI: 20 students, Cost: marketing, some tuition discounting.*
3. Focus on continuously improving the quality of AUR teaching via faculty hiring, faculty development, curriculum updates, advising, teaching & learning seminars and workshops. Make high quality curriculum, teaching and academic services the hallmark of the AUR experience. *KPI: ongoing benchmarking, to be measured in academic by assessment, surveys, market comparison, focus groups. Cost: labor.*
4. Improve academic advising by establishing a baseline set of standards, practices and outcomes. Encourage cross- or inter-disciplinarity through strategic uses of general education, market-informed combinations of majors/minors or majors and cross-disciplinary coursework. Find a structured way to introduce career strategy and development into the curriculum and/or advising function. *KPI: ongoing, to be measured by assessment, surveys, focus groups. Cost: labor*
5. Continuously improve assessment practices, institutional research, data collection and dissemination in order to continuously improve learning and derive budget needs for learning enhancements. *KPI: Observation that it gets done. Cost: labor.*

### **Year 2:**

6. Begin and end the year with an Academic Affairs retreat to set and maintain an agenda of teaching and advising excellence. Include at least two faculty development seminars during the year focused on special topics. *KPI: complete as described, Cost: labor, food, pay of adjuncts*



to attend, 15k.

7. Develop an advising philosophy and curriculum structure that encourages curricular blending of liberal arts and career competency-based courses (minors, double majors, certifications) for maximal options at graduation. Ensure that students add to their academic journey, co-curriculars, professionalizing experiences, capstones, networking, certifications, and other career development strategies. *KPI: Quickly establish a feasible baseline and then improve this statistic by 10% a year as reflected in student experience surveys. Cost: labor*

8. Buy or develop graduation audit software to efficiently track – and have students self-track - progress in their chosen programs and career curriculum. *KPI: Get 100% of students to actively track their progress toward graduation and optimal graduation outcomes. Cost: price of software, labor.*

9. Work with Student Life to provide possible credit-bearing learning experiences via volunteerism and service-learning and/or develop a co-curricular transcript that officially records meaningful service work. *KPI: Experiment at small scale and grow if it works and is acceptable. Cost: labor.*

### **Year 3:**

10. Find innovative ways to bring high-level faculty members from professional fields for short-term, credit-bearing teaching workshops, lecture series, courses or residencies that appeal to more than one academic area. *KPI: A noticeable influx of temporary experts. Cost: 40k*

11. Develop exciting summer programming designed to enhance AUR's visibility and attract new students to campus. *KPI: Increase summer enrollments by 10% per year. Cost: labor*

12. Make digital competencies and literacy an integral part of the curriculum. Perhaps become an Adobe Creative Campus so that all students have access to the tools for professional-level digital content creation and dissemination, an essential set of skills for the modern workplace, a useful crossover skill for all majors. *KPI: tba. Cost: 18,000 euros.*

### **3. Diversity**

#### **Create an even more globally diverse, inclusive, and ethics-based learning community of internationally-minded students, faculty & staff**

*Description: Founded as an international university and composed of a globally diverse student body, staff and faculty, diversity has always been one of AUR's founding pillars. Our current mission continues to be inspired by our founders' vision of transcending the pitfalls of narrow nationalisms and extremist ideologies. In this sense, diversity and equity are social and ethical values; they stand as a pillar of AUR's culture and aspirational learning environment. By attracting and embracing students from around the world, AUR seeks to deliver on three key strategic purposes: to prepare students for global citizenry and international cooperation, to develop problem-solving skills that derive from daily encounters with globally diverse people, ideas, beliefs and perspectives, and to position students to be values- and purpose-driven leaders in their chosen career paths.*

Actions:

#### **Year 1:**

1. All things equal, give priority to diversity hiring in professional and staff positions.  
*KPI: Increase the current percentage as possibilities arise, ongoing; Cost: pro-active recruiting.*

2. Improve recruitment for student diversity: *KPI: Improve by 10% per year. Cost: Marketing, tuition discounting.*
3. Provide faculty and staff development on current DEI principles and practices. *KPI: underway, ongoing assessment. Cost: done internally or consultant fee.*

**Year 2:**

4. Recognize and work to eliminate structural forms of discrimination in policies, practices, attitudes and values assumed to be gender-, ethnic- or race-neutral. *KPI: Faculty and student satisfaction with improvements. Cost: Labor.*
5. Better embed diversity & equity principles in pedagogy, research, course design and advising. *KPI: Faculty and student satisfaction with improvements. Cost: Labor.*

**Year 3:**

6. Study and find effective ways to address variable learning outcomes tied to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or language barriers. *KPI: Faculty and student satisfaction with outcomes assessment adapted for context. Cost: Labor.*

#### **4. Campus**

***Develop and maintain an inspiring and up-to-date campus & infrastructure that aligns with enrollment goals, AUR's mission and student expectations.***

*Description: A liberal arts education was traditionally founded on the classical ideal of searching for beauty, truth, and the good. Although times have changed, AUR remains committed to providing: 1) a campus whose architecture, aesthetics and locale inspire a sentiment of belonging to a humanistic learning community bigger than one's self; 2) a classroom size and configuration focused on "lateral learning" and a vigorous exchange of ideas among faculty and student peers for optimal learning and problem-solving; and 3) a campus size that focuses on the educational values and well-being of the AUR learning community, with a focus on small class sizes, up-to-date facilities and technologies.*

*After previous efforts to move the AUR campus to a new location, we have shifted the current thinking to investing in our current space, while making the necessary repairs and refurbishments, and using it as efficiently as possible, while working with the Barnabites to expand into Bldg B, the "theatre," and/or adding modularized spaces nearby to accommodate enrollment growth.*

**Actions:**

**Year 1:**

1. Work with architects and construction firms to bring the Barnabite campus in alignment with fire and seismic codes in order to renew our lease. *KPI: the official approvals. Cost: unknown.*
2. Continue to align library with mixed-used trends in higher education. *KPI: ongoing, Cost: minimal.*
3. Align instructional and campus technologies with student expectations. *KPI: Cost: See IT budget.*
4. Provide staff & faculty development for upskilling in use of technology. *KPI: Faculty remains up-to-date. Cost: minimal internal labor.*

**Year 2:**

*Focus on identifying physical and virtual areas that better connect students and faculty, and encourage cultural & academic exchange. KPI: Improved community and student experience as reflected in survey or assessment data. Cost: unknown.*

### **Year 3:**

5. Find an adequate space to combine the arts, design & creative areas into a School of Creative Arts and Design for better collaboration and identity, and a small gallery space for arts shows. *KPI: Project completion. Cost: unknown.*

6. Secure funding to rent and transform the theater into a new classroom and/or lab spaces for project-based learning. *KPI: project completion. Cost: unknown for now.*

## **5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### ***Achieve long-term institutional growth & financial sustainability***

As a tuition-dependent university, enrollment is our main source of revenue, requiring increased collaboration of marketing, admissions, the dean's office and finance around a long-term plan of steady enrollment growth. Our recent strategic enrollment plan, *AUR Ascends: 2021-2024*, focuses on a set of assumptions and strategies adapted for annual growth in an extremely challenging international higher education marketplace. Recruitment and retention are founded on a comprehensive, "all-hands-on-deck" approach, with every community member aware that a top priority is AUR's institutional growth and sustainability. Beyond enrollment, AUR's recently drafted advancement plan aims to supplement AUR's tuition revenue, either directly, via unrestricted giving, or indirectly through scholarships and institutional enhancements. We should also in the near future look to a housing plan as an important revenue stream.

### **Timeline. All activities are ongoing.**

1. Continue to follow and improve on the current Strategic Enrollment Plan for optimal enrollment growth and retention. *KPI: continuous improvement in enrollment numbers, with a 7.0 - 10% annual increase in profit. Cost: increased marketing, space, faculty.*

2. Develop a financial plan that projects growth, aligns with enrollment strategy and fundraising targets and maintains spending controls. As part of this, develop and continuously review a tuition and financial aid strategy for optimizing net revenue. *KPI: completed project and ongoing assessment of results. Cost: labor.*

3. Follow the advancement plan to increase the annual fund, raise an endowment for a Center of Design & Entrepreneurship, Center of Sustainable Heritage (the Aventine Dig), identify funding for a Center for Women's Empowerment, scholarships to support our 70% female population, program enhancements. *KPI: raise \$1m per year with optimal allocations to these projects. Cost: labor.*

4. Continuously review campus spaces for efficiency and optimal use. *KPI: ongoing assessment. Cost: labor.*

5. Continuously review the budget for efficiency, impact and alignment with priorities. *KPI: ongoing assessment. Cost: Labor.*

6. Review labor allocation for efficiency, benchmark against standards and shape the org chart according to strategic needs. *KPI: Ongoing assessment. Cost: Labor.*

7. Continuously review the study abroad and partner portfolio for optimal revenue generation. Replace low-fee partners with higher fee. *KPI: Analysis of efficiency and yield. Cost: labor.*

9. Develop better alumni engagement strategies and practices. *KPI: number, quality and impact of events, benchmarked against peer standards. Cost: Labor and volunteer time.*