

REPORT ON
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY – CENTRAL ASIA (AUCA)
PREPAREDNESS FOR ACCREDITATION BY NEW ENGLAND
ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES (NEASC)*

**Contract Number REM-M-00-05-0097, MOBIS/Technical Assistance to USAID/Caucasus
Vocational Education and Training Design
Prepared by Kenneth Tolo
September 30, 2007**

This report, based upon a review of AUCA materials during September 2007 and discussions with AUCA senior officers, faculty, staff, and students in Bishkek (September 25-28, 2007), includes

- an assessment of AUCA’s preparedness for seeking affiliation with the NEASC Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE) as a candidate for accreditation; and
- a preliminary timeline/action plan for AUCA to move forward with the CIHE/NEASC accreditation process and the implementation of an enhanced enrollment strategy.

To be eligible to apply for initial CIHE/NEASC accreditation, AUCA must first be granted candidacy status by CIHE/NEASC. At this time, AUCA is well-positioned to initiate its application for candidacy status and to submit to CIHE/NEASC in early October its “Report of Eligibility,” the primary component of which is a AUCA document (not to exceed 30 pages, excluding appendices) that responds to the CIHE/NEASC *Requirements of Affiliation of Free Standing Institutions Abroad*.

Attachment A provides an assessment of the extent to which AUCA’s actions taken and planned meet each of the 23 accreditation-related conditions in the *Requirements*. It is hoped that this assessment will be helpful to AUCA President Ellen Hurwitz as she prepares the institution’s “Report of Eligibility” for submission to CIHE/NEASC.

Attachment B provides a preliminary timeline/action plan for AUCA to achieve CIHE/NEASC accreditation. While affirming AUCA’s readiness to begin this process immediately, this attachment also highlights challenges that AUCA faces in addressing this timeline/action plan.

Attachments:

- A. Requirements of Affiliation for Free-Standing Institutions Abroad: Report of Eligibility for Candidate Status of American University – Central Asia (AUCA)**
- B. American University – Central Asia (AUCA) Preliminary Timeline/Action Plan for Achieving CIHE/NEASC Accreditation**

**The AUCA Assessment undertaken during September 2007 under Contract Number REM-M-00-05-0097 focused on both AUCA accreditation and AUCA enrollment management. This report is based on the accreditation work conducted by the consultant Kenneth Tolo, who will transmit this report directly to USAID. Bram Caplan, the other consultant, will transmit separately to USAID his report on his AUCA enrollment management work.*

ATTACHMENT A.
**REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION FOR FREE-STANDING INSTITUTIONS
ABROAD: REPORT OF ELIGIBILITY FOR CANDIDATE STATUS OF
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY – CENTRAL ASIA (AUCA)**
**For Submission to Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE)/
New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)**
Prepared by Kenneth Tolo
September 30, 2007

The Institution:

1. *Has formally adopted a statement of mission, which demonstrates that the fundamental purposes of the institution are educational, and which is also appropriate to a degree-granting institution and appropriate to those needs of society it seeks to serve.*

STATUS: Presently, AUCA is guided by a mission statement approved several years ago by its Board of Trustees. During the 2006-07 academic year and into the fall of 2007, an AUCA strategic planning committee developed, in consultation with on-campus and off-campus constituencies, a new mission statement as part of a new five-year institutional strategic plan. Also a part of this new strategic plan is a statement of the values that underlie the new AUCA mission. The new mission and values statements, which President Ellen Hurwitz will present to the AUCA Board of Trustees for endorsement at the next Board meeting (November 1-2, 2007), are as follows:

Mission: *“An international, multi-disciplinary learning community in the American liberal arts tradition, the American University of Central Asia develops enlightened and passionate leaders for the democratic transformation of Central Asia.”*

Values: *“American University of Central Asia values responsible freedom in the search for truth and justice. As we pursue academic excellence, we are honest, transparent, self-critical, rational and respectful. We cherish critical inquiry and investigative learning both for its own sake and for the development of an open and just society that suits the region where we learn and serve.”*

Following Board endorsement, these new statements will be posted on the AUCA website; they also will appear in future editions of the AUCA catalog (Section 1) and in other publications widely available to on-campus and off-campus constituencies. [See the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 7-8) for the AUCA mission and core values statements as of September 28, 2007.]

CHALLENGE: The development of a new institutional mission statement is often viewed as an end in itself. After an extended period of institutional review focusing on writing a very succinct statement on which all constituencies agree, however, the difficult challenge is using this mission statement as the foundation

on which all institutional priorities, policies, practices, and programs are grounded – in a sense, “unpacking” the statement and making it “real.”

This is a significant challenge facing the AUCA community, since the CIHE/NEASC accreditation process is mission-driven. By building its new strategic plan around its new mission and values statements, though, AUCA has put in place a framework not only for achieving its mission but also for preparing for (and preparing its materials for) accreditation. AUCA also has in place the institutional plans – strategic plan, financial plan, academic reorganization plan, enrollment plan, and the like – necessary to achieve its mission. In the next few years, all campus constituencies must view the extended accreditation process now starting as integrally related to the ongoing, already anticipated campus processes associated with the implementation of its various strategies and plans, while at the same time creating an institutional focus (e.g., through the designation of a campus accreditation coordinator) to ensure the success of the accreditation effort.

2. *Offers one or more collegiate-level education programs, consistent with its mission, that lead to a degree in a recognized field of study and that require at least one year to complete.*

STATUS: AUCA, the first higher education institution in Central Asia that functions according to the American model, with a credit-hour system, an American-style liberal arts curriculum, and a commitment to democratic values, freedom of expression and inquiry, and academic integrity and honesty, satisfies this eligibility criterion.

AUCA offers 11 undergraduate-level education programs, all of which are consistent with its clarified mission statement: American Studies, Business Administration, Cultural Anthropology and Archeology, Economics, European Studies, International and Comparative Politics, Journalism, Law, Psychology, Sociology, and Software Engineering. Graduates receive both an AUCA Bachelor of Arts degree and the Kyrgyz State Diploma. Completion of the Bachelor of Arts degree requirements in each of these programs requires four years (eight semesters).

The Law program differs somewhat from the other 10 undergraduate programs. After four years, students may choose to receive a baccalaureate degree in Law. In order to be licensed to practice as an advocate in Central Asian countries, however, candidates must complete a five-year Law program and receive a Diploma of Completion of the Higher Educational Specialty in Jurisprudence (“Diploma”) from their own ministries of education.

The four-year AUCA Law program permits Central Asian students from countries other than Kyrgyzstan to complete their fifth year for the Diploma in their home countries. Kyrgyz residents completing the Law program generally remain at

AUCA to complete their fifth year, thus enabling them to earn the Diploma from the Kyrgyz Education Ministry. This fifth year provides students greater breadth by enabling them to integrate Law and Liberal Arts courses; to earn a Specialization Certificate in any of three areas of Law (i.e., Business Law, International Public Law, Criminal Law); and/or to earn a minor or a double major in other academic fields of study.

AUCA offers one graduate degree, namely, Masters in Business Administration, which has two specializations: Marketing and Management, and Finance and Accounting. This degree program takes two years (four semesters) to complete, unless the student's bachelor's degree is in Management; in this instance, the duration of study is one year (two semesters).

In addition, AUCA offers Supporting Programs (Arts and Recreational Sports; English Language; Kyrgyz Language; Modern Foreign Languages – Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Turkish; Natural Sciences and Information Technologies; and Russian Language); an intensive English language-learning Preparatory Program to prepare students to apply for admission to AUCA or other international, Western-style universities or colleges; and Summer School.

Detailed information about AUCA undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as supporting programs and preparatory programs, is provided in the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 30-161), as well as on the AUCA website at www.auca.kg/academics.

CHALLENGE: AUCA's challenge is ensuring that, as it provides instruction and implements academic reorganization plans, all faculty and academic leaders offer, strengthen, and develop courses, course sequences, and major fields of study in a way that is "consistent with [AUCA's] mission."

3. *Offers academic programs that are comparable in terms of length, curriculum, objectives, learning outcomes, and degrees awarded to those offered by regionally accredited institutions in the United States.*

STATUS: AUCA's academic programs are comparable to those offered by U.S. colleges and universities accredited by CIHE/NEASC.

According to the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 28-30), a student who has successfully completed all the requirements of an AUCA undergraduate degree program is permitted to take the final state attestation. If this attestation is successfully passed, the student receives a Kyrgyz State Diploma and, simultaneously, has conferred upon himself/herself an American-style Bachelor of Arts diploma.

Final state attestation of AUCA graduates can be conducted in the form of two or more exams in certain academic disciplines or, alternatively, in the form of a final complex (interdisciplinary) exam as well as preparation and defense of a senior thesis. The right to write a senior thesis is given to those students who have achieved considerable success, on the basis of the decision of the chair of the graduate's department. Preparation and defense of a senior thesis is done in the English language, with the exception of students who are completing the German Studies program; they may present their theses in German. In addition, the TOEFL and the History of Kyrgyzstan are required state exams to receive the Bachelor of Arts degree in all majors.

AUCA Bachelor of Arts diplomas are of four types: Summa Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, Cum Laude, and without honors. The general criteria for receiving an AUCA Bachelor of Arts diploma are:

- a student must earn no fewer than 144 credits for the period of studies in AUCA, including internships;
- the student's cumulative GPA for the entire period of studies must be not less than 2.0;
- the student must successfully pass the final state exams and/or defend his/her senior thesis;
- the student must pass the final state exam in English (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 550; and
- the student must not have committed any violations of the AUCA Disciplinary Code.

Of the 144 credits required to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from AUCA, no fewer than 51 credits must be derived from general education courses for students entering as freshmen in 2007-2008; students who are sophomores, juniors, and seniors in 2007-2008 must earn no fewer than 42 credits from general education courses. [See the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009*, pp. 21-22.] The 51 credit hour requirement includes History of Kyrgyzstan, 3 credits; Mathematics (Level 1), 3 credits; English Composition, 6 credits; Kyrgyz or Russian Language, 6 credits; Philosophy, 3 credits; Social Sciences and Humanities (6 credits in each of two course clusters), 12 credits; Critical Skills, 3 credits; History and Philosophy of Science, 3 credits; Ecology, Geography, or Geophysics, 3 credits; Introduction to Computers, 3 credits; and Arts and Recreational Sports, 6 credits.

At most 51 credits of introductory (100-level) courses may be counted toward the 144 credit hour minimum requirement. Students must take a minimum of 30 credits taught in the English language, excluding courses designed to teach English language skills. Moreover, at least 3 credits must be in courses focusing on the U.S., with an additional 3 credits in courses focusing on the U.S. or other Western countries.

For each undergraduate program, the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 30-118) provides a program overview, program objectives, major requirements, degree

requirements (by semester/year), graduation requirements, and course descriptions. For example, the Economics undergraduate program overview in the *Catalog* (pp. 57-58) includes the following statements:

“This program seeks to prepare professionals who can contribute to the transformation of economies in transition in banking, business and the public sector.

“The objective is to offer students an understanding of market-oriented economics. Taking into account the values and needs of the Central Asian economic community, the program emphasizes the issues of economies in transition and development economies.

The program prepares students to effectively address private and public policy problems by teaching them to analyze a wide range of issues from an economic perspective and by proposing appropriate decisions.”

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) program has been designed in compliance with international requirements for the MBA degree. This program, whose mission is “to grow the next generation of business leaders of Central Asia who will build and develop a competitive, transparent and sustainable local business environment, successfully integrated into the global economy,” is for students who want a Western-style graduate education in one year. The program includes four eight-week modules, with at least six courses per module. Students without prior education in business or economics are required to take five eight-week pre-MBA courses in Management, Business Mathematics, English, Economics, and Information Systems. The MBA program is characterized by curriculum intensity; innovation; substantial independent work; interactive methods of teaching; and a balance between theoretical and practical courses. [See the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-09*, pp. 119-125.]

AUCA has devoted considerable attention to identifying course-level learning outcomes; for example, more than 50% of the course syllabi were reviewed last year to ensure that such outcomes were included.

CHALLENGE: The specification of student learning outcomes and the assessment of these outcomes are – and are viewed by U.S. regional accrediting associations as – critically important. While AUCA has fostered faculty attention to course-level learning outcomes, academic program learning outcomes are not as consistently clear as they might be in the program descriptions in the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009*. Identifying program outcomes, offering and developing courses that seek to achieve these program outcomes, and assessing whether the program outcomes actually are achieved will be a continuing challenge for AUCA, as it is for every U.S. college and university.

4. *Awards the bachelor's, master's, or doctor's degree or, if it grants only the associate's degree, includes at least one program leading to a degree in liberal arts or general studies or another area of study widely available at the baccalaureate level of regionally accredited colleges and universities in the United States.*

STATUS: AUCA offers numerous Bachelor of Arts degrees and an MBA degree; all are widely available in CIHE/NEASC-accredited colleges and universities in the United States. AUCA offers no associate's degree.

CHALLENGE: AUCA faces no significant challenge in meeting this requirement. Its current and proposed baccalaureate and master's level programs, traditional liberal arts as well as professional, are in areas of study that are "widely available" in the U.S. colleges; this is true even for those programs focusing specifically on Central Asia.

5. *Has, for each of its educational programs, clearly defined and published objectives appropriate to higher education in level, standards, and quality, as well as the means for achieving them, including a designated course of studies acceptable for meeting degree requirements, adequate guidance to degree candidates in the satisfaction of requirements, and adequate grading or evaluation procedures.*

STATUS: The *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 30-125) includes designated courses of study for meeting degree requirements associated with the MBA degree and each undergraduate degree. In addition, the *Catalog* (pp. 15-27) includes comprehensive guidance for students with regard to the AUCA Code of Conduct, Student Travel Fund, Attendance, Visa Regulations, Military Training Regulations, Registration, Responsibilities and Rights, Classifications and Expectations, Transcripts, General Education Requirements, Grading System, Auditing Courses, Course Repetition, Dismissal, Readmission, Probation, Temporary Suspensions, Academic Leave, Transfer Within AUCA, Transfer From AUCA, Double Major, Minor, and Part-Time Students, President's List and Vice President for Academic Affairs' List, and related topics.

AUCA letter grades and their associated grade points are: A (Excellent) (4.00); A- (Excellent) (3.67); B+ (Good) (3.33); B (Good) (3.00); B- (Good) (2.67); ...; D- (Poor) (0.67); and F (Failure) (0.00). Other grades include W (Withdrawal), I (Incomplete), X (Unsatisfactory – student dropped from course by instructor), P (Pass, but with no grade points), and AU (Audit). Additional information relating to AUCA grading procedures is found in the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 22-25).

CHALLENGE: As noted in the CHALLENGE part of the response to requirement #3, it is difficult to find "clearly defined and published" objectives for all AUCA programs in the *Catalog*. Even though they may exist, they need to be publicly available.

6. *Awards only degrees appropriate to each graduate's level of attainment.*

STATUS: AUCA has a scrupulous diploma monitoring system. The institution awards only degrees appropriate to each graduate's level of attainment, as confirmed through the institution's advising system and certified by the Registrar. The *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 28-30) specifies the requirements (e.g., number and appropriateness of credit hours, cumulative GPA, successful passage of TOEFL and other exams and/or defense of senior thesis) that a student must complete to receive the Bachelor of Arts degree and Kyrgyz State Diploma.

Occasionally, AUCA awards an honorary degree, following approval by the AUCA Board of Trustees.

CHALLENGE: AUCA may want to introduce periodic audits of its diploma monitoring system in order to ensure the continued integrity of the grading system (for example, as this relates to determining whether students receive Bachelor of Arts degrees with honors).

AUCA also may wish to affirm more clearly (e.g., in its catalog) that its Academic Senate has approved all degree requirements.

7. *Offers its instructional programs entirely or predominantly through coursework that includes face-to-face instruction.*

STATUS: All courses offered by AUCA in its undergraduate programs, MBA program, and Supporting Programs are offered only through face-to-face instruction, unless a rare exception is authorized by a program chair.

CHALLENGE: Currently, AUCA faces no challenge in addressing this requirement in its candidacy application. However, as AUCA continues (appropriately) to explore ways in which it can more effectively and broadly serve its potential constituencies throughout Central Asia, greater attention will need to be given to ensure the high quality of whatever e-learning is implemented.

8. *Uses English as a principal language of instruction and operation, sufficient to permit an evaluation by the Commission and to ensure the ability of its graduates to continue their education in other regionally accredited U.S. institutions.*

STATUS: Currently, English is a principal language of instruction and operation at AUCA; however, its use in instruction must increase. [Russian also is a significant language of instruction at AUCA, with relevant courses offered in Kyrgyz as well.] As President Hurwitz reported to the AUCA Board at its February 2007 meeting, "just over 54% of our courses are so taught (including courses on the English Language itself)." However, at this same meeting, the AUCA Board approved a motion stating that "English become the primary language of instruction in the University by 2009-2010, with at least 80% of all

courses being taught in English.” This Board action, together with other actions taken by the AUCA Board, administration, and Academic Senate during the first half of 2007 (see below), demonstrate an unequivocal commitment to ensuring, within the next two years, that most AUCA (non-language) courses will be taught in English.

In the 2006-2007 academic year, as reported by AUCA Vice President for Academic Affairs Batyk Beshimov at the June 2007 Board meeting, 40.5% of full-time faculty members taught in English, compared to 34.3% in the 2005-2006 academic year. He also reported in June 2007 that, “with the exception of faculty in the language programs, the Arts and Recreational Sports Program, the Natural Sciences and Information Technologies Program, and the Preparatory Program, 50% of local, full-time degree program faculty members teach in English.”

Increasing the percentage of courses taught in English and the percentage of faculty who teach in English is a priority objective for AUCA and its Board of Trustees. At its February 2007 meeting, for example, the Board approved a motion that “Faculty will not be eligible for promotion or merit pay unless they have achieved sufficient English capacity to conduct classes or they have agreed with the Vice President of Academic Affairs on a program by which they will be teaching in English by 2010 or the VPAA determines a specific exemption [e.g., teaching a Russian Language course].” At that same meeting, the Board also approved the motion “All new and renewed [faculty] contracts must contain the following provisions: (a) the employee recognizes that the University is committed to use English as its language of instruction and (b) if the employee is not sufficiently proficient [in English], he/she will commit to acquiring proficiency within 2 years.”

As a follow-up to these February 2007 Board actions, VPAA Beshimov reported at the June 2007 Board meeting that each faculty member to which the February 2007 English language instruction motions apply has agreed to an individual professional development plan that specifies when that faculty member will begin teaching in English (no later than 2009-2010) and how he/she will improve his/her English instruction capability (e.g., Summer School or internship abroad).

Not all AUCA faculty have enthusiastically endorsed these English instruction transition actions. In order to motivate and stimulate faculty members to make this transition to instruction in English, the AUCA administration is implementing several steps, including increasing salary levels for faculty members who make this transition and offering labor contracts for longer periods (e.g., 3-5 years) to such faculty. For example, at the June 2007 AUCA Board meeting, following AUCA Academic Senate approval, the Board approved a new Employee Handbook that specifies that “[t]he contract duration for **full-time local faculty**” is as follows:

- 1 year for incoming faculty who are able to teach in English;

- 3 years for faculty members who have at least 3 years of AUCA teaching experience, and who are able to teach in English; and
- 5 years for faculty members who have at least 5 years of AUCA teaching experience, have made a significant contribution to the development of AUCA, and are able to teach in English.

“The policy on contract terms is applicable to all new contracts. Exceptions to the policy on the ability to teach in English will be considered for those faculty members who have taught at AUCA for more than 5 years and have made significant contributions to its development. Such exceptions must be recommended by the program/department chairs and approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.” [Note: such exemptions will be limited to the circumstances identified in this and the two previous paragraphs.]

While most AUCA staff are able to communicate successfully in English, another institutional priority is to ensure that English is the principal language used in university operations and administration, especially among those staff whose responsibilities involve communicating with students and external constituencies (e.g., admission, registration, development, and human resources). Although staff English language transition may not occur as rapidly as faculty English language transition (e.g., staff salaries fall short of market-parity for English-speaking staff), the AUCA leadership is committed to exploring ways (e.g., external funding) to address this challenge.

All materials prepared by AUCA and submitted to CIHE/NEASC as part of the AUCA application for candidate status will be written in English. Likewise, all supporting documents provided to the Commission evaluators of the AUCA application will be available in English. These documents include the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009*, course syllabi, planning documents, personnel handbooks, financial statements, marketing brochures, and other promotional materials.

CHALLENGE: The many challenges facing AUCA in responding to this requirement are discussed in depth above. This requirement is an area to which CIHE/NEASC will give a great deal of attention in its communications with and visits to AUCA. Thus, it is critical that all AUCA faculty and staff understand the importance of and rationale for the actions that are being implemented to create an “English language campus” at AUCA.

9. *In addition to study of the areas of specialization proper to its principal educational programs, requires a coherent and substantive program of general education at the postsecondary level, comparable to those offered by institutions in the United States, as either a prerequisite to or a clearly defined element in those programs; documents a commitment and resource base sufficient to facilitate students’ achievement of the goals of general education.*

STATUS: Current general education requirements to earn an AUCA Bachelor of Arts degree are found in the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (pp. 21-22). [See, also, the comments in response to eligibility requirement #3 above.]

During the 2007-2008 academic year, AUCA will continue its ongoing review and reform of the current general education requirements for undergraduate degrees to ensure that these requirements provide an integrated, coherent, and substantive curricular and intellectual foundation for such degree programs.

Because AUCA has an American-style curriculum, its students are expected to learn how to carry out critical inquiry, express in written form their own ideas with supporting documentation, and think independently. If the general education requirements are to provide the requisite foundation for all undergraduate degree programs, access to diverse and up-to-date instructional (e.g., library and computing) resources is important.

The AUCA Library provides students and faculty with these resources. Through the Library, for example, students and faculty have access to

- “more than 75,000 titles, more than 40 periodicals, and hundreds of audio, video, and CD-ROM titles”; and
- “an online catalog and online databases and search engines including EBSCO, Oxford Reference Online, and Springer, and more than 2,400 journals.” [See the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* (p. 6).]

AUCA also recognizes, though, that it needs to improve the Library’s “physical space to alleviate chronic student overcrowding and to provide more shelf space for its growing collection. The construction of an extension to the present [Library] building is proposed for 2008-2009, subject to external funding. Technology for access to electronic books for users ... will be implemented along with the widening of collections, particularly in electronic and multi-media resources. The Library’s [annual] operating budget will increase from \$54K to \$150K [in Kyrgyz currency] over the five-year period [2007-2012] to reflect an increase in spending on these needs.” [See the May 2007 “AUCA Five-Year Financial Plan: 2007-2012,” p. 9.]

CHALLENGE: AUCA’s general education program as a whole should be mission-driven. While many general education courses have well-articulated goals and learning outcomes, the goals and learning outcomes of the general education program as a whole need to be more coherent and more integrated. Moreover, these goals and outcomes need to be better articulated and disseminated in AUCA print materials and on the AUCA website – and in the AUCA accreditation submissions to CIHE/NEASC. Yet another challenge associated with the current general education program is the relatively small percentage of courses taught in English. Given the numerous program-related responsibilities of AUCA faculty and administrators in the coming year, however,

the relative priority of the continuing general education program redesign with respect to other faculty-intensive program responsibilities must be clear.

The CIHE/NEASC website documents suggest a few topics that might be addressed in the AUCA “Report of Eligibility.” For example, AUCA may wish to note the percentage of AUCA faculty who are teaching at least one course during 2007-2008 that satisfies a general education requirement. Also, in addressing AUCA’s “resource base sufficient to facilitate students’ achievement of the goals of general education,” the AUCA report may wish both to affirm the excellent quality of existing classrooms for general education and to outline the institution’s expectations (as identified, for example, in the AUCA facilities plan) for improved physical facilities and resources over the next five years for academic programs generally.

10. *Has adopted a statement specifying the potential students it wishes to serve, and admits qualified students to its programs under admission policies consistent with this statement and appropriate to those programs.*

STATUS: At its November 1-2, 2007 meeting, the AUCA Board of Trustees will act on the new five-year AUCA institutional strategic plan (2007-2012). This proposed plan states in its “Learning” section that

“[AUCA] will have the best international student body in Central Asia, who read, write, and study primarily in English and who actively pursue their curricular and extra-curricular life in the process of becoming the future leaders of the region.”

AUCA intends to achieve this profile of its student body through improved admission and retention strategies, as well as more broadly through the development and implementation of an enrollment management framework that emphasizes international student enrollment and addresses all phases in the “student life cycle” from marketing and outreach through recruitment, admission, financial aid, retention, graduation, and alumni engagement. A critical element of this framework is the planned construction of an international student and faculty residence hall; resolution of final construction site and funding issues should be resolved by early 2008.

CHALLENGE: Although the AUCA strategic plan statement cited in the above STATUS section addresses the matter of potential AUCA students, this matter needs greater clarity and emphasis in AUCA outreach and communication materials. Perhaps an expanded statement might be included in the catalog statement of AUCA’s admission objectives and policies, for example. Increasing transparency in the entire recruitment, admission, retention, and graduation process, combined with clearer statements about the students that AUCA wishes to serve, should enable the institution to more fully achieve its mission.

11. *Has students enrolled in and pursuing its principal educational programs at the time of the Commission's evaluation.*

STATUS: In fall 2007, each of the AUCA degree programs (11 undergraduate and MBA) has both new and continuing students enrolled and pursuing the respective degrees. This pattern of enrollment has existed every semester for several years and is expected to continue throughout the time of the CIHE/NEASC evaluation of AUCA's application for candidacy status.

CHALLENGE: AUCA faces no challenge addressing this requirement. It would be useful in its response to this requirement to provide detailed information about fall 2007 student enrollment, e.g., total enrollment, as well as enrollment by gender, country of origin, student classification, full-time vs. part-time status, etc. In addition, information might be provided on key enrollment trends, short-term and long-term.

12. *Has available to students and the public a current and accurate website and catalog or comparable official publication setting forth purposes and objectives, entrance requirements and procedures, rules and regulations for student conduct, programs and courses, degree completion requirements, full-time and part-time faculty and degrees held, costs, refunds, and other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution.*

STATUS: The *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* is the official current publication setting forth purposes and objectives, entrance requirements and procedures, rules and regulations for student conduct, programs and courses, degree completion requirements, faculty and staff and their degrees held, student tuition for 2007-2008, student financial aid requirements and procedures, institutional history and partners, institutional mission, academic calendars, grading system, and other items related to attending or withdrawing from AUCA. The catalog is revised, updated, and published every two years.

The AUCA website www.auca.kg also is current and accurate and contains all information found in the most recent catalog. The public has full access to print and website versions of the catalog.

CHALLENGE: A challenge for AUCA, as for other colleges and universities, is ensuring that statements of policies and procedures remain current, accurately reflecting what actually occurs throughout all units of the institution. Accordingly, regular reviews should be conducted of AUCA statements relating to such areas as entrance requirements, codes of conduct, faculty qualifications, costs of attendance and refunds, and withdrawal and readmission. [For example, perhaps the *AUCA Catalog: 2007-2009* might include information regarding the part-time or full-time status of listed faculty.]

13. *Has a charter and/or other formal authority from the appropriate government agency authorizing it to grant all degrees it awards; has the necessary operating authority for each jurisdiction in which it conducts its activities, and is operating within its authority. If the institution is not legally eligible for local government approval, it otherwise documents its standing and significant support from the local community and other relevant communities of interest.*

STATUS: On April 6, 1993, the Kyrgyz State National University (KSNU) dean signed a decree that opened the Kyrgyz-American School (KAS) within KSNU. Under the leadership of Dean Camilla Sharshekeeva, KAS experienced dramatic growth during its first four years. As a result of a decree signed by President Akaev of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1997, KAS officially became the American University in Kyrgyzstan (AUK); this decree followed the signing earlier that year of a memorandum of understanding between the Kyrgyz government, the United States Department of State, and the Open Society Institute. President Akaev's decree establishing AUK was solemnized in a ceremony on November 12, 1997, after which the University began to take on more aspects of US universities, including governance by an independent, international Board of Trustees.

Within the next five years, AUK was increasingly admired internationally as a university based on the American liberal arts tradition of free and critical inquiry and serving all of Central Asia. As a result of this international reputation, on December 11, 2002, President Akaev presented a certificate to the AUK President, David Huwiler, approving a change in the institution's name to the American University – Central Asia (AUCA) (a name that previously had been authorized by the AUK/AUCA Board of Trustees).

During 2007, AUCA reorganized its legal office and hired its first full-time attorney, one of whose first priorities was rewriting and reregistering the AUCA Charter to reflect compliance with the legislative base of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education, the national labor code, and Kyrgyz education laws. This new Charter has been approved by the AUCA Board of Trustees and by the Kyrgyz Ministry of Justice. These actions ensure that AUCA has the necessary and appropriate formal authority from the Kyrgyz government to operate legally, including awarding degrees.

Since 2002, students completing their studies in any of AUCA's educational programs and passing the final state attestation (the latter includes state exams in English Language, the History of Kyrgyzstan, and academic disciplines appropriate to students' programs of study) receive simultaneously an American-style Bachelor of Arts diploma and a Kyrgyz State Diploma (awarded by AUCA on behalf of the Kyrgyz government).

AUCA conducts its instructional and related activities in one location, namely, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. In this jurisdiction, AUCA has formal authority from the Kyrgyz government to grant its degrees and conduct all its other activities.

CHALLENGE: With its recent actions to redesign and reregister its Charter, AUCA should face no challenge with respect to this requirement.

14. Has sufficient organizational and operational independence to be held accountable for meeting the Commission's standards.

STATUS: AUCA clearly has sufficient organizational and operational independence to be held accountable for meeting the CIHE/NEASC standards. Beginning in 1997 with its establishment as AUK, AUCA has had and continues to have an independent and international Board of Trustees, which carries out its responsibilities independent from Kyrgyz and U.S. government interference.

CHALLENGE: Currently, AUCA is in the final stages of its program re-attestation process with the Kyrgyz government; in addition, in fall 2008 AUCA must renew its government-issued license to operate as an approved institution of higher education. Since AUCA is taking particular care to ensure that these government processes do not compromise its commitment to the CIHE/NEASC standards, these developments should not negatively affect AUCA's application for candidacy status.

15. Has a governing board that includes representation reflecting the public interest that oversees the institution, working to assure the fulfillment of its mission and advance the institution's level of quality; assures that fewer than one-half of the board members have any financial interest in the institution, including as employee, stock-holder, or corporate director.

STATUS: The AUCA Board of Trustees, which has existed for about 10 years, has become increasingly independent, sophisticated, and focused on policy development during this period. The Board is authorized to have up to 15 members; currently, the Board consists of 13 Trustees.

All Board terms are for three years; reappointment of Trustees is possible. Board members conduct annual self-reviews (which address possible conflicts of interest), followed by feedback from the Board chair and the chair of the Nominations and Trusteeship Committee. Third-year review of Board service is based on self-reviews and also peer review; the results of these reviews determine reappointment to a second Board term. Subsequent third-year reviews are increasingly stringent; Board member beyond two terms is rare. The same procedure applies to Trustee appointments as chairs of any of the seven Board committees, which include Academic Policy, Standards and Accreditation; Development; Nominations and Trusteeship; Finance and Planning; Marketing and Enrollment; Legal Affairs; and Executive Committee.

All members of the AUCA Board of Trustees represent the public interest; Trustee nominations are reviewed by the Board's Nominations and Trusteeship Committee, then considered and, as appropriate, approved by the full Board.

CHALLENGE: AUCA should face no challenge in meeting this requirement.

16. *Has a chief executive officer, appointed by and responsible to the governing board, whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution and who possesses the requisite authority.*

STATUS: The AUCA President is appointed by and is responsible to the AUCA Board of Trustees. The President has Board-delegated authority on and full-time responsibility for all matters except those prohibited in the AUCA Charter and By-Laws, with an understanding that expense variance over a certain amount requires Board approval. Dr. Ellen Hurwitz, former President of New England College and of Albright College, is the third and current AUCA President; she assumed this position on February 1, 2005.

CHALLENGE: AUCA should face no challenge in meeting this requirement.

17. *Has faculty sufficient in number, qualifications, and experience to support the academic program offered, including an adequate number of faculty whose time commitment to the institution is sufficient to assure the accomplishment of class and out-of-class responsibilities essential to the fulfillment of institutional mission and purposes.*

STATUS/CHALLENGE: The consultant has not had an opportunity to adequately assess the extent to which AUCA meets this requirement.

18. *Has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience, to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purposes.*

STATUS/CHALLENGE: The consultant has not had an opportunity to adequately assess the extent to which AUCA meets this requirement.

19. *Has an administration, faculty, and professional staff who collectively have significant experience in American higher education and are prepared to ensure the institution meets the Standards for Accreditation.*

STATUS/CHALLENGE: The consultant has not had an opportunity to adequately assess the extent to which AUCA meets this requirement.

20. *Devotes all, or substantially all, of its gross income to the support of its educational purposes and programs.*

STATUS: All AUCA gross income is devoted to the support of the institution's educational purposes and programs.

The AUCA operating budget for 2007-2008, as approved by the AUCA Board in June 2007 and denominated in Kyrgyz currency (soms), shows projected revenues of \$3,488,400 and projected expenses of \$3,483,455. All projected expenses are associated with AUCA instruction (\$1,605,390), AUCA student services (\$94,300), AUCA institutional support (\$1,611,565), or AUCA physical plant (\$172,200).

The AUCA endowment as of the end of March 2007 totals \$18,488,833; primary funding to create this endowment was provided in 2005 by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (US\$10 million) and the Open Society Institute (OSI) (US\$5 million).

CHALLENGE: AUCA should face no challenge in responding to this requirement.

21. Documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to carry out its stated purposes.

STATUS: The AUCA Board of Trustees, President, and senior administration have given serious and ongoing attention to the development the funding base, financial resources, and financial plans necessary to achieve the institution's mission.

At its June 2007 meeting, the AUCA Board of Trustees reviewed the updated (May 2007) "AUCA Five-Year Financial Plan: 2007-2012," prepared by the AUCA senior officers. Quoting from this document's purpose, this updated financial plan "is designed to take the University to the next level in international enrollments, curricular and research design, and institutional planning in order to attract and retain an excellent international faculty and student body worthy of donor support and U.S. accreditation. The University is proud of the investments received from the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the United States and Kyrgyz governments. It now seeks to diversity its donor base and to enhance its tuition revenues such that it can address critical space shortages and curriculum development essential for its maturation. Appended to this document is this current AUCA financial plan.

Also reviewed at the June 2007 AUCA Board meeting was the updated (February 2007) "AUCA Facilities Master Plan." Among the topics addressed by this updated facilities plan are facilities progress since July 2006, space utilization and scheduling, priorities for action in spring and summer 2007, new building projects (international residence hall and an annex to the AUCA library building), and campus development generally.

CHALLENGE: AUCA's financial reports (including operating budgets and endowment reports), audited financial statements (from a highly regarded international firm familiar with U.S. higher education institutions), and newly

updated five-year financial plan position well the institution to respond to this requirement. A key issue for AUCA to address in its response will be the feasibility of the projected revenues in the AUCA financial plan

22. *Has financial records that relate clearly to the institution's educational activities and has these records externally audited annually; if auditing procedures differ from those generally used in the United States, provides financial records reconciled to accounting practices common to American higher education.*

STATUS: AUCA financial records relate clearly and fully to the institution's educational activities.

At its June 2007 meeting, the AUCA Board approved engagement of Deloitte & Touche as the AUCA auditor for 2007-2008; this external auditor is very familiar with audits of higher education institutions and uses procedures similar to those used in U.S. colleges and universities.

At its February 2007 meeting, the AUCA Board was informed that AUCA had received a clean audit from Deloitte & Touche for 2006-2007, with the exception of a land valuation issue. In response to that exception, AUCA hired a local appraiser to perform an appraisal of the land in question, and this report was then sent to Deloitte & Touche for review during its 2007-2008 audit of AUCA.

CHALLENGE: AUCA should face no challenge in responding to this requirement.

23. *Has graduated at least one class in its principal educational programs before the Commission's evaluation for accredited status. If the institution has graduated its first class not more than one year before the Commission's evaluation, the effective date of accreditation will be the date of graduation of that first class.*

STATUS/CHALLENGE: AUCA clearly meets this requirement. However, the consultant has not had an opportunity to obtain detailed data on the numbers of degrees awarded in each program during each of the 10 years in which AUCA (and its predecessor, AUK) has existed.

ATTACHMENT B.
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY – CENTRAL ASIA (AUCA)
PRELIMINARY TIMELINE/ACTION PLAN
FOR ACHIEVING CIHE/NEASC ACCREDITATION
Prepared by Kenneth Tolo
September 30, 2007

As demonstrated in **ATTACHMENT A**, AUCA is well-positioned to initiate immediately the multi-year process to be accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). This CIHE/NEASC accreditation process is significantly more challenging and extensive for institutions such as AUCA that have not previously been accredited by the Commission, however. Such an institution first must be granted candidate status by CIHE/NEASC (i.e., named an affiliate of CIHE/NEASC); after candidate status is granted, the institution may seek accreditation.

Following is a **preliminary** timeline/action plan that identifies key accreditation-related actions and dates to which AUCA must give its priority attention during the next 3-5 years to achieve, first, candidate status and, then, accreditation. This timeline/action plan will need regular monitoring and updating to reflect not only CIHE/NEASC actions relating to AUCA's accreditation initiative but also the commitment that AUCA administrators, faculty, and staff have made to carry out other important institutional planning and implementation processes (e.g., strategic planning, enrollment planning, financial planning, academic program improvement, Kyrgyz Ministry of Education re-attestation of AUCA academic programs). The comprehensive institutional development underway at AUCA creates extraordinary opportunities – but it also creates extraordinary challenges for AUCA that require the institution to integrate and to set priorities among the actions and steps associated with all these processes, including accreditation.

It is critically important to emphasize the **preliminary** nature of this accreditation timeline/action plan – it must be regularly reviewed and adapted by President Hurwitz and the AUCA community to ensure that projected dates and actions reflect not only institutional priorities but also AUCA and CIHE/NEASC realities. For example, this preliminary timeline/action plan presupposes that AUCA will be able to find someone to serve as its “Accreditation Coordinator”; that AUCA will obtain the funding to cover all the costs associated with its first-time accreditation by CIHE/NEASC, including the travel costs for all CIHE/NEASC team visits to AUCA and the cost of employing the AUCA “Accreditation Coordinator”; and that the required visits of Commission teams and the Commission director to AUCA can be planned and carried out in a timely manner, given the schedules of these CIHE/NEASC representatives.

The preliminary AUCA accreditation timeline/action plan outlined below is presented in terms of the two phases of this accreditation process: Phase One includes the projected actions and dates through the decision by CIHE/NEASC to grant AUCA candidate status; and Phase Two covers (in a highly preliminary way) the subsequent actions and dates through the CIHE/NEASC decision to grant AUCA full accreditation.

PHASE ONE

2007-2008

- October – **AUCA President Hurwitz submits AUCA “Report of Eligibility”** to CIHE/NEASC for staff review and comment; this report provides detailed information documenting how AUCA meets CIHE/NEASC *Requirements of Affiliation of Free Standing Institutions Abroad* (23 requirements); submission includes letter of intent from President Hurwitz informing Commission that AUCA seeks candidate status and that AUCA Board of Trustees has authorized such a request
- November 1-2 – **AUCA Board of Trustees meeting**: discussion of AUCA’s new mission statement, values statement, and strategic plan, plus President Hurwitz’ submission to CIHE/NEASC requesting approval to apply for candidate status [*Reports on AUCA actions to achieve candidate status and then accreditation will occur at each subsequent Board meeting until AUCA gains accreditation*]
- December-January – Proposed **visit of CIHE/NEASC director to AUCA** to assess AUCA’s preparedness to apply for candidate status (unconfirmed)
- Winter-Spring – **AUCA Board of Trustees and President Hurwitz identify funding for the entire accreditation process (initial estimate: US\$300,000)**
- Winter-Spring – **Visit to AUCA by CIHE/NEASC “Eligibility Team”** appointed by CIHE/NEASC director; purpose of team’s visit is to validate information in “Report of Eligibility”; after visit, team submits report and recommendation to Commission regarding whether AUCA should be invited to submit a formal application for candidate status (i.e., for affiliation)
- Winter-Spring – **President Hurwitz appoints AUCA “Accreditation Coordinator”**; likely necessary to recruit someone from outside AUCA who has familiarity with U.S. accreditation requirements and expectations; person’s initial responsibilities include preparing and beginning to implement multi-year AUCA institutional plan/process (consistent with CIHE/NEASC requirements) to achieve candidate status (Phase One) and then full accreditation (Phase Two)
- Winter-Spring – AUCA team responsible for leading campus accreditation process attends **Central European University (CEU) intensive course on the preparation of an institutional self study**; per President Hurwitz, OSI Higher Education Support Program has agreed to fund AUCA staff development at CEU, as well as related travel costs;
- Winter-Spring – **Proposed engagement of U.S. accreditation consultant** to assist AUCA in development of AUCA accreditation plan/process to coincide with AUCA Board of Trustees meeting (February 22-23)

- Spring – AUCA Vice President for Academic Affairs participation in accreditation self study workshop at Association of American International Colleges and Universities (AAICU) meeting in Cairo (April)
- Spring-Fall (2008) – CIHE/NEASC accepts AUCA “Report of Eligibility” and “Eligibility Team” report of visit to AUCA; **Commission invites AUCA to apply formally for candidate status**
- Spring-Fall (2008) – **President Hurwitz submits AUCA’s “Candidacy Self Study”** to CIHE/NEASC for staff review and comment; self study includes updated “Report of Eligibility,” plus how AUCA meets accreditation standards

2008-2009

- Summer-Fall-Winter – **CIHE/NEASC director appoints “Evaluation Committee,” which visits AUCA** to validate information in “Candidacy Self Study”; after visit, team submits report to Commission assessing eligibility of AUCA for candidate status and its potential for attaining accreditation
- Fall-Winter-Spring – CIHE/NEASC accepts AUCA “Candidacy Self Study” and “Evaluation Committee” report/recommendations; **COMMISSION GRANTS AUCA CANDIDATE STATUS**

PHASE TWO

2008-2009

- Summer-Fall-Winter-Spring-Summer – After submission of its “Candidacy Self Study” in spring 2008, AUCA and its “Accreditation Coordinator” **update accreditation plan/process to focus on preparing accreditation self study and other requirements for achieving full accreditation**
- Fall-Winter – **Proposed engagement of U.S. accreditation consultant** to assist AUCA in development of updated AUCA accreditation plan/process

2009-2010

- Summer-Fall-Winter-Spring-Summer – Continue **accreditation self study** work
- Spring – **AUCA annual report** to CIHE/NEASC; such a report is required for all candidate institutions and all accredited institutions in spring of each year

2010-2011 *(project dates for this academic year are very preliminary)*

- Fall-Winter – **AUCA submits accreditation self study** to CIHE/NEASC
- Fall-Winter-Spring – **CIHE/NEASC director appoints “Site Visit Team”** to visit and evaluate AUCA; team prepares report/recommendations for Commission
- Spring-Fall – **CIHE/NEASC GRANTS AUCA FULL ACCREDITATION**