Transformation toward a World-Class University (WCU): Actions and Prospective in the case of King Abdulaziz University (KAU)

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In the age of information, communication, and knowledge, the world has become increasingly knowledge-based.

Over the years universities have proven their viability, their ability to include change, and their role to create welfare states by providing highly educated professionals and sustaining development and growth through research and innovation.

Universities are confronted with formidable challenges due to focus on total quality, ICTs prolific developments, globalization, competitiveness and increasing expectations of university roles in knowledge societies.

It became imperative that universities have to encounter transformation; must proceed to change and renewal; have shifts to be more responsive; and have to accentuate their capacities to effectively meet their mission.

To perform their envisaged roles, universities may transform into world class universities (WCUs), but have to work hard to acquire the characteristics of the WCUs.
Characteristics of WCUs are proposed in brief, however not exclusively defined:

- Effective and creative leadership.
- Defines the university identity as a future directive.
- Effective recruitment, development of the university intellectual human capital and fostering thinking practices.
- Effectively engage in strategic planning practices.

Proposed Characteristics of WCUs

- Effectively and efficiently manage and utilize all university resources to produce value and achieve synergy.
- Managing knowledge efficiently to expand its potential and application by means of commercialization.
- Fit utilization of the accelerating advances of ICTs.
Proposed Characteristics of WCUs

- Enhance and strengthen progressive academic updated programs.
- Develop and foster more faculty-student engagement.
- Achieve programs accreditations, institutional accreditation, and reaccreditations.
- High quality campus infrastructure to host state-of-the-art facilities and services.

Proposed Characteristics of WCUs

- Provide quality education, advise, and mentorship for students to be ready to assume future responsibilities.
- Expand outreach programs to the community, government and the nation; and build stronger linkages with external partners.
Proposed Characteristics of WCUs

- Enhance entrepreneurship spirit
- Develop the most supportive and equitable environment and culture
- Provide high quality graduate programs for both professional and research degrees
- Continual capacity building and reinvigoration as a pillar for research productivity and sustained development.

As there is no such exclusive definition of WCUs characteristics, it is a good opportunity that this excellent intellect gathering collaborates on refining and defining such characteristics.
King Abdulaziz University (KAU) has been named by the name of the founder of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is a dynamic and expanding higher institution that is aspiring to be a more active agent of change, a value adding institution, a committed citizen to better serve the society, a beacon of knowledge through its educational and research endeavors, and a member of the international innovative and excellence higher education community.

**History of KAU**

- **In 1964** the idea of establishing KAU was first initiated by a group of dedicated citizens.
- **In 1967**, KAU was founded as a private higher education institution.
- **In 1973**, it became a public institution due to the need for public funding for expansion to satisfy the societal needs.
King AbdulAziz University

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

KAU in Numbers (2009)

- (28) Faculties / Colleges.
- (50980) Undergraduate Students
- (4,198) graduate Students
- (5,810) International undergraduate &
  graduate Students
- (21059) Male Students
- (29921) Female Students
KAU in Numbers (2009)

- (2213) Ph.D faculty members.
- (811) International Ph.D faculty members.
- (2381) Lecturers & Teaching Assistants
- (944) Teaching staff on scholarship abroad.
- (73) Teaching staff on local scholarship.
- (4000) Administrative, medical & technical staff.
- (11) Independent Deanships.
- (8) Research Centers of Excellence.
- (8) Research Centers.
- (7) Functional Centers.

KAU Faculty Members

- (2220) Saudi Ph.D Faculty Members (30%)
- (2381) Demonstrators & Lecturers (52%)
- (811) International Ph.D Faculty Members (18%)

King AbdulAziz University
Six years ago, KAU has started its challenge to transform to a quality higher education institution in the age of information and knowledge.

- By that time, many indicators had made the evidence clear that KAU educational and research subsystems, performance quality, and ability to innovate are inadequate to meet the challenge and irrelevant to fulfill the promise.
- KAU had charted its first strategic plan which had reflected the vision and goals that were far to reach and had required dramatic functional, structural, and cultural changes.

KAU has chosen to be a multi-faceted hybrid university. It has maintained its traditional identity as a comprehensive university while emphasizing new facets as research, electronic, thinking and entrepreneurship.

Vice-Presidency for Development (VPD) has been established.

KAU has drawn heavily on the experiences and best-practices of highly reputed universities, and professional higher education associations and organizations, while adopting and adapting what could fit as we recon that KAU requires to build its own equation depending on customized approaches.
Actions & Challenges to Shift KAU to WCU

- **capacity building of faculty members.**
  In 2008/2009, (102) training programs had been organized, (78) programs attended by (2350) faculty members by the Center for Teaching and Learning Development (CTLD)

  (24) training programs attended by (600) faculty members in the context of the initiative for Innovation and Excellence Programs (IEP) half of such programs were organized by universities abroad.

- (1286) of the administrative and technical staff had attended training programs.

- **KAU has embarked largely on electronic and distance learning based mainly on multimedia-rich technologies. The system has started in 2006 and soon the system will be backed with satellite interactive TV channel.**
KAU has utilized the concepts of electronic management in all its administrative departments, services, procedures, and information.

KAU has provided many services electronically through introducing the system of On Demand University Services (ODUS) that has been utilized through KAU Intranet.

Electronic version of course portfolios is being developed as a tool for effective teaching and learning.
KAU is moving steadily on the ICTs track. Faculty members, students, researchers, and administrators are becoming more ICTs dependent.

Think Tank Groups (TTGs) represent a technique which is expected to expand at KAU to generate creative ideas, initiatives, new solutions.

One main area of concentration has been Quality and External Accreditation where 36 academic programs have been externally accredited and some are reaccredited.

Two adjacent routes for KAU entrepreneurial perspective. The first is through educational entrepreneurship during all years of study. The second is business entrepreneurship where KAU encourages and supports its graduates to have enterprise start-ups and incubators.

Collaboration with McMaster University at Canada.

An agreement to finance student projects with the Saudi Credit & Saving Bank.
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Aeronautical Engineering, Chemical and Materials Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Mining Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Production Engineering and Mechanical Systems Design, Thermal Engineering and Desalination Technology.

Mineral Resources and Rocks, Hydrogeology, Engineering and Environmental Geology, Petroleum Geology and Sedimentology, Structural Geology and Remote Sensing, Geophysics
As KAU is endeavoring to become a research university

To succeed in the effort of Research Capacity Building:

- Centers for Research Excellence
- Allocating more public funds for research
- Endowment funds for research
- Launching prizes for quality research and publishing
- Facilities for intellectual property and commercialization of research outcomes
- Developing the capabilities of researchers
- Collaborating in research projects locally and internationally
KAU maintains diversity in its faculty members and student bodies with inbound and outbound directions.

(92) agreements with international universities provide a mosaic of activities.

KAU has taken significant steps to have an International Advisory Board (IAB).

**Actions & Challenges to Shift KAU to WCU**

**External Agreement with International University**

- USA & Canada (48) 52%
KAU is to establish a nearby new campus about (35) kilometers to the north of the present location of KAU to absorb the increasing demand and to provide best possible space to teach, learn, innovate, work, and socialize among all categories working at KAU.

• **The First Strategic Plan (2005-2010).**

• The Second Strategic plan (2010-2015), which is presently being carefully crafted.

• Indictors assure that KAU is proceeding in the right direction.

• We believe that through our collaborative efforts our **motto** for the second plan will come true: "**KAU Takes – off**"
Extracted Lessons & Priorities to Transform to WCUs

- Creative and committed university leadership.
- The driving force and foremost priority is to develop and encourage the human capital to meet the challenge and reach their potential.
- Research capacity building, research innovation and productivity, and commercialization of research outcomes.
- Engage in strategic planning and quality practices.
- Enhance teaching and learning, and fostering more faculty member–student interactive engagement.
- Expand outreach programs and entrepreneurship spirit.
- Continuous quest for enhancing university international involvement and participation.