
Strategic Planning for the Development of the University of Thessaly 2022-2025

(Decision of the Rector's Council meeting 168/12-10-2021)

The University of Thessaly (UTH) seeks to preserve and enrich the social good of knowledge, ensuring the right of access of the new generation to it, but at the same time the possibility for the country to choose a new model of development which will systematically and effectively utilize knowledge for the benefit of society. To support the creative forces and the new generation, to transmit ideas and good practices, to produce new knowledge through research, to create networks and positive examples of the utilization of knowledge in the modern environment, composing a new web that connects it with the needs of the country and public policies. The greatest challenge of UTH for the next 4 years is to complete the image of one of the largest Universities in the country and to improve its position internationally.

With reference to the implementation of the goals of the previous strategic plan, during the years 2019-2020, it is noted that the institution:

- successfully completed its certification by the competent committees of Hellenic Authority for Higher Education, as well as the certification of 18 departments,
- launched 17 new departments, of which 13 were already autonomous, and increased the number of postgraduate programs from 35 to 85,
- significantly increased the number of faculty members (from 618 to 689)
- completed the integration of all study programs of the former TEIs of Thessaly and Central Greece, as well as the integration of their administrative and financial services,
- Training and Lifelong Learning Center (KEDIVIM) completed the operational framework and implemented 51 programs within 2 years, with 3400 trainees.
- the "IASON" University Center for Research, Innovation and Development was established, the Structure for Research, Innovation and Excellence (DEKA), and a scholarship system for doctoral studies was established
- the research committee increased the number of research projects,
- in the field of infrastructure, a series of projects were completed such as the building of Electrical Engineering Computers, the auditorium of TEFAA and others.
- The Confucius Institute was established for academic cultural and research collaborations with China.
- Updated the Code of Ethics and established a Protection Code for "Harassment and Bullying" issues»

Our vision is UTH:

- To develop into one of the most productive Universities in the country, with an emphasis on the excellent education of its students, excellence, high-level research, and its decisive contribution to the development of local societies.

- To become recognized internationally for the production, utilization and dissemination of knowledge, as well as its collaborations with the international scientific community.
- To intensify efforts in the direction of expanding and strengthening autonomy with the immediate goal of getting rid of the suffocating bureaucracy.
- To complete the restructuring of the academic and administrative structure, the expansion of its research horizons, and the quality upgrade of the teaching work, thus transforming the UTH into a large-scale higher educational institution of the country.
- To strengthen the finances and to complete the infrastructure for housing all the Departments and its services.
- To improve the quality indicators of all administrative units of the institution, and the indicators of its teaching, research and social work. To strengthen the environment of incentives and excellence to attract highly trained scientists and utilize strong research teams. To develop motivational strategies for students, teachers and administrative employees. To consolidate stable and decent working conditions for all categories of personnel.

The realization of the vision for the development of the Foundation requires that the strategy and goal setting consider a series of components that affect the educational and research function of it and its academic units respectively and are analyzed in the environmental PEST analysis and the mapping of the existing situation of the SWOT Analysis, which follow:

I. PEST analysis

A. Political component:

1. Continuous change of the educational institutional framework: The continuous change of the educational policy by the administration of each Ministry of Education brings instability to the educational system, with direct effects on the strategic planning of the Institutions.
2. Public funding: Institutions' dependence on public funding of higher education is high and very often its distribution is based on irrational criteria, which lead to difficulties.
3. Number of undergraduate students: The policy of the Ministry in recent years with a continuous increase in the number of undergraduate students in Universities without following rational criteria such as infrastructure, teacher/teacher ratio, credits according to the number of students, etc., creates problems in operation.

B. Economic component

1. Economic recession: The economic recession observed in the country for many years affects decision-making both at the macro-economic level (e.g., financing of Higher Education) and at the micro-economic level (e.g., family budget, which has an impact on students' choice of Faculty of study)

2. Labor market: The connection of studies with the labor market is a strong motivation for choosing the field of education of the students and a dominant goal of the Institutions. Achieving this connection and economic growth so that there is absorption in Greece will be a strong career prospect compared to overseas markets and will keep graduates in the country.

C. Social component

1. Obtaining a higher education degree is considered an important tool for success in the modern world, but also a key component of social advancement for the Greek reality. The offering of higher education degrees by Private Colleges, following the granting of the right to award equivalent professional degrees, can increase citizens' interest in these colleges, considering that admission to these private educational institutions will be easier than it is to universities. This fact affects public Universities and is a threat that must be resolved.

2. Professional qualifications: Also, professional certifications from various bodies (such as CFA and ACCA) that are increasingly recognized by big business may further reduce interest in graduate studies.

E. Technological component

1. Offer alternatives: The quality of online education resources is improving rapidly and in many cases is free. This prompts many high school graduates to skip further education to pursue online learning, which dramatically affects the traditional higher education sector in Greece and Europe. Institutions should adapt in the best possible way to the new conditions and improve the provided online services and education solutions in order to attract students.

2. Extensive use of ICT to improve the educational process: Due to the rapid improvement of technology capabilities (eg, Applications) many physical and intellectual resources are shared among the various functions and activities of universities. The use of new technologies supports the educational process, for lectures, informative material in targeted fields of interest of students/stakeholders.

3. New and emerging technologies: There is a rapid development of new technologies and technological applications for industrial and other use, such as industry 4.0, 3D printing, augmented reality technologies VR, Internet of Things (IoT), CAD systems -CAM, remote sensing technologies using drones, sensors, etc. which academic units should adapt to their operation to achieve the best result in the learning process.

II. Foundation SWOT Analysis

INTERIOR ENVIRONMENT	EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its considerable size and spatial scope in five cities make it the largest University in Central Greece. • The scope of the cognitive objects that it treats with a mainly applied character. • Certified and certified 18 study programs. • The growing number of high-quality scientific personnel • The strong academic identity and distinct personality through the continuous development of the scientific work of the teaching and research staff. • The ability to provide high-level education and research through the self-financing of education to a large extent from research programs and studies that are/have been implemented. • His rise in the international rankings. • High research performance with a positive sign in the bibliometric bases of the published work and the reports of the teaching and research staff. • The existence and the possibility of developing synergies and collaborations with other Institutions in Greece and abroad in matters of research, teaching and connection with the labor market. • Code of Ethics and establishment of a Protection Code for matters of "Harassment and Intimidation" 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploitation of the geomorphological position of the Thessalian plain with a remarkable comparative advantage, for the promotion of Agricultural and Agro-Technological Sciences, as well as Veterinary Medicine. • Focus on individual areas such as Biochemistry, Informatics with applications in Biomedicine, which are cutting edge sciences for the future • Convergence of quality standards and greater integration in the Single Area of higher education at European level. • Alignment of the Foundation's operation with the requirements of the goals for sustainable development - effort to reduce its environmental footprint, implementation of management systems for effective and efficient use of resources and minimization of risks • Utilization of European and national resources to strengthen research, teaching and infrastructure. • Expanding international collaborations with institutions and attracting valuable scientific potential • Utilization of funding for the reopening of the Career Office



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a Teaching and Learning Support Office • Structure PROSVASIS • Center of Excellence DEKA (Research, Innovation and Excellence Structure) • PEK IASON with ..Institutes 	
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of modern, flexible and interoperable administrative organization - need to reform the Organization • Inadequate number of teachers - maintenance of the disproportionate proportion of students / teachers that characterizes Greek Universities • Low percentage of women among teachers - a general condition in Greece remains one of the lowest in the EU. • Lack of student housing infrastructure - need for student accommodation and sports infrastructure • Lack of infrastructure for classrooms, laboratories, administration areas, offices. • Lack of graduate tracking structure • The increase in the number of students with more than n+2 years of study due to the merger with the former TEIs • Low graduation rate • Lack of sufficient and specialized administrative staff in central administration services • Limited utilization of relationships and interaction with society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growing intervention of the state in the operation of Universities • The ever-decreasing state funding while at the same time the student population is increasing • The constant institutional changes in the legislative framework within which the organization is required to operate, economically-socially-technologically, which makes it difficult for it to act independently • Need for a modern institutional framework • The leakage of valuable scientific personnel abroad due to financial difficulties. • The acceleration of the pace of changes at a scientific, economic, technological and social level that forms a new demand regarding the education of students and the research conducted • The great development of digital technology that has changed and affected higher education worldwide. What effects can this have on the way of training and conducting research? • Competition to attract students, increasingly higher tuition fees and competition for research funding from organizations

Following the above analyses, the Foundation's strategy aims at the development of the individual sectors, as follows:

EDUCATIONAL WORK

The training of young scientists, the cultivation of skills and erudition, but also the promotion of human-ecumenical values and the progress of society in general is highlighted by the high-level teaching work of university education. For these reasons, a continuous restructuring of the undergraduate and postgraduate education programs is required, so that they are kept up-to-date and competitive with the corresponding ones in Greece and abroad and develop into standards of educational excellence, in the fields of knowledge cultivated by the University. More specific goals:

- Improving the learning process, reducing the time to complete studies, improving the quality of undergraduate students' work.
- Development of a program to improve the teaching skills of faculty members and other categories of teachers, with internal processes, seminars, exchanges and international collaborations.
- Familiarization of faculty members, who teach in postgraduate study programs, with distance and hybrid teaching and learning methodologies.
- Higher requirements for the inclusion of PhD candidates and the adoption of a network of incentives to attract talented researchers, with a search for more scholarships, and with open calls for doctoral and postdoctoral students and with stricter criteria for announcing PhDs.
- Establishment of incentives to support teaching by doctoral candidates.
- Awarding PhDs also oriented towards problems of the wider social space, work, the environment, health, the highlighting of local history and the advantages of our geographical space, so that a greater connection with society emerges.
- Empowerment of the Center for Education and Lifelong Learning
- Redefining the content of the undergraduate and postgraduate study programs based on the certification reports.
- Submission of proposals for foreign language undergraduate and postgraduate study programs.
- Development of the International Education Center and the Confucius Institute.
- Improvement and continuous modernization of the Library's services.

RESEARCH PROJECT

Research is one of the key functions in the UTH with which it improves and promotes science, and opens new horizons in the promotion of science and the development of the country. Research based on international trends, strengthening the existing and attracting new research potential, improving performance in production and international recognition of the research project and increasing research funding are stable options of UTH. In particular, the UTH is focused on:

- Attracting new research potential, promotion and recognition of the research project being carried out, rewarding the funded research, but also internal support of research areas that do not have the possibility of external funding.
- Strengthening the research fields in which each Department already has distinctions.
- Internationalization of the activity of UTH through the development of interdisciplinary and inter-state collaborations, so that the UTH to strengthen its international recognition and the most efficient claim for funding from the community programs (GGET, Region of Thessaly, Region of Central Greece, NSRF, ERC, Horizon 2020, RIS3).
- Facilitating collaborations and exploiting the potential of the productive forces, the advantages of the geography, the natural and historical wealth of the region.
- Systematic recording and promotion of research production at UTH (amount of research grants, number of active researchers, patents, partnerships for services and transfer of know-how, etc.).
- Strengthening of research infrastructures and resources for a medium-long-term period (which of course is also linked to the general state of the country's economy and the suffocating dependence of the University on the central political administration).
- Development of common research support infrastructures.
- Rewarding excellence with sponsorships (individual-group), rewarding innovative research products and supporting start-ups & spin-offs for products and services.
- Legal start-up support for newly established companies.
- Expansion of collaborations between all Departments of the University, as well as with strategically selected Greek and foreign Universities.
- Organization of open "Research Topics" seminars with the aim of motivating and attracting researchers from the active core of the student population.
- Utilization of available knowledge/expertise for the benefit of the University, the Region of Thessaly and Greece.
- Coordinated support of the Region of Thessaly in the effort for coordinated utilization of funds of the new ESPA 2014-2020.
- Completion of the physiognomy of the center of the IASON research institutes.
- Laboratory Certification Program
- Development of the Averofia agro-food technology park.

FINANCIALLY

The increase in overall funding, the rationalization of funding allocation and the contribution of new sources of funding is a necessary condition for the achievement of the institution's goals. The dramatic cuts in the already meager (pre-crisis) state subsidy make it an imperative priority to take care of the financial survival of UTH by limiting expenses and securing additional financial resources. In particular, the UTH aims:

- In the development of a campaign to inform the citizens and the institutions of the region about the importance of the financial support of UTH in conjunction with publicizing donation and sponsorship incentives.
- The gradual zeroing of building rental costs.
- Limiting the annual expenses in DEKO.
- To limit deficits, transfer costs of regular maintenance, cleaning and safekeeping to the Property Management & Utilization Company.
- To reduce the maintenance budget of the facilities.
- In the utilization of public investment programs.
- To increase the absorption rate of the available funding sources.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The aim of the administration is to create an attractive and friendly environment for life, work and performance, with a stable working status, with decent wages. The administrative, technical and other support staff, whose significant contribution to date should be recognized, can in turn contribute to the upgrading of the UTH services, with consistency, responsibility, continuous improvement of efficiency, and cooperation with the Faculty members and students in a climate of mutual recognition of roles and responsibilities. Completing the Foundation's Organization and Internal Regulations and the election of directors through open procedures are the foundation's first options for 2021. Additional priorities are:

- Drafting of a new organization adapted to the new structure of the UTH.
- Description of responsibilities of each administrative body.
- Substantial regular quantitative and qualitative performance evaluation of the administrative work. The application of semi-annual progress reports of each service.
- The creation of programs for training and developing skills and improving the competence of the administrative staff.
- The establishment of performance incentives.
- Reduction of bureaucracy, modernization of processing procedures.
- Clear definition of the obligations for each job position.
- Develop an incentive framework to reward excellence and optimal performance.
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- Upgrade of electronic infrastructure and services, development and improvement of infrastructure and service management systems.
- Attracting new staff from the transfer program.
- Implementation of the project "Strengthening and speeding up processes of merger and reorganization of structures of the University of Thessaly" which includes: drawing up a new organization and internal regulation, Consolidation, Upgrading and Expansion of Central Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Infrastructures, Consolidation, Upgrading and Expansion of Information Systems of the Special Account for Research Funds, and Awareness, Information and Promotion Actions

STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

All the development strategies of the institution have its students as final recipients. UTH focuses on the creative inclusion of students in the academic community, on their responsible participation in its actions, so that they contribute creatively both within the University and in the social space, and on the consolidation of an environment that encourages learning and research. Additional priorities for UTH are:

- Limiting the number of admissions to levels that guarantee an optimal ratio of students to teachers and the capacity of the facilities.
- The improvement of student care, feeding, sports facilities and cultural activities.
- The development of infrastructure for student housing and clubs in all cities.
- The strengthening of Counseling stations in all cities and the Office of the Student Advocate.
- Care for the access and facilitation of disabled people in all cities.
- The creation of opportunities for an academic career for young people who distinguish themselves (at all levels of study) with meritorious criteria and organized support for them.

The successful career of the graduates is a parameter of special weight in the recognition of UTH. They are a valuable and underutilized human capital of the UTH, which today is scattered throughout the entire scale of social activity – administration, production, education, research, services, culture, etc. – and far beyond the borders of the country. This is how the priorities for UTH are:

- The connection of the University of Thessaly with its graduates everywhere through direct communication, invitations, active participation in the "life and events" of the University of Thessaly.
- The provision of incentives for the establishment of Alumni Associations in all Departments or Schools of the University of Thessaly, through the institutional project "CAREER"

INFRASTRUCTURES

The creation of an academic environment with adequate infrastructure, which favors work, supports teaching and research and strengthens the creativity of all its human resources and the competitive potential of UTH. The central administration and the Asset Development Company will exhaust every possibility of saving resources from the:

- Strengthening and utilizing the available infrastructure.
- Approval of ESPA funds 2014-2020 for the promotion of the construction program with priority on the implementation of all mature housing projects of the Departments.

Planning and completion of a series of studies:

- a. Integrated intervention of urban regeneration and utilization of the industrial property of the cotton industry in Nea Ionia Volos for the creation of student residences, educational and research facilities and social infrastructure of the University of Thessaly in Volos
- b. Creation of student Centers and educational and research infrastructures of the University in Volos and Lamia (PPP project, Vamvakurgia)
- c. Amphitheater and health sciences laboratories in Biopolis

- d. Study for the construction of Hospitals, Dietetics, Nutrition and sports facilities in Trikala
- e. Study - construction of Sports facilities and Gymnasium in Gaiopoli
- f. Yellow warehouse
- g. Students Residences in Volos

Development of the course of projects that are in the construction phase:

- a. Civil Engineering building, polytechnic school
- b. polytechnic engineering school building
- c. Construction of a sports complex at TEFAA in Trikala

Facility maintenance:

- a. Amphitheatres of the central building of Papastratos, Agricultural etc.
- b. Programmatic agreement for maintenance of buildings and students' residences in all cities
- c. Receipt of Computer Engineering building, polytechnic school

GREEN UNIVERSITY

Environmental upgrade of all facilities, with original studies to create a favorable microclimate, save energy, water and create an attractive place to work.

The establishment of an Environmental Actions Committee at the University made up of expert scientists with the intention of volunteering, who will initiate initiatives not only within the Foundation, but also in the wider region and nationwide, in collaboration with the local government and interested bodies. Also:

- Awareness campaign of the academic community in combination with the establishment of incentives for those who reduce the environmental burden.
- Recycling (paper, ink, equipment, etc.) and volunteer programs.
- Utilization of renewable energy sources
- The redesign and necessary modifications of the existing building infrastructure.

EXTRAVERSION, RELATIONSHIP AND INTERACTION WITH SOCIETY

At the center of the development strategy of UTH remains its interconnection and essential interaction with the social space in Thessaly, in Central Greece, in the country and in the rest of the world, building "bridges" through the educational functions, the diffusion of knowledge, the research its directions and its contribution to the development of the region and to culture.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The systematic monitoring of the overall work of the institution through the Quality Assurance Unit and the experience gained over the years will help to achieve the goals of the institution. More specific goals in this direction are:

- The systematic recording of the teaching and research work carried out on an annual basis.

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- The redesign of MODIP's information system.
 - The implementation of plagiarism systems.
 - The implementation of the research repository.
 - The implementation of the code of ethics.

EPILOGUE

A catalytic condition is the social and personal well-being of staff and students, in an environment that promotes and highlights all the potential of human resources. The general governance of the University with prudence and best practices has a decisive contribution to this goal. With respect to the democratic principles established in Universities, dialogue, representativeness and social accountability.

The University is the place where, in order to face all the current challenges and realize its vision and goals, it must highlight the communication and relationships of students, Faculty members as a central issue. and all the staff between them. To form an environment that encourages free thought and expression, dialogue and fruitful confrontation. Adopting a concept of understanding, tolerance and respect for 'diversity' in every component of the academic community will result in a more socially coherent and creative attitude to life, action and culture in the University. Only when the entire academic community understands the importance and value of this transformation and accepts collective and individual responsibility for its promotion, when it is inspired by a broad consensus and common commitment to the active contribution and meaningful participation of all its components in defining of the goals, then only their achievement is possible. Based on the above, the administration of the University of Athens maintains an open dialogue for information, the fruitful confrontation of opinions from all sides of academic life, with the ultimate goal, a dynamic university institution of the country for the coming decades.