



Open Letter: Academic Freedom, Recognition, and the AIU Family

Atlantic International University is proud to inform that **2023 will be our 25th anniversary**, marking a journey defined by academic freedom, innovation, advancement, overcoming challenges, and a pioneering spirit present in all members of the AIU family. It will be a journey, in which, you, our alumni, staff, and students have been key participants. There is much more to come, including a Virtual Reality Interface to your Campus. Throughout the years, we have demonstrated to the world the efficacy and the empowerment that are possible via **an open learning, andragogic model that inspires so many to become their best selves.**

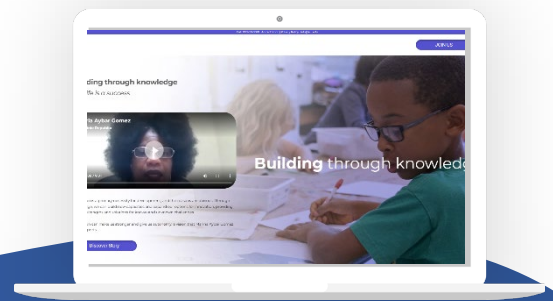
Defining clear, real-world goals that align with your values and the desire to improve our communities and the world, constitute what inspired so many AIU students to take the AIU Pledge to contribute and persevere. Instead of sticking to a conventional academic program, AIU graduates construct a body of work that combines independent research, theory, and practical application to solve problems ***1**. The student-centered learning model you witness at AIU is not an incremental change, but **a groundbreaking leap that challenges the foundation of the traditional model of higher learning.** The AIU alternative in higher education greatly resonates with the profile of AIU students, and it is often mentioned by our graduates as the most memorable and life-changing aspect of their experience.

AIU students are capable, experienced professionals with the ability to learn independently and collaborate with faculty remotely, via the use of technology and other tools of the Virtual Campus. Alumni include executives from Fortune 500 companies, presidents, members of the highest levels of government, NGOs, university deans, professors, business owners, teachers, scientists, inventors, etc. ***2** There is no central curriculum to follow at AIU; **our students define their own becoming a UNIVERSITY OF ONE.**

Each academic program is unique and ideally suited to the particular goals and interests of the student where the increasing level of focus and the specificity of the content often result in the student's becoming the expert in the niche, not the professor or lecturer. Having an expert repeat the same material, semester after semester, year after year, guarantees its obsolescence and erodes the utility and relevance of the matter covered. The AIU model addresses these challenges. Due to these marked differences present in AIU, there has always existed an element of skepticism towards our unique learning model by spectators ***3**.

For this reason, AIU has remained autonomous and independent, fiercely guarding its founding **principles to avoid becoming a clone or copy for the purpose of checking a box or completing a bureaucratic process.** We understand and respect the independence of various governments around the world in determining the requirements for revalidation. Yet, we also consider inalienable the knowledge, experience, and achievements our students secured through hard work, research, and the successful implementation of projects. These benefits exponentially exceed those that can be gained from any official seal or stamp. Occasionally, **inaccurate information is posted or shared on the web and social media regarding the university,** its students, academic programs, goals, accreditation, and recognition. As is widely known, social media postings by individuals are rarely accurate or relevant, and should be looked at with skepticism, especially, when presented with a clearly negative or one-sided bias, seeking to attack or insult, and with political or ulterior motives.

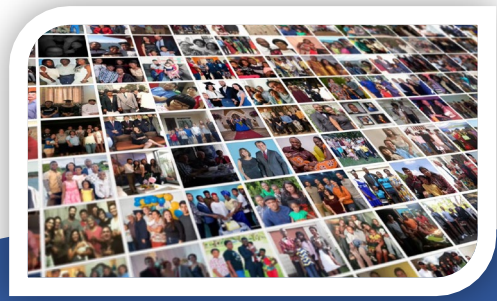
In such cases, it is counter-productive to engage directly as those sources typically feed on attention and sensationalism.



We are presenting this communication to bring to light some key facts about AIU, its programs, technology, resources, students, and staff.

The following are important characteristics of the university, along with the academic programs that, we believe, should be clearly defined and presented in the public domain:

- Academic freedom is paramount at AIU: we understand that such freedom empowers students and gives them the motivation to reach their full potential.
- In Phase 1, students first define what their purpose is and what motivates them. This becomes the foundation of the AIU program and the curriculum design.
- **Each course is unique to each student.** Still, all courses encompass specific goals, objectives, reading materials, research, and projects, which establish the academic requirements.
- AIU students seek purpose in their academic work and look to solve problems in their communities through their work and by taking the AIU Pledge to contribute to the development of their communities and the attainment of the UNESCO 2030 goals.
- The Academic Advisor and Academic Dept. must approve each student's proposed curriculum.
- The pace of academic advancement is defined by the student. Students may exceed the required credits to be fully prepared with no additional cost. **The student's optimum growth is the ultimate goal at AIU.**
- Each AIU course typically requires an average of 30 to 40 hours for its completion.
- The time required for each course originates from a combination of the following: course preparation, reading, research, essay assignments, quizzes/tests, or projects when applicable, and it can vary from student to student.
- Students participate in webinars and conferences, both as presenters and participants.
- All graduates are required to pass an oral thesis/dissertation defense before a panel of scholars.
- On average, AIU students are over 35 years old, have accumulated 8 or more years of work experience in their academic fields or closely related ones, and have been involved in managing, teaching, or mentoring others.
- Our Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate's programs respectively require the following credits: 60, 120, 30-40, 50-60.
- Technology plays a vital role in the AIU program with over 25 tools in the Virtual Campus to provide you with the best possible experience and development: Gamification & achievements, Video tutorials, **MYAIU *4**, AIULink, AIUTV ***5**, Curriculum Builder Tool, Merlin Media Center, CampusAPP, 500+ Live and archived Webinars, Virtual Conferences, Live Chats, Virtual Laboratories, Online Courses, Web Site Builder, the Language Center, Recommended Readings, Optional Assignments, an Online Library with more than 260,000 books, 30 million academic articles, 1.2 billion bibliographical references, and a support system of tutors, academic advisors, staff and fellow AIU Alumni.
- Virtual Reality/Immersion for the Student Section and Campus are currently in Beta testing and allow students to access their program via a 3D/VR interface and hold video call communications.
- AIU is on the Blockchain to facilitates the fastest and most affordable transfers to its students worldwide.
- Gamification and Ludification play a role in ongoing learning. AIU's achievements badges, competitions, tournaments and earned NFT's distinguish students who can proudly share them and show them on their profiles.
- AIU was established 24 years ago in 1998 and in accordance with all state and federal laws as a degree-granting institution in the United States.



The university is **in good standing with all relevant state and federal benchmarks, which govern its existence and ability to operate in the United States.**

Accreditation in the US is performed by private accrediting agencies, not by the US government. AIU is accredited by ASIC, a private accrediting agency based in the United Kingdom ***6**.

Universities in the US are not required to obtain accreditation, as this is voluntary. Visit AIU's Accreditation page for more information **7***. However, compliance with laws that govern universities and granting institutions is mandatory. **AIU conforms and adheres to all state and federal laws** that regulate the faculty to operate as a university and to grant degrees to students who meet the graduation requirements of the corresponding programs.

AIU Monthly Magazine, CAMPUS MUNDI keeps our student body informed of AIU happenings ***8**

We are aware that on the Internet, there are **many entities that show themselves as "higher education institutions"** when, in reality, they are not. It is easy to identify them based on what follows: they only exist online, they are not registered anywhere physically, which implies there is no state or federal jurisdiction that they must obey, they often operate from a PO box, they do not require academic work, they issue degrees on the basis past experience, and in a few days or weeks, they do not have a faculty or academic advisors, they do not hold live events, they do not have any library or academic resources, they lack research or academic collaboration, they do not require testing, projects, or theses/dissertations from their students, **they only demand a payment in exchange for a degree**, etc.

Colleges and Universities often ought to work through litigations and complaints that accumulate throughout the years. **AIU is proud of the fact that over the past 20 years, the institution has not had a single such occurrence.** We see this as a testament to the transparency of our deeds in addition to our consistent communications with both the public and our students. Additionally, this is corroborated by the results, benefits, and achievements that our graduates gain and enjoy during and beyond their study programs ***9**. Most importantly, our students have a purpose beyond hanging a degree on a wall; their programs help them advance to become better persons and generate growth opportunities for themselves and other people.

Our founding principles are based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; per article 26, ***10** AIU believes that Higher Education remains a quite critical human right.

Our **students can be located in over 180 countries.**

AIU members actively participate and volunteer in their communities as part of their academic programs, and they have allocated over 100,000 hours of service to diverse causes and initiatives throughout the world.

There is **no distinction between the programs offered through AIU and those of traditional campus-based programs** regarding the following: program structures, degrees issued, transcripts, and other graduation documents, which follow the same standards used by US colleges and universities.

AIU graduation documents can include an apostille and authentication from the US Department of State to facilitate their use, internationally.



To see some of our graduates' opinions about their studies, kindly visit the Media Center and Testimonials [section](#) ***11**

AIU Graduates around the world are breaking paradigms in Higher Education. We recommend every student visit the AIU Press Room [*12](#) so they can be informed about their outstanding accomplishments. Your **knowledge, skills, and expertise collected during your studies at AIU are inalienable**. No institution or person can take them away or prevent you, the student, from applying them to the betterment of your life, your community, or the specific endeavors you decide to pursue. We fully respect all Higher Education regulations from school authorities everywhere in the world. By the same token, **we respect people's freedom to choose the best options for their personal development and growth**. We are very proud of what all our students have achieved academically, in addition to their professional triumphs as global citizens.

We also know that our graduates consistently receive recognition in countless capacities for their abilities in the form of advancement or promotion in both private and public venues worldwide. Those accomplishments speak loudly to the quality and integrity of AIU and its graduates. This unquestionably portrays a better administration of the world village and its resources via an **andragogic, unique, open learning model that frees students to discover their passion in life and find their purpose** while contributing to solving the world's problems sustainably, all this while respecting human rights from virtually all vantage points.

Sincerely,

Dr Jose Mercado
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

Dr. Franklin Valcin
Academic Dean

*References:

- *1 <https://www.aiu.edu/GeneralInformation.html>
- *2 <https://www.aiu.edu/Graduation/grids/interviews.html>
- *3 <https://www.aiu.edu/MissionVision.html>
- *4 <https://www.aiu.edu/myaiu.html>
- *5 <https://myaiu.tv/>
- *6 <https://www.asicuk.com/international-directory/>
- *7 <https://www.aiu.edu/Accreditation.html>
- *8 https://www.aiu.edu/university/magazine_campus_mundi/all-editions/all-editions.html
- *9 <https://www.aiu.edu/DownloadCenter.html>
- *10 <https://www.aiu.edu/HumanRights.html>
- *11 <https://www.aiu.edu/Testimonials.html>
- *12 <https://www.aiu.edu/news.html>