







MAY/JUNE

Special Edition

MAY/JUNE ,2025







Message from the President

"Honoring Our Past, Reimagining Our Future"

Dear Esteemed AAU Community,

It is with immense pride and heartfelt congratulations that I address you on this extraordinary occasion, one that marks not just a single milestone, but three, first the 75th Graduation Ceremony of Addis Ababa University, second the eve of our Diamond Jubilee, and third the bold transformation underway through our autonomy reform.

To our graduates your resilience, dedication, and intellectual rigor have brought you to this pivotal moment. You are the embodiment of AAU's legacy and the promise of its future. As you step into the world, know that you carry with you the values, knowledge, and critical spirit that define this university. We are confident you will contribute meaningfully to Ethiopia's path toward prosperity.

As we prepare to celebrate 75 years of academic excellence, public service, and nation-building, we pay tribute to the generations of educators, students, researchers, and partners who have built and sustained this flagship institution. Our Diamond Jubilee is a commemoration of history, it is a reaffirmation of our present mission, and a call to collectively reimagine the future.

This is also a defining moment in our institutional journey. The autonomy reform signals a bold new chapter, one that brings both great responsibility and unprecedented opportunity. It calls on us to innovate with purpose, govern with integrity, and recommit to academic freedom, quality, and accountability. It invites us to chart a future where AAU is not only Ethiopia's premier institution but also a leading research university in Africa, relevant, responsive, and resilient.

The transformation we envision has not just been abstract. It is rooted in our students, our staff, and our communities. It is visible in the revitalization of our campuses, in our expanding global partnerships, in our digital transformation, and in the vibrant research and scholarship that emerge from our classrooms and laboratories every day.

This moment stands as a testament to how far we have come as a university, rooted in a proud legacy, guided by a shared vision, and enriched by the generations we continue to shape. The moment reflects not only our enduring commitment to excellence but also our readiness to define the future of higher education in Ethiopia and beyond.

Congratulations to us all once again. May the next chapter in your journey and that of Addis Ababa University be even more impactful, inspiring and inclusive.

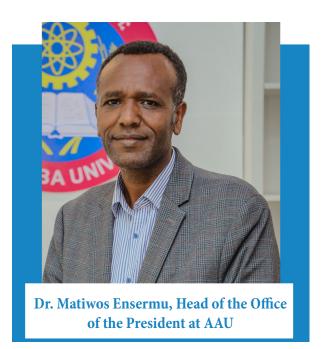




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Pioneering Autonomy: AAU's Bold Reform Journey A chat with Dr. Matiwos Ensermu, Head of the Office of the President at AAU

With the enactment of the Addis Ababa University (AAU) Establishment Council of Ministers Regulation No. 537/2023, our University stepped into a transformative new era, one placing it at the forefront of a nationwide shift in how public universities operate, manage resources, and deliver excellence. As Ethiopia's first autonomous public university, AAU is not just reforming itself, rather it is blazing a trail for the future of higher education across the country.



"Autonomy is not simply a change in structure, it has been a change in mindset for us at AAU. It empowers the university to be strategic, responsive, and accountable to its mission," says Dr. Matiwos Ensermu, Head of the Office of the President at AAU.

Phase I: Laying the Foundations of Autonomy

The reform process is structured into three phases, and the first phase, already well underway, has focused on building the legal, institutional, and operational bedrock of the autonomy process.

1. Governance Reform and Strategic Leadership

At the core of this transformation is a new governance model. AAU has established independent governing boards and embraced a CEO-led management structure. Through this, it has introduced more agile leadership and performance-based accountability. This structure empowers the university to engage in long-term strategic planning, quickly adapt to change, and implement the vision of the reform with speed and clarity.

2. Comprehensive Policy Frameworks

Autonomy requires a clear and coherent policy foundation. In Phase I, the University developed and approved of a series of landmark strategic and regulatory documents, including:





- -The 2024–2028 Strategic Plan
- -The Revised University Senate Legislation
- -New Admissions Policy
- -Policies on Resource Mobilization and Diversification
- -Policies on Endowment Management, and on Internationalization
- -Directives for Human Resources Management, Financial Management, and Procurement & Property Administration

These frameworks have set the stage for effective institutional governance and innovation.

"This policy infrastructure is more than just paperwork, it reflects a new institutional culture of excellence, merit, and mission alignment," Dr. Matiwos explains.

3. Academic and Operational Independence

With autonomy, AAU has gained the academic freedom to shape its curricula, research agendas, and outreach priorities without external interference. Administrative reforms especially in finance, procurement, and human resources, have improved operational efficiency and enabled faster service delivery, enhancing our University's ability to attract and retain talent, raise the necessary funds, and serve the various, diverse communities that rely on us.

Financial Autonomy & Revenue Diversification

A central pillar of the autonomy is financial independence, and AAU is rapidly moving toward a block grant financing model. This means that instead of receiving detailed budget lines from the government, the university now receives a lump-sum grant, giving it full discretion over how funds are allocated in line with the strategic priorities we hold dear at the University.

This shift has also allowed for direct budget allocation to Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital (TASH) which further ensures improved planning and integration between the University and the country's flagship teaching hospital.

Furthermore, to support long-term sustainability, AAU has launched a robust Revenue Generation and Diversification Strategy, endorsed by its governing board. Key income-generating initiatives include:

- -Consultancy Services across sectors
- -Private hospital ventures and health service delivery units
- -University-linked business enterprises within disciplinary areas
- -Endowment fund development and investment
- -Alumni fundraising campaigns
- -Monetization of university assets, such as land, buildings, and intellectual property

"Financial autonomy is about building the capacity to fund our own future. We're now better positioned to generate, manage, and invest resources strategically," Dr. Matiwos affirms.



Institutional Efficiency and Capacity Building

AAU has also undertaken a set of internal reforms to strengthen institutional systems and performance culture. Key improvements include streamlined procurement and finance procedures, performance-based recruitment and human resource practices, and capacity-building programs for leadership, faculty, and administrators. These major changes are helping the university operate with greater speed, transparency, and accountability, all critical for navigating its ambitious reform agenda.

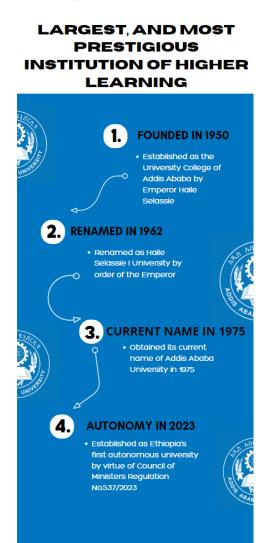
Looking Ahead: Phases II and III

With Phase I delivering a solid institutional foundation, Phases II and III will focus on full-scale implementation, culture change, and reform replication across academic and administrative units. The vision is not only to entrench AAU's autonomy, but also to serve as a national model for the other public universities poised to transition into autonomous status as well.

AAU's reform is designed to be scalable, resilient, and inclusive putting excellence, equity, and innovation at the center of its mission.

"A New Model for Ethiopian Higher Education"

The autonomy reform at Addis Ababa University is more than an internal transformation, it is a national experiment in rethinking what public universities can achieve when given the space and tools to lead themselves. As the country's premier university, AAU is not just adapting to change, it is actively shaping the future of higher education in Ethiopia.

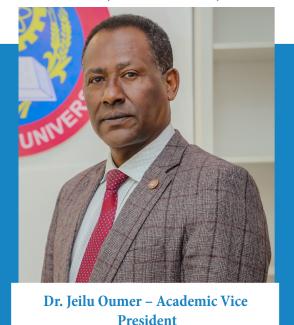


"This journey is about unlocking AAU's full potential, and in doing so, inspiring a new era of self-reliant, high-performing, and socially impactful universities," concludes Dr. Matiwos.



By Dr. Jeilu Oumer – Academic Vice President

As Addis Ababa University (AAU) celebrates its 75th anniversary, it stands not only as Ethiopia's oldest university but as the architect of a bold academic transformation in the Country. With the granting of full institutional autonomy, AAU is redefining what it means to be a public university in the 21st century: one that is academically free, structurally efficient, and aligned with national and global priorities.



"Autonomy at AAU has been about unlocking academic potential and empowering faculty and students to shape the future of knowledge in Ethiopia," says Dr. Jeilu Oumer, Academic Vice President.

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What Has Changed?

Since transitioning to autonomy, AAU has experienced a quiet revolution in its academic environment. At the heart of this change lies the University's new Strategic Plan (2024–2028), where we are "Reimagining Our Future" as a flagship university, which repositions AAU as a dynamic center for academic excellence, cutting-edge research, and strong industry linkages.

In March 2024, AAU revised its Senate Legislation to reflect its autonomous status. This allowed for enhanced academic self-governance, giving faculty greater influence in academic policy decisions and creating room for departments and colleges to respond to emerging societal and technological challenges.

"Academic autonomy has allowed us to move forward with long-overdue curricular reforms. We're seeing growing collaboration across departments, from integrating spatial analysis into sociology to shared digitization efforts led by our Media and Communication unit." Dr. Ezana Amdework, Interim Director, College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities



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STATISTICS Image: state s

351 Post Graduate Programs

66 Undergraduate Programs

32 Sub Specialty Certificates Programs



One of the most visible transformations has been the reorganization of AAU's academic programs. The university has streamlined its curriculum, consolidating programs across various disciplines. The number of academic programs has been reduced from over 500 to 416, which was a strategic decision to strengthen quality over quantity. This restructuring also resulted in the formation of seven Colleges and a standalone School of Law, improving institutional coherence. The seven colleges are:

- The College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
- The College of Technology and Built Environment
- The College of Health Sciences
- The College of Education and Language Studies
- The School of Law
- The College of Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture
- The College of Business and Economics
- The College of Natural and Computational Sciences

How has the Teaching and Learning Paradigm Shifted?

With autonomy, curriculum design is now faculty-led and responsive to real-world demands. Programs are becoming more interdisciplinary, research-driven, and industry-relevant. New teaching methodologies emphasize practical application, critical thinking, and innovation. Courses are now embedded with content tailored to Ethiopia's economic and developmental realities. Additionally, the expansion of research institutes is creating new opportunities for graduate students and faculty to engage in specialized research, fostering a more vibrant academic culture.

"Autonomy has empowered our College to redesign curricula that are both nationally relevant and globally informed. We're embracing interdisciplinary approaches like integrating climate and data scienc and equipping students with cutting-edge problem-solving skills through dynamic academic programs." Dr. Bikila W. Dullo, Interim Executive Dean, College of Natural and Computational Sciences



What has been the response from the Students?

Many students have responded positively to the streamlined academic structure. They are experiencing clearer academic pathways and increased opportunities for industry engagement. However, the process has also surfaced some challenges, particularly among graduate students in restructured research institutes who voiced concerns about the clarity of the transition.

Dr. Jeilu acknowledges these concerns and emphasizes the importance of proactive communication. "Change must be explained, not just implemented. We're learning to build a culture of dialogue around reform."

What are we looking ahead to?

Over the next two years, AAU will deepen its focus on improving teaching quality, enhancing postgraduate education, and boosting graduate employability. Support systems for students and faculty will be expanded. At the same time, efforts are underway to improve the use of technology in the classroom and increase the visibility of AAU's research contributions.

From its founding in 1950 as the University College of Addis Ababa, to its leadership in post-independence nation-building, AAU has always stood at the crossroads of change. Today, with full institutional autonomy, AAU is not simply adapting to change, but rather it is shaping it.

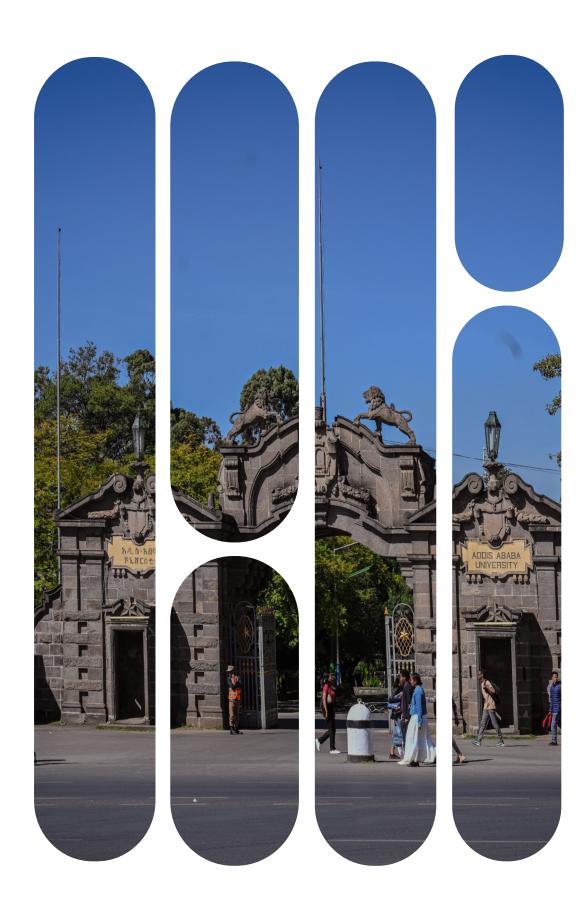
"This is not just a policy change; it is a turning point in our institutional identity," reflects Dr. Jeilu.

AAU's academic reform is ambitious, but necessary. By reclaiming academic independence and centering students and faculty at the heart of the reform process, the university is laying a foundation for long-term excellence. As Ethiopia reimagines its future, AAU is proving that universities can lead that journey, through knowledge, innovation, and bold reform.



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Reimagining AAU's Research and Innovation Agenda Prof. Worash Getaneh, Vice President for Research and Innovation

As Addis Ababa University (AAU) transitions into autonomy, research and innovation are emerging as central pillars of the University's strategic vision. In this regard, the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation is driving a bold agenda, streamlining systems, empowering scholars, and reaffirming AAU's role as Ethiopia's premier knowledge generator not just in the country, but in the region as a whole.



Prof. Worash Getaneh, Vice President for **Research and Innovation**

"Autonomy has enabled us to design a research ecosystem that reflects our local priorities while meeting international standards," says Prof. Worash."We are creating space for researchers to thrive without unnecessary bureaucratic barriers."

A Systemic Reform Built for Researchers

One of the most impactful changes is the restructuring of AAU's research support system, which includes the rollout of an in-house Research Management System (RMS). This platform replaces the costly CONVERIS system, eliminating foreign currency expenses and making proposal submission, funding calls, and research tracking far more efficient.

"We needed a solution built for us, by us. The RMS is more than a tool, it's a declaration of AAU's capacity for self-reliance and for innovation."

In parallel, the new Research and Innovation Policy and Strategy provides a long-term framework that prioritizes ethical research, national relevance, and institutional accountability. These reforms form the backbone of AAU's transition from a centralized research culture to one defined by academic freedom and strategic focus.

"We now have greater flexibility to direct research toward real-world impact, promote innovation, and engage communities meaningfully. With strong leadership support and a strategic vision grounded in 'Reimagining Our Future,' we're confident in our path toward becoming a leading research university in Africa." Dr. Bikila W. Dullo, Interim Executive Dean, College of Natural and Computational Sciences

A Strategic Direction focusing on Multidisciplinarity and Mentorship

Over the next two years, AAU's research direction will emphasize transdisciplinary collaboration, bringing faculties and departments together to tackle grand challenges in health, sustainability, technology, and society.

A defining feature of this strategy is a strong investment in early-career researchers. Through mentorship programs, seed funding, and workshops, the university is laying the groundwork for a sustainable, inclusive research pipeline.

"Mentoring young researchers is not optional, it's essential. They are the future of Ethiopian science and scholarship," Prof. Worash stresses.

Capacity-building remains a core focus for AAU. The university regularly conducts Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions on research ethics, methodology, and grant writing, expanding knowledge and competence across departments.

Flagship Identity Through Integrity and Impact

AAU's flagship status is not just about numbers, it's about ethical leadership in research. As the institution ramps up its output, it also strengthens safeguards to ensure quality and integrity.

"We take research ethics seriously. Our credibility depends on it. We've intensified trainings and are actively countering threats like predatory publishing," says Prof. Worash.

The numbers back this up: in the past year, AAU produced 985 peer-reviewed publications and engaged in 46 institutional research collaborations, elevating its presence on the African and global stage.

"Research autonomy is helping us think and work across boundaries. This year's Research Week featured diverse themes, from cinematic storytelling to digital peacebuilding. Our public engagement is deepening, and new seminar series and grant proposals are positioning the College as a hub for collaborative, impactful research." Dr. Ezana Amdework, Interim Director, College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities

Research With Reach

AAU scholars continue to deliver impactful research across sectors:

- In public health, research is influencing national policy on disease prevention and maternal care.
- In environmental science, sustainable water and land use models are being tested in rural regions.
- In technology, breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and renewable energy are informing industrial policy.

• In social sciences, studies on governance, migration, and urbanization are shaping national and region al development dialogues.



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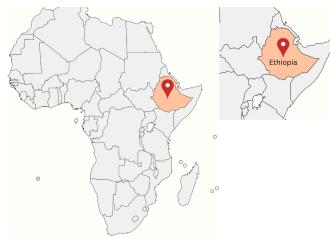
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"Our research must answer the questions our society is asking, Whether it's climate resilience, education reform, or digital innovation, AAU must be part of the solution." Prof. Worash concludes, "As AAU celebrates 75 years of academic leadership, its vision is to be a home for innovation, integrity, and impact. Autonomy has unlocked new possibilities."



AAU At A Glance

Since 1950, Addis Ababa University has served as a hub for transformative education, cutting-edge research, and impactful engagement. Located in the heart of Ethiopia's capital, the university's vision is to become a leading research university in Africa, driving national priorities and responding to global development needs. Its mission is to pursue transformative learning, world-class innovation, and community service that advances the socio-economic, cultural, and technological aspirations of the country and continent.







Societal Impact Through Innovation and Engagement

Dr. Solomon Kiros, Interim Director, Office of Innovation and Engagement

Addis Ababa University's reform agenda under autonomy has empowered the Office of Innovation and Engagement (OIE) to become a dynamic bridge between academia and society. By fostering partnerships, supporting innovation, and advancing community-oriented research, the OIE plays a central role in actualizing AAU's flagship status and driving Ethiopia's sustainable development goals.

In just a short span since the reform, the OIE has made remarkable strides in promoting innovation and engagement:

"Our approach is anchored in turning ideas into impact, translating research into tangible solutions for communities, industries, and policy," says Dr. Solomon Kiros.

Five innovative products are currently in the pipeline for commercialization, and three have already been successfully transferred to end users. These include:

- A legal dictionary, now in use at the Ministry of Justice,
- Ergonomic gari carts improving street vending conditions,
- Solar charging stations deployed in Butajira schools.

AAU's incubation ecosystem is also thriving. The number of supported projects has doubled, from five to ten, all thanks to expanded funding and targeted mentorship. In addition, six new inventions have been submitted to the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority (EIPA) for patenting, signaling growing recognition of AAU's research output as commercially viable and socially relevant.

The university's innovation ecosystem is now underpinned by over 30 strategic partnerships; with industries, government agencies, NGOs, and community actors, spanning consultancies, short-term trainings, and joint research.

The OIE's reach also extends to direct community services. In the past year alone:

- 18,443 animals received medical care through veterinary outreach,
- 146,506 individuals accessed free legal aid through the College of Law,
- More than 1,400 students were placed in internships, while 60 staff completed externships across industries,
- 65 industry experts enriched the classroom through co-teaching, mentoring, and curriculum devel opment.

In one powerful example of civic engagement, AAU students collectively donated over 1 million birr to Mekedonia by sacrificing their breakfast allowance for five days, underscoring a culture of empathy and social responsibility within the student body.



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Over the next two years, the OIE is focused on scaling its impact on Ethiopia's socio-economic and environmental challenges. This includes:

- Deepening support for incubation centers and startup ecosystems,
- Expanding technology transfer pipelines and IP commercialization,
- Strengthening partnerships with businesses, government, and NGOs to co-create scalable solutions,
- Advancing service-learning, volunteerism, and externships to connect academic knowledge with community needs



"Innovation doesn't end in the lab," notes Dr. Solomon. "It must live in the lives of people, through health access, legal aid, economic opportunity, and community resilience."

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OIE's role in Reinforcing AAU's Flagship Identity

The OIE's work amplifies AAU's mission-driven status as a flagship institution through its tripartite structure: University–Industry Linkage, Innovation and IP, and Community Engagement. Each pillar ensures that research and learning are not abstract exercises but active tools for transformation.

From medical outreach programs by the College of Health Sciences to free veterinary clinics and legal aid services, the university's societal footprint is expansive. Institutional support including access to labs, coworking spaces, startup funding, and IP protection ensures that innovation remains central to academic life.

In addition, the OIE is nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets among students and staff through innovation forums, exhibitions, and training, while building an enabling policy environment to sustain growth.

Through sustained institutional backing, strategic partnerships, and a growing culture of engagement, the OIE ensures that innovation is not a side program, but a core mission of AAU.

"We're embedding innovation and engagement into the very identity of AAU," says Dr. Solomon. "That's how we build a university that not only educates, but transforms society."







Statistics



Students with disabilities study at AAU 32 Female Students with disabilities study at AAU

Support and Resources

We value all of our students, and our university is keen to ensure that all of our students have the necessary resources to succeed in their academic endeavors





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Laying the Foundation for a Resilient and Responsive University Dr. Abdurezak Mohammed Vice President for Administration and Student Support (VPASS)

The transition to autonomy at Addis Ababa University marks not only a shift in governance but a redefinition of how we deliver value to students, staff, and the broader community. As Vice President for Administration and Student Support (VPASS), Dr. Abdurezak Mohammed has overseen critical structural reforms aimed at building a more responsive, transparent, and efficient institution.

"Autonomy demands more than independence, it requires responsibility, agility, and innovation," says Dr. Abdurezak. "We are building the systems that will sustain AAU's excellence for generations to come."

Since the enactment of Regulation No. 537/2023 and Proclamation No. 1294/2023, Addis Ababa University's transition to autonomy has empowered its leadership to undertake deep structural reforms. For the Vice President for Administration and Student Support (VPASS), this has meant building the institutional backbone that will sustain autonomy, not just legally, but operationally. Over the past two years, Dr. Abdurezak Mohammed and his team have developed and secured the approval of the Board for a suite of new directives covering financial management, property administration, procurement, and human resource management. These reforms have been meticulously aligned with AAU's strategic plan and reviewed for compliance with national legal frameworks, ensuring their seamless integration into the university's governance fabric.

To support these directives, the VPASS office has also initiated the creation of standard operating procedures and implementation guidelines that will translate policy into daily practice across all units. In tandem, the office has driven forward a shift to digital platforms, phasing out manual systems and introducing electronic communication university-wide.

Crucially, this transformation has been underpinned by a sharpened focus on responsible and transparent financial stewardship. Through strengthened monitoring, planning, and audit practices, AAU has achieved clean audit reports for two consecutive budget years, a milestone that underscores the university's growing financial discipline and institutional maturity. Resource optimization has also taken center stage, with internal reallocations addressing surpluses and deficits to ensure more equitable and efficient use of university assets.



Dr.Abdurezak Mohammed Vice President for Administration and Student Support (VPASS)

"We are managing every birr with intentionality," Dr. Abdurezak affirms. "And the results are already visible."



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Taken together, these achievements signal the emergence of a modern, responsive support system capable of powering AAU's ambitions as a flagship university.

Improving Accessibility and Service Delivery

In tandem with financial and structural reforms, VPASS has worked to improve the student and staff experience through digital solutions and administrative modernization. The adoption of digital platforms for internal communication, payroll, procurement, and HR services has streamlined operations and significantly improved service turnaround time.

Furthermore, VPASS is steering the rollout of an inclusive rightsizing process aligned with AAU's core values of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness. This involves reviewing and optimizing the university workforce to ensure the right mix of professionals and leadership talent across all levels.

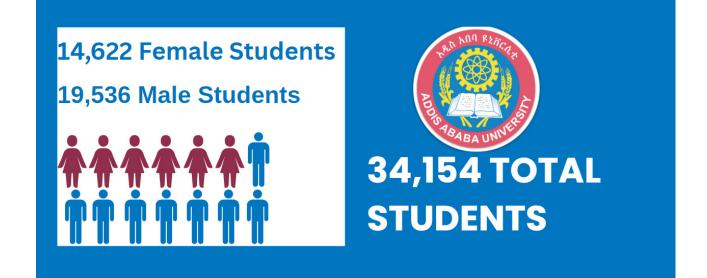
Strategic Focus for the Next Two Years

Looking ahead, the office will focus on fully institutionalizing recent reforms through operational guidelines, digital tools, and streamlined service delivery. Workforce rightsizing will be a key priority, guided by AAU's core values of diversity, equity, and merit to ensure the right mix of skilled professionals and visionary leader-ship.

The university's digital transformation will deepen, with improved automation and integrated platforms to enhance efficiency and transparency. Strategic efforts will also focus on leadership development, internal accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.

Dr. Abdurezak Mohammed emphasizes that this next phase is about building a responsive, future-ready administration that anchors AAU's ambition to lead African higher education.

"Our commitment is to create a future-ready administration," Dr. Abdurezak concludes. "One that empowers academic excellence by removing bureaucratic hurdles and enabling smart, efficient support systems."





"Premier. Flagship. Autonomous."

Dr. Rahel Argaw Kebede - Vice President for Partnership and Communications

Under the University's autonomy transition, the Office of the Vice President for Partnerships and Communications (VPPC) has played a pivotal role in repositioning Addis Ababa University as a flagship institution of national pride and global relevance.

"We took autonomy not just as an administrative shift but as an opportunity to reimagine" who we are, what we represent, and how we engage the world," says Dr. Rahel Argaw, Vice President for Partnerships and Communications.

Through a bold rebranding initiative, the Office launched verified and redesigned social media platforms, introduced this AAU Connect monthly newsletter, and introduced targeted digital campaigns.

"Strategic communication has allowed us to shape the narrative of reform and position AAU as an impact driven, forward looking university," she adds "This transition empowered us to own our story, to tell it boldly, and forge collaborations that reflect our strategic ambitions and societal responsibilities."

The autonomy framework has enabled the university to streamline its communications, improve its institutional image, and leverage partnerships that align with national development goals and the university's reform agenda. Internally, the office ensured seamless institutional communication by standardizing official email systems and amplifying university-wide messages around reform, partnerships, and academic milestones. Simultaneously, flagship events such as cultural festivals and stakeholder engagements have served to build a cohesive community identity grounded in the new era of autonomy.

The office has also forged high-impact engagements with key public institutions in Ethiopia such as the Ministries of Education, Health, Transport and Logistics, and Mining marking a shift toward AAU's emergence as a national policy partner.

"We are no longer just recipients of change. We are co-architects of Ethiopia's future," Dr. Rahel emphasizes.

Looking ahead, Dr. Rahel outlines a focused agenda to further align communications and partnerships with AAU's strategic pillars.

"Our mission at this Office is to tell our story with power, purpose, and consistency, while cultivating partnerships that are mission-aligned and impact-oriented."

In communications, the goal is to build internal capacity, improve institutional messaging, and broaden AAU's presence across multimedia platforms. "We want the voice of AAU to be informed, inclusive, and inspiring," she notes. Externally, storytelling will be scaled through expert features, podcast series, visual content, and interactive forums that showcase the University's leadership in research, innovation, and societal transformation.

On the partnerships side, the External Relations and Partnerships Office under the Vice President for Partnerships and Communications has been expanding its academic, research, industry and diplomatic outreach through targeted engagements with international organizations, embassies, foundations, and leading universities and research institutes.



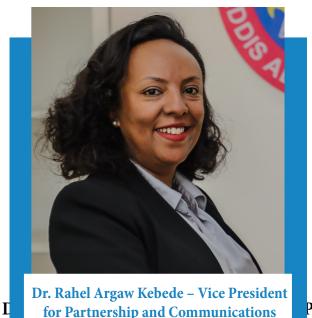
"We are moving from transactional relationships to transformational and, fair collaborations," says Lea Mehari, Interim Director for External Relations and Partnerships. "Our emphasis will be on co-designed and sustainable partnerships that contribute to policy, capacity building, and shared development goals."

Elevating AAU's Standing Through Strategic Communications

Dr. Rahel emphasizes the power of consistent messaging during times of institutional change. "Reform must not only be implemented, it must be communicated. And we've done that through facts, vision, and trust."

From nationwide coverage of AAU reform forums to social media storytelling about student innovation, strategic communication has helped AAU strengthen its reputation as a thought leader in higher education and development.

The revitalized newsletter, public events, and digital engagement have kept faculty, staff, and students aligned with reform goals, while opening up new spaces for public dialogue



"When people hear 'Addis Ababa University,' we want them to think excellence, relevance, and reform."

Partnerships

The past year has seen several partnerships with high diplomatic and academic value. One standout is the restoration of the Geunete Leul Palace, supported by long-standing partnership from Italy.

"The palace stands not only as a cultural heritage site but as a symbol of the trust and continuity that define our global relationships," Dr. Rahel reflects.

Recent MoUs have also paved the way for new academic programs, collaborative research, and staff-student mobility with institutions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.





"Our pivot more towards South-South and continental collaborations is intentional. We want to c-create knowledge that matters to, and that solves the problems of our region." Lea states.

At the same time, the External Relations and Partnerships office has led efforts to mobilize domestic partnerships with public institutions and industries. These collaborations have brought both financial resources and policy relevance to the university's work.

"We are building a university that is responsive, resourceful, and rooted in national priorities."

Aligning Strategic Partnerships with AAU's Vision

"Our partnerships are not about prestige. They're about purpose, no longer are we holding on to shelved MOUs." states Dr. Rahel.

All engagements are assessed for alignment with AAU's core pillars, academic excellence, innovation, impact-driven research, and inclusive development. Through a new partnership monitoring system developed internally, there are now moved to track each MOU not just by deliverables but by its contribution to AAU's strategic goals.

"We are building a culture where partnerships are not ends in themselves, but catalysts for transformation."

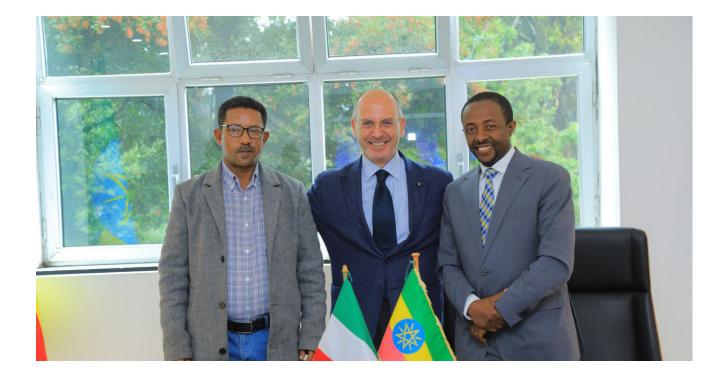
















AAU's Digital Leap Forward

Dr. Wondwossen Mulugeta - Vice President for Digitalization and Infrastructure

As Addis Ababa University advances into a new era of institutional autonomy, digital transformation has also taken center stage. For Dr. Wondwossen Mulugeta, Vice President for Digitalization and Infrastructure, the transition has not just been about upgrading systems, it has also been about fundamentally rethinking how the university operates, teaches, and connects with its communities.

"Digital transformation is the backbone of autonomy. It enables the speed, transparency, and intelligence that modern universities need to thrive," says Dr. Wondwossen.

Over the past two years, the Office of Digitalization and Infrastructure has overseen a sweeping modernization of AAU's core academic and operational systems. At the heart of these efforts is a commitment to service excellence, as part of AAUs core value, one that ensures students, faculty, researchers, and administrators benefit from accessible, secure, and efficient platforms.

Modernizing the Digital Backbone

One of the most impactful developments under autonomy is the design and deployment of a comprehensive Learning Management System (LMS), now used across colleges to facilitate course delivery, assessments, and virtual engagement. Complementing this is an integrated academic program review tool, which has allowed AAU to conduct its curriculum reforms with more clarity, consistency, and efficiency reducing program duplication and enhancing academic coherence.

In a landmark move toward transparent and inclusive student selection, the University also launched a fully digitized admissions platform, supporting the new admissions policy endorsed by the Governing Board. This shift has made it possible to ensure equitable access while streamlining the evaluation of applications across programs.

Teaching innovation is also being supported by infrastructure. Over 50 smart classrooms have been equipped across AAU campuses, while a Center for Technology-Enhanced Learning (CTEL) has been launched at the Main Campus to anchor pedagogical innovation and faculty capacity building. These investments are not isolated upgrades, they form part of a broader vision, the Smart Campus Initiative.



Dr. Wondwossen Mulugeta - Vice President for Digitalization and Infrastructure

"This is the first of its kind in Ethiopia," Dr. Wondwossen notes. "In partnership with Ethio-Telecom, we are creating a fully connected, digitally secure environment that supports learning, collaboration, and administration, all in real time."

The initiative, which has already secured over 500 million ETB in investment, is set to become a benchmark for digital infrastructure in higher education across the country.

Beyond academics, the university has made strides in research and service management. The newly implemented Research Management System allows for realtime tracking of project data, resources, and outcomes, helping researchers and administrators optimize their workflows. An Alumni Engagement System, integrated with existing student records, is reconnecting thousands of former students with their alma mater, opening new opportunities for mentorship, fundraising, and professional collaboration.

One of the standout examples of digital innovation is the locally developed Electronic Health Record (EHR) system now deployed at Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital. This tool has significantly enhanced patient data management, continuity of care, and institutional decision-making, illustrating how digital solutions can also drive excellence in service delivery.

In support of AAU's growing national and international footprint, a new corporate website was launched to strengthen stakeholder engagement and better reflect the university's strategic identity under autonomy.

A Shift to Full Digital Integration

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While the past two years focused on building the digital foundations for teaching, research, and academic management, the next phase will tackle the digitalization of administrative and support functions. This includes automation of procurement, finance, human resources, asset management, and campus logistics.

"The future is not just digital. It is integrated. We want every service, from student registration to staff onboarding, to be seamless, transparent, and trackable," Dr. Wondwossen explains.

Key to this vision is not only technological deployment but also digital culture change. Faculty and staff are being trained to adopt new platforms confidently, and user experience is being prioritized in system design to ensure broad uptake. Cybersecurity, data protection, and system resilience are also guiding principles in AAU's digital strategy.

The Bigger Picture

AAU's digital transformation is not just an institutional priority but rather of a national significance. With its Smart Campus initiative and innovations like EHR, the AAU is setting a precedent for other institutions in Ethiopia and the wider region. Plans are already underway to document these best practices and develop scalable digital blueprints that other universities can adopt.

"We are no longer content with catching up," Dr. Wondwossen affirms. "We want to lead. We want to be the university that others benchmark against."

As has been witnesses, digital transformation at AAU is far from a mere side project but rather a bold strategic direction. And as autonomy gives the University more room to maneuver, its digital leadership is poised to become a key pillar of its national and continental influence.

















Strategic Theme 9: Stewardship and Sustainablity

As Addis Ababa University enters a new phase of institutional autonomy, its commitment to long-term sustainability and responsible resource stewardship has become a major part to its transformation agenda. Anchored in Strategic Theme Nine Stewardship and Sustainable Infrastructure and Facilities, the university is making bold investments in infrastructure, campus planning, and technological modernization to enhance learning, research, and student life. This strategic goal aims to provide efficient stewardship of AAU's financial, physical, and technological resources to ensure sustainable high-quality education, research, and community engagement for years to come.

AAU Connect reporter Anteneh Walelegn sat down with various members of the AAU community to get their take on how the University is progressing towards that goal.

From Vision to Groundbreaking Progress

Over the past two years, Addis Ababa University has undertaken a wide range of development projects aimed at enhancing the educational environment across all its campuses. These efforts have included the completion of long-stalled construction projects, bringing back into use critical academic and service infrastructure that had previously been left unfinished. New car parking facilities and improved roadways have eased mobility and access for faculty, students, and visitors alike. At the same time, sports fields and recreational areas, particularly at the Main Campus and the College of Business and Economics, have been revitalized to promote student wellness and campus life. The university has also implemented extensive beautification and green development initiatives, transforming outdoor spaces to reflect a commitment to sustainability and pride in the campus environment. In the realm of arts and culture, AAU has dedicated new facilities to creative education, including the long-awaited restoration of the Cultural Centre and the establishment of purpose-built studios and learning spaces that now serve as hubs for artistic expression and interdisciplinary collaboration.

These projects are part of a larger, integrated plan to align university resources with its strategic priorities, creating a coherent and functional ecosystem for higher learning.

Laying the Foundation for an Integrated University Village

One of the most ambitious components of AAU's infrastructure strategy is the development of a new Comprehensive Property Use Plan. This blueprint will guide how space, land, and facilities are utilized across campuses, maximizing efficiency while opening up new avenues for expansion, innovation, and community integration.

"The recent improvements can act as a c atalyst for the University Village concept," says Professor Ahmed Hussen, an environmental science expert at AAU. "It's not just infrastructure, but rather weaving the academic and residential experience into a vibrant, collaborative, and inclusive university community."

This vision is further supported by the development of dedicated zones for recreation, wellness, and cultural expression, reinforcing the idea that holistic education includes not just classroom instruction but also health, creativity, and social connection.

For the arts, the renewed investment in facilities marks a long-awaited breakthrough. Assistant Professor Tesfaye Eshetu, Head of the AAU Cultural Centre, underscored the importance of this revitalization:

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"Establishing a supportive infrastructure from the outset is crucial for facilitating effective teaching and learning in the arts," he explained. "The reopening of the Cultural Centre after years of closure is a powerful signal of AAU's renewed commitment to artistic excellence and cultural innovation."

The Centre now serves as a dynamic space for interdisciplinary engagement, performance, and creative exploration, integral components of the university's educational mission.

Students are already seeing the tangible benefits of these developments. For Daniel Desta, a graduate student at the College of Business and Economics, the impact of the improved sports fields has been immediate:

"These improvements are essential for promoting health and well-being among students," he shared. "It's easier now to balance study and relaxation, especially with the enhanced green spaces and upgraded dormitory surroundings."

Campus beautification has transformed formerly neglected areas into lively, welcoming spaces for study, collaboration, and leisure which serve key factors in fostering a thriving academic community.

To complement physical upgrades, AAU is also developing a Sustainable Information Technology (IT) Plan, with the goal of integrating digital systems across academic, administrative, and operational units. These efforts are already underway through major initiatives like the Smart Campus Project and the deployment of learning, research, and alumni management platforms.

The IT plan supports not only teaching and innovation but also sustainability, ensuring energy-efficient systems, reducing paper-based processes, and enabling more responsive decision-making across the institution.

Strategic Planning for Long-Term Stewardship and Sustainability

AAU is also designing a comprehensive financial model and budget process to align resource allocation with strategic priorities and performance metrics. The goal is to strengthen financial sustainability while giving colleges and units greater ownership of their development trajectories.

"Autonomy must be backed by smart planning," says one senior administrator. "This is how we ensure that our physical, financial, and digital infrastructure doesn't only keep pace with but actually leads the way in Ethiopian higher education."

With over 280 global partnerships and growing recognition as a national and regional thought leader, Addis Ababa University is positioning itself as a model for sustainable, future-oriented university management. Strategic Theme Nine is a philosophy of responsibility, forward-thinking, and excellence in resource use. As stakeholders across AAU continue to engage in and benefit from these initiatives, this strategic theme provides on important message that this is a university that is building a better future brick by brick, byte by byte.



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MAY/JUNE ,2025











Clinical Excellence

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Prof. Andualem Deneke Beyene (Dr.) – Interim Executive Dean of the College of Health Sciences

Across the academic landscape, a palpable change is coming. Addis Ababa University is recognizing the imperative to adapt and evolve in the face of changing societal needs, technological advancements, and economic realities. Nowhere is this reform more critical, or potentially more impactful, than within the College of Health Sciences (CHS).

The CHS is actively undergoing a profound reshaping, a multi-faceted endeavor designed to enhance excellence, ensure sustainability, and significantly contribute to healthcare system. This reform is characterized by several interconnected pillars, each addressing important aspects of the college's ecosystem:

Academic Re-engineering

The cornerstone of this renewal is a comprehensive Academic Program Review. Moving decisively away from a fragmented landscape of 129 distinct programs, the college is streamlining and reorganizing into a more cohesive and strategic portfolio of 112 programs. This consolidation represents a deliberate effort to enhance academic quality, eliminate redundancies, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensure programs are sharply aligned with current and future healthcare workforce demands and scientific advancements. The results will be a curricula that is are more relevant and better positioned to produce graduates equipped with the integrated skills needed in modern healthcare.

Financial Sustainability

A critical underpinning of any lasting transformation is financial health. The CHS is proactively working on revenue generation activities, exploring innovative funding models beyond traditional tuition streams. This includes pursuing grants with greater vigor, developing specialized executive education or certification programs, fostering industry partnerships, and optimizing clinical revenue streams.







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Embracing the Digital Frontier

Recognizing that technology is reshaping healthcare delivery and education, the college is prioritizing digitalization. A key initiative in this domain is the implementation of an Electronic Health Record (EHR) system. This move brings administrative convenience, integrates cutting-edge technology directly into the educational experience. Students will train on the same platforms used in modern clinical practice, gaining invaluable proficiency in data management, interoperability, and digital patient care workflows.

Elevating Clinical Excellence and Impact

The transformation extends beyond internal structures and processes to directly impact healthcare delivery and research focus. A significant manifestation of this is the development of Cardiac and Hemato-Oncology Centers of Excellence. These centers represent a strategic investment in specialized, high-impact areas of medicine. They will serve as hubs for advanced patient care, cutting-edge translational research, specialized training for students and professionals, and community outreach.

This huge reform within the College of Health Sciences is not an isolated event, but a necessary and ambitious response to the evolving demands of 21st-century health education, research, and service. In this vein, the establishment of specialized Centers of Excellence targets high-need areas, enhancing clinical care, research impact, and the college's reputation.



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Anniversary

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