

AIU Long-Term Vision 2024-2033

-Connecting Akita with the World to Create Value and
Knowledge for the Future-

April 2024



国際教養大学

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I Introduction

Akita International University (AIU) was established in 2004 as the first Public University Corporation in Japan, and this year marks its 20th anniversary.

As part of the university's philosophy, AIU has established an educational system never before seen in Japan, including liberal arts education in small classes, all classes taught in English, one-year Study Abroad with mutual tuition exemption, and community life in the dormitory for all new students along with international students. Due to the steady implementation of these pioneering efforts, AIU has become a leader in international university education and has influenced the education of many universities in Japan.

In 2008, AIU established a professional graduate school for the practical areas of English education, Japanese language education, and communication skills, and have been working to develop highly specialized human resources.

Up to the present, AIU has produced more than 2,600 graduates and 260 postgraduates who are active not only in Akita Prefecture and other parts of Japan, but also overseas. The university's mission of "developing global leaders" is steadily bearing fruit.

In 2014, AIU was selected for the Top Global University (TGU) Project and has been promoting, over 10 years, 24-hour liberal arts education, reforming English education through programs such as "English Village," and strengthening the curriculum, student support, and internal governance while comparing with top liberal arts universities in the U.S., paving the way for further enhancement of education and research. In addition, AIU has been working to strengthen its curriculum, student support, and internal governance using comparisons with top liberal arts universities in the U.S., paving the way for further strengthening education and research.

While maintaining the characteristics of its education, to respond to changes in society, AIU has evolved its curriculum, including the establishment of the Global Connectivity Program, and introduced "Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA)" from 2021 to deepen and strengthen integrated knowledge and human skills.

Change in the global environment surrounding AIU is accelerating significantly. The advanced development of science and technology, information and communication networks, robot technology, and AI are having a major impact on how we work and live. In addition, global climate change, pandemics, and other trends shaking our lives and livelihoods require that we make decisions based not only on economic value but also on new criteria including social and environmental value.

Looking at Akita Prefecture, we are facing many challenges, such as a declining birthrate, an aging population, and a growing population decline, but we are also seeing new possibilities for regional development, such as introduction of wind power generation and other new energy sources.

In this rapidly changing society, global leaders who study liberal arts and combine integrated knowledge and human skills to solve various societal issues are in demand.

In addition to further development of Global Human Resources who can play an active role in the global society that we have been promoting, as a Public University Corporation, it is necessary for AIU to utilize our network of domestic and international universities and companies to contribute to solving the issues

that Akita Prefecture is facing. The issues in Akita Prefecture are also issues that many countries and regions around the world will also face in the future. Our efforts to solve these issues are a form of contribution to global society.

This year, on our 20th anniversary, we have compiled “AIU Long-Term Vision 2024-2033,” which outlines our vision for the next ten years. Under this new vision, AIU will strengthen regional cooperation and create new value, thereby foster human resources suitable for global leadership, through its function as a nexus for diverse entities at home and abroad, and through further development of “Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA).”

April 2024

Monte CASSIM
Chair of the Board and President,
Akita International University

II Background of Long-Term Vision Development

1 Twenty Years of Progress and Achievements

- In terms of education, there is no doubt that AIU's pioneering efforts, such as small-class-education in English and the Study Abroad requirement, have significantly impacted the internationalization and globalization of university education in Japan. It is no exaggeration to say that the liberal arts education (International Liberal Arts Education) at AIU, especially the learning system that fosters intellectual and human skills through an integrated campus where students can study and live together, has given new direction for university education in Japan.
- The role that AIU has played in promoting English education and cross-cultural understanding in Akita Prefecture has been grand. Since the university's opening, cross-cultural exchange meetings with elementary school students have been held several hundred times. As these children grow older, the significance of the fact that they have been able to break down international barriers and speak English without fear will become clearer.
- AIU's International Liberal Arts Education has attracted the attention of many universities, industries, and the media. Many visitors from all over Japan have come to AIU to study its unique education, including members of the Imperial Family, ambassadors, politicians, astronauts, athletes, and university and high school educators. In addition, AIU's efforts have been introduced throughout Japan on television, in newspapers and magazines, and have contributed to raising the profile of Akita Prefecture.
- The impact that AIU has had on the local community is also significant. The fact that young people from throughout Japan and 51 countries and regions of the world continuously gather on our campus in the suburbs of Akita City, forming a community and that they are expanding their activity fields throughout the region is remarkable in a prefecture facing a declining and aging population.
- The economic ripple effect of AIU's presence is estimated to reach 4 billion yen annually (Akita Economic Research Institute, 2013). For example, the management company of the professional basketball team "Akita Northern Happinets" was established by one of the first graduates of AIU, and the number of graduates who remain in the prefecture and start their own businesses is increasing.
- AIU has also been able to ensure its presence in Japan, by obtaining large external funds from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to contribute to the globalization of the university. Through grants such as Inter-University Exchange Project (2011-2015), Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development (2012-2016), and the Top Global University Project (2014-2023), AIU has introduced active learning, dramatically expanded the number of partner institutions, and strengthened curriculum, student support, and internal governance in comparison with top U.S. liberal arts universities. These efforts have paved the way for further enhancement of education and research.
- According to the results of the CLA+ (a US test that quantitatively measures

writing and critical thinking skills), our students' "data literacy skills" at graduation were above the US students' average. In "ability to write logically" and "applied skills such as problem-solving," our students exceeded the average of U.S. Non-Native (non-native English speaker) students and approached the average of U.S. Native (native English speaker) students.

- AIU was ranked No. 15 overall (No. 1 among public universities) and No. 2 in educational enrichment (No. 2) in the Times Higher Education Japan University Rankings 2023, and in terms of internationality, it was ranked No. 1 consecutively from 2017 to 2021, before the Covid-19 pandemic, due to its ratio of international students and the number of international faculty members. In addition, AIU's educational method was selected as one of the Good Design Best 100 in the Good Design Awards in 2023, and the university's presence has grown in 20 years.

2 Changes in the Environment Surrounding AIU and New Challenges

◆ Environmental Changes

- The state of society, economy, science and technology are changing on a global scale, and information and communication technology is drastically developing. Thereby, cross-border connections are being activated in all areas of society, and the mobility of human resources and competition to acquire human resources is intensifying.
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has had a serious impact on the global economy, particularly in terms of energy and the supply of industrial materials. It has provoked a rise in military tensions not only in the vicinity of Ukraine but also worldwide, reminding us once again that conflicts between regions have a major impact around the world.
- The pandemic of the new coronavirus infection had a major impact on social life and the global economy. At AIU, we were unable to send students abroad and to accept international students. These challenges inspired possibilities for new forms of learning, such as online classes.
- In society, there is a growing trend to hire students with specialized knowledge due to reforms in work styles and the hiring of job-type personnel, and there are also indications that AI will replace many occupations that humans have performed in the future due to advances in AI.
- While many countries are accelerating investment in new growth fields such as digital and decarbonization, Japan has fewer highly specialized science and engineering personnel compared to other countries, and it has been pointed out that Japan needs to accelerate its efforts to develop such personnel. In response, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has taken the lead in fostering human resources for science and engineering by providing support to universities and other institutions that are working to strengthen the development of science and engineering for growth in digital and decarbonization fields.
- According to a 2015 estimate by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, the number of students entering college in 2033 is expected to be about 85% of the number in 2015, based on the 18-year-old population estimated

for 2033 and assuming the college enrollment rate remains the same as in 2015.

◆AIU' s Challenges

- While adhering to the liberal arts education that is the core of the AIU' s educational philosophy, it is necessary to develop graduates who can respond to changes in society and have the ability to operate digital and other forms of technology.
- AIU will develop graduates who can cope with increasing change and the future of society, by strengthening education for both integrated knowledge and human skills through Applied International Liberal Arts Education (AILA).
- As a public university, AIU needs to take on the challenge of solving the various issues Akita Prefecture is facing and contribute to creating new value while leveraging the resources and expertise of our university and our diverse network of domestic and international universities and companies.
- As the number of students entering universities is expected to decline in the future, and as the number of universities and Faculty of International Liberal Arts is increasing, it is important for us to differentiate ourselves more clearly from other universities to secure the number and quality of applicants and enrollments.
- When facilities are in need of maintenance, it is necessary to improve the overall attractiveness of AIU by renovating and upgrading aging facilities, such as the Administration Building.
- In order to sustain operations while enhancing the educational and research environment in the face of increasing personnel costs and prices, it is necessary to expand the financial base.

III Overview of AIU Long-Term Vision

We believe that the reason for AIU's growth over the past 20 years has been our sincere efforts to connect with educational channels and the community, refusal to give up on challenges, and uncompromising pursuit of quality, which has resulted in a growing circle of supporters and partners, serving as a connection points in every aspect of our work.

In the next decade, we will work with various entities to solve problems in Akita, Japan, and the world, through these connections and the development of Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA). AIU will evolve into a university that fosters human resources suitable for global leaders, combining knowledge, practical skills, and human abilities.

To achieve this goal, AIU will define strategies in the four areas of "education," "research," "social contribution" and "university administration," and promote initiatives based on the "AIU Core Values" (*) established in April 2024 as our action guidelines.

*AIU Core Values: The following three values and action guidelines for students, faculty and staff of the university:

"Embracing Diversity"

"Advancing Mutual Growth"

"Creating Value Together"

Mission

Fostering leaders in the global society by upholding "International Liberal Arts Education" as our educational philosophy.

Vision

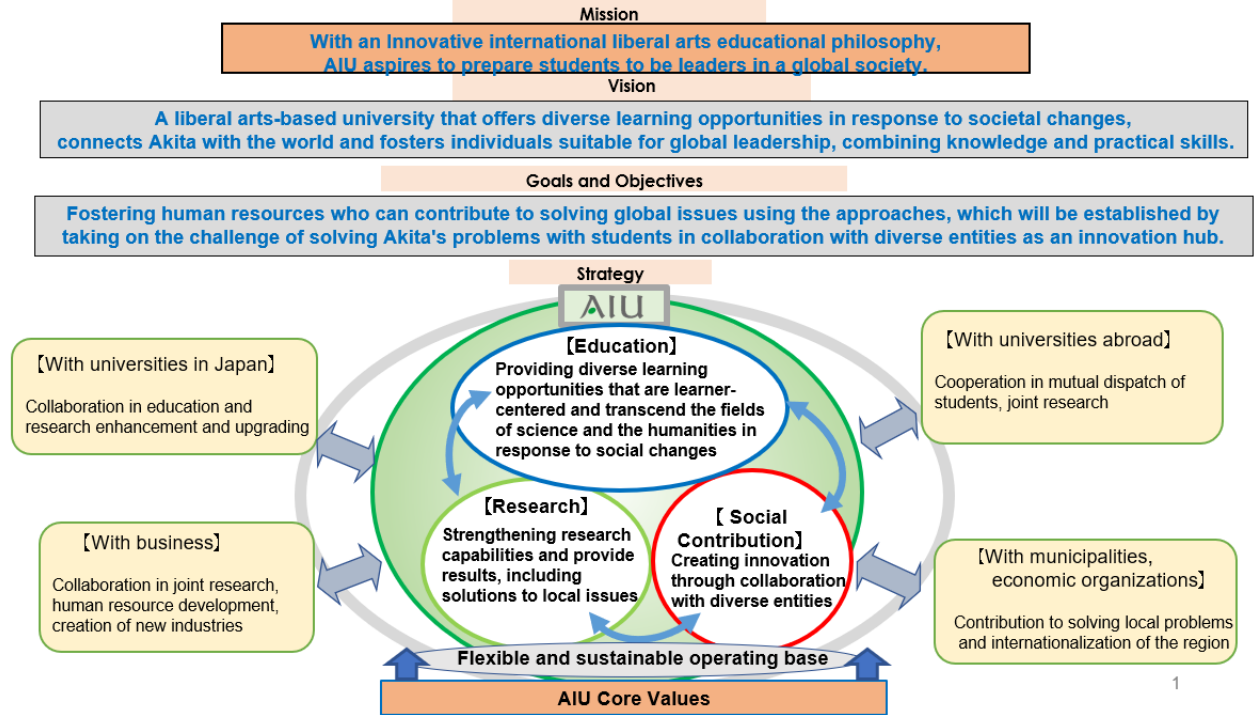
We envision the ideal state of the university in 10 years as follows.

A Liberal Arts-based University that offers diverse learning opportunities in response to changes in society connects Akita with the world, and fosters individuals who are suitable for Global Human Resources, combining knowledge and practical skills.

Goals and Objectives

The following summarizes what must be accomplished over the next 10 years to realize the vision described above.

Fostering human resources who can contribute to solving global issues using the approaches, which will be established by taking on the challenge of solving Akita's problems with students in collaboration with diverse entities as an innovation hub.



IV Strategies to Achieve the Long-Term Vision

The four areas of strategy, “Education,” “Research,” “Social Contribution,” and “University Administration,” are all interlocked with each other. Based on a “flexible and sustainable management foundation” (University Administration), AIU will promote “strengthening research capabilities and providing results, including solutions to local issues” (Research) with universities and other institutions in Japan and abroad, and it will lead to “creating innovation through collaboration with diverse entities” (Social Contribution). By involving students in these initiatives, AIU will realize “diverse learning opportunities that are learner-oriented and transcend the sciences and humanities in response to social changes” (Education) and develop human resources suitable for global leaders.

1 Education

“Providing diverse learning opportunities that are learner-oriented and transcend the sciences and humanities in response to social changes”

(1) Developing education based on liberal arts and in response to changes in society, including DX

- In addition to promoting International Liberal Arts Education (AILA), as stated in our educational philosophy, we will develop education that responds to societal changes and growth areas such as DX and GX.

(2) Deepening of academic learning

- Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA) aims to strengthen integrated knowledge by further enhancing International Liberal Arts Education, which promotes intellectual and personal growth through the experience of applying knowledge to real-world problems in an interdisciplinary manner.
- The Institute for Promotion of Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA), consists of the Center for Active Learning (ALC), Center for Collaborative Research & Outreach (CCRO), and Center for Creative Design & Data Science Center (CreDDS) - these will advance the activities in the field of education based on the AILA philosophy.
- We will enhance practical learning based on social changes through collaboration with companies, including the establishment of courses provided by companies with cutting-edge technologies and endowed courses.
- By promoting credit transfer and student exchange in deeper collaboration with partner universities such as Tohoku University and Nara Institute of Science and Technology, we aim to combine the strengths of the two universities with those of our own university and develop human resources.

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- Through the IR initiatives, we will improve the curriculum by verifying the level of learning achievement from various perspectives and conducting systematic curriculum inspection and evaluation.
 - In order to further strengthen the Graduate School Program, the educational system and content will be continuously reviewed and examined.
- (3) Enhancement of the environment as an international campus
- In order to maintain the University's strength as a "campus of intercultural space" where high-quality students from around the world gather to study, we will strive to secure the number and quality of exchange students from partner universities.
 - We will deepen courses related to Japanese language and culture to make Study Abroad even more attractive for students from partner universities.
- (4) Securing a motivated and diverse student body
- AIU will continue to recruit diverse human resources through the April and September admission systems and various types of entrance examinations to find students who have the qualities of global human resources.
 - In addition to the website, we will effectively utilize SNS and other means to promptly disseminate fresh information about AIU.
- (5) Enhancement of Student Support
- By promoting DEI* in student support, we will work to develop systems and environments to ensure that each student from diverse backgrounds is respected and that psychological and physical barriers are removed.
*DEI: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
 - AIU regards all aspects of student life as a place of education, including dormitories, student apartments, and "Subject-based Houses," and provides student support to help students grow both inside and outside the classroom, thereby promoting the strengthening of human resources, a pillar of Applied International Liberal Arts (AILA).
 - In addition, we will promote detailed career support, improving convenience and providing individual consultations with students, guidance, and company information sessions. We will also strengthen support for students by providing more information on entrepreneurship to help them make various career choices.
 - For students who wish to pursue higher professional development, the Academic and Career Support Center (ACSC) will provide support to enter

graduate schools in Japan and abroad.

- Nakajima Library will be open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and enhance students' autonomous study functions in the Active Learning Center (ALC).

2 Research

~Strengthening research capabilities including solutions to local issues and providing results~

(1) Enhancement of research on local issues and giving back to the community

- The Center for Collaborative Research & Outreach (CCRO), the Creative Design & Data Science Center (CreDDS), and other University resources will be used to research issues that the prefecture is facing, such as extending healthy life expectancy, introducing renewable energy, and addressing climate change, and to contribute to society by providing research results.

(2) Stimulating research through collaboration with partner universities in Japan and abroad

- In addition to overseas partner universities with which we have exchange Study Abroad Programs, we will increase partner universities for the purpose of research and activate academic exchange through joint research (including establishment of cyber research teams) using the online platform.
- AIU will actively engage in research in collaboration with other Universities in Japan while utilizing external funds such as the “Program on Open Innovation Platforms for Industry-academia Co-creation (COI-NEXT)” of the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST).

(3) Company cooperation and collaboration

- AIU will serve as a hub, collaborating with various entities, including companies with unique technologies from within and outside the prefecture, to conduct research aimed at solving regional issues from an interdisciplinary perspective, a characteristic of AIU, and to sophisticate our research.
- A place for community collaboration will be established on campus to facilitate collaborative research with community and companies.

3 Social Contribution

~Creating innovation through collaboration with diverse entities~

(1) Strengthening functions as an innovation hub

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- AIU will serve as a hub, collaborating with various entities, including domestic and international universities and companies, to link research results to creating new industries.
 - The hub function will be enhanced by developing a place for community collaboration on campus.

(2) Promote entrepreneurship education

- To produce graduates that will be active in the region, we will collaborate with Tohoku University and other universities in Japan and abroad to establish a human resource development program for those who aim to start their own businesses.
- Through the AIU Design LAB activities such as “Design Thinking Practice,” we will involve students in solving corporate issues, enhance their design thinking, and foster their entrepreneurial awareness.

(3) Contribution to regional internationalization

- In collaboration with local governments in the prefecture with which we have cooperative agreements, we will create programs to promote international understanding with student participation.
- The project will utilize the resources accumulated through implementing the “English Village” to further deepen the project’s content, which targets both within and outside of the prefecture.
- We will sophisticate English and Japanese language education in the region by enhancing initiatives such as Teachers’ Seminar and training of Japanese language education.

(4) Community contribution activities utilizing alumni networks

- We will enhance and strengthen cooperation with alumni associations, and also promote their participation in regional contributions such as disseminating information related to Akita Prefecture.
- By continuing relationships with international students from partner universities after returning to their home countries, we will create a grassroots network between our prefecture and the rest of the world.

4 University Administration

~Flexible and sustainable management foundation~

(1) Promotion of maintenance based on the facility development concept

- The aging Administration Building (A Building) will be developed to improve student services, increase administrative efficiency, and to

enhance the research environment.

- The Student Hall (F Building) will be renovated to create an open space that can be used by the local community and function as a facility where the university can promote collaborative research with the community and companies.
- The lecture buildings (B and C Buildings) and the Student Hall (F Building), which have been in use since the establishment of the university, will be maintained to extend its service life and to improve the learning environment.
- We will improve the attractiveness of the campus by developing a landscape with symbolic characteristics, and continue to study campus development to meet future needs.

(2) Expansion of financial base

- We will expand our financial base through the efforts such as obtaining external research funds.
- In light of the current state of educational content and the educational environment, AIU will consider securing income by reviewing student fees including tuition.

(3) Establish a flexible and sustainable University management system

- AIU will be managed based on teaching and learning management.
- To realize the university philosophy and the measures outlined in this vision, we will recruit outstanding faculty members from all over the world through open recruitment and improve the overall quality of the faculty body by enhancing and strengthening Faculty Development.
- While taking into account the purpose of “work-style reform,” we will promote efficient and flexible work styles and create an environment where everyone can work comfortably with an emphasis on diversity, which will lead to long-term retention and recruitment of capable faculty and staff members, as well as human resource development from a long-term perspective.
- We will promote management, including personnel evaluation so that faculty and staff members are motivated to perform their duties and can exercise their abilities. We will improve operational efficiency by streamlining operations and enhancing individual capabilities.
- AIU will promote DX and DEI to improve work efficiency and environment.