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WUF

WORLD UNIVERSITIES FOUNDATION

AN INTRODUCTION TO WUF

One voice for every university.

Prof. Bassem Khafagy, Founder and Secretary General
World Universities Foundation · Founded 2018

San Diego, California · Antalya, Türkiye
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AT A GLANCE

THE GLOBAL VOICE FOR ACADEMIA.

The World Universities Foundation (WUF) is an independent, inclusive and global organization that gives the world's universities one voice. It brings universities of every size, type and region to one table, together with the governments, organizations, companies, students and thinkers who shape their future, so that universities shape the decades ahead instead of reacting to them.

FOUNDED	2018
HEADQUARTERS	San Diego, California · Antalya, Türkiye
MANDATE	REACT: Represent, Empower, Advocate, Celebrate, Transform
SERVES	More than 35,000 universities in more than 200 countries, and everyone who shapes their future
CONVENES	Summits, forums, workshops, digital roundtables and awards for universities and their partners
INDEPENDENCE	No political, religious, partisan or national ties
FOUNDER AND SECRETARY GENERAL	Prof. Bassem Khafagy
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WHY NOW

STRONG ONE BY ONE. SILENT TOGETHER.

For centuries universities have been the architects of human progress: the guardians of what humanity knows and the engines of what it does next. No other institution carries a comparable responsibility for knowledge, leadership, ethics and the progress of societies.

Yet when the world discusses the future of education, universities speak in fragments. Each is strong on its own. Together they have no shared space to deliberate and no voice that can speak for all of them. The networks that do exist serve a small fraction of institutions, and the great majority of the world's universities have never had a seat at the global table.

Meanwhile the forces at work on universities are larger and faster than any in living memory. Artificial intelligence is changing how knowledge is created and passed on. Climate change is redefining what responsibility means. Shifts in geopolitics are altering the ground on which academic cooperation stands, and public trust in institutions is being tested everywhere. These changes are structural, not passing, and their consequences will reach well beyond this generation.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

How knowledge is created and passed on

CLIMATE

What responsibility means

GEOPOLITICS

The ground of academic cooperation

PUBLIC TRUST

Tested in every country

> If universities do not define their own future, others will define it for them.

Governments, markets and technology platforms will shape the future of learning whether universities take part or not. Adaptation without ownership leads to dependency, and change without a shared vision leads to drift. WUF exists so that universities move from reacting to change to shaping it.

THE SCALE WE SERVE

THE LARGEST COMMUNITY OF INSTITUTIONS ON EARTH.

35,000+
universities

200+
countries

260+ MILLION
students

15+ MILLION
academics

20+ MILLION
administrative staff

1+ MILLION
executives and leaders

These institutions form the minds of every profession, carry out much of the world's research and anchor the life of their cities and regions. Their reach is unmatched by any other community on Earth.

> **THE GAP WUF CLOSES**
>
> More than 80 percent of the world's universities have never had a seat at the global table. WUF exists for all of them.

Source: World Universities Foundation, 2026.

WHAT WUF IS

ONE TABLE, OPEN TO EVERY UNIVERSITY.

WUF is built to serve the entire higher education ecosystem. It is a democratic assembly, not an exclusive club. It preserves the diversity of the world's institutions, by size, by system, by region and by culture, and it gives them a neutral place where they can debate freely, disagree respectfully and act together when global responsibility requires it.

WUF champions every legitimate institution: regional, technical, emerging and community universities alongside the established ones. A university's value is measured by how well it serves its students and its society, not by its place in a ranking.

WUF is independent and impartial. It has no ties to any political, religious, partisan or national interest, and it speaks for universities and for no one else. That independence is what allows a university in any country to trust it.

Founded in 2018, WUF works from two headquarters, in San Diego, California, and in Antalya, Türkiye. Between them they form a bridge between the Global North and the Global South, and a meeting point that is open and accessible to every region.

A COLLECTIVE VOICE, NOT A UNIFORM ONE

Universities differ by mission, size, culture and place, and that diversity is a strength. WUF does not centralize or rank them. It gives them a common platform, owned by universities, where they can speak together.



THE MANDATE

REACT: FROM REACTING TO LEADING.

For a long time universities have been asked to react to forces they did not choose. WUF turns the word around. Its mandate is five words, always in this order.

R — REPRESENT

Speaks for all 35,000+ universities and gives every legitimate institution, whatever its size, wealth or region, an equal seat at the global table.

E — EMPOWER

Builds the capacity, intelligence and resilience of universities and of the people who lead, teach and work in them, with data, frameworks and direct support.

A — ADVOCATE

Carries the collective voice of universities into the places where policy and the future of learning are decided, and protects academic freedom against political and commercial pressure.

C — CELEBRATE

Recognizes the achievements of universities, educators and innovators, and the value they give to society, to raise public trust in higher education.

T — TRANSFORM

Helps universities become smart, sustainable and inclusive institutions, ready to use new technologies wisely and to withstand the crises of the decades ahead.

REACT.

Represent · Empower · Advocate · Celebrate · Transform.
Five words, always in this order.

WHO WUF SERVES

NOT ONLY UNIVERSITY LEADERS.

Universities do not exist on their own. Their future is shaped by everyone who leads, funds, regulates, equips and depends on them. WUF brings this whole ecosystem to the same table.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Presidents, rectors and vice-chancellors; chancellors and board chairs; provosts and vice presidents for research; chief operating officers and general secretaries; heads of technology, innovation and quality.

POLICY AND PUBLIC BODIES

Ministers of higher education and of education; parliamentary education committees; national higher education councils and accreditation bodies; research councils and public funding agencies; the education leaders of international organizations.

INDUSTRY, TECHNOLOGY AND INVESTMENT

Leaders of education technology and learning platforms; heads of education at technology companies; academic publishers and analytics companies; the employers who hire graduates; investors in education.

STUDENTS AND SOCIETY

Student and youth leaders; alumni networks and civil society organizations; thinkers, authors and independent experts; the media that tell the story of higher education.

> When those who make education policy sit at the same table as those who lead universities, education stops being a regulated sector and becomes a shared global priority.

WHAT WUF DOES

FIVE AREAS OF WORK.

WUF is organizing its work around five areas, each built on the long trends that shape the future of universities rather than on the pressures of a single year.

1 ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY

A unified voice for universities wherever global decisions are made; alliances that cross borders and bridge the Global North and South; shared declarations that set direction toward 2040 and beyond.

2 DATA AND INTELLIGENCE

Independent, unbiased data on the world's universities; benchmarks that measure a university's impact on society, not its prestige.

3 INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Helping universities adopt artificial intelligence and other new technologies responsibly; networks around university innovation districts; research across borders on the great shared challenges.

4 INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Pathways that bring diverse leaders to the top of university governance; professional development for the world's 15+ million academics; dedicated networks that advance equity in every academic role.

5 RESILIENCE AND CONTINUITY

Rapid response frameworks that keep teaching and research going through conflict, disaster and pandemic; support for the long term survival of institutions under strain.

> Education is a human right that must survive every crisis.

THE FOURTEEN DOMAINS

EVERY PART OF UNIVERSITY LIFE.

To turn its mandate into practice, WUF works across fourteen domains of university life. Progress in one strengthens the others.

1 EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION
Teaching and curricula built around inquiry, problem solving and real application.

2 INNOVATIVE RESEARCH
Research across disciplines and borders that answers humanity's largest questions.

3 SUSTAINABLE AND SMART CAMPUS
Campuses that save energy and resources and serve as living models of sustainability.

4 STAFF AND STUDENT EMPOWERMENT
Communities in which students and staff are supported and able to thrive.

5 LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT
Continuous development for those who teach and those who lead.

6 TOTAL QUALITY
Quality as a culture across teaching, research and service, not a compliance exercise.

7 CREATIVE COLLABORATION
Partnerships between universities, industry, government and civil society.

8 EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT
Fair, global and diverse pathways for students and faculty.

9 HIGHER ACADEMIC RANKING
New measures that recognize real impact on society, inclusion and innovation.

10 AI AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Artificial intelligence and data used with confidence and with care.

11 SMART ACADEMIC PUBLISHING
Open, modern ways of sharing knowledge with the world.

12 FINANCIALS AND BUDGETING
Resilient finances that protect independence and allow investment.

13 SMART AND STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE
Transparent, accountable and agile decision making.

14 UNIVERSITY INFLUENCE
Universities as anchors of their communities and voices in public life.

HOW WUF CONVENES

WORKING PARLIAMENTS, NOT PASSIVE CONFERENCES.

WUF gatherings are built for decisions. Each format has a purpose, and together they keep the conversation going through the year.

GLOBAL SUMMITS

The annual meeting of the sector's leaders to debate shared priorities and agree on direction.

THEMATIC AND REGIONAL FORUMS

Focused meetings on one domain or one region that turn broad direction into practical plans.

WORKSHOPS AND ACTION LABS

Hands on sessions where leaders and their teams solve problems they face this year.

EXHIBITIONS

Showcases of educational technology, smart campus solutions and new academic writing.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

Structured meetings between universities, companies and governments that lead to signed agreements and joint programs.

DIGITAL ROUNDTABLES

Year round online sessions open to every institution, wherever it is and whatever its means.

AWARDS

Evenings that honor universities, professors and leaders for their impact on society.



WHAT A UNIVERSITY GAINS

A SEAT, A VOICE AND A CIRCLE OF PEERS.

A university of any size, in any country, gains five things from taking its place at the WUF table.

A SEAT	Equal standing beside the established institutions of every region, whatever its size, age or ranking.
A VOICE	Its concerns carried into the places where the future of higher education is decided, as part of a voice that speaks for all universities.
PEERS	Leaders who face the same questions in other systems and regions, and partners for teaching, research and joint programs.
INTELLIGENCE	Independent data and benchmarks that show where it stands and where it can go, measured by its impact on society.
RECOGNITION	A stage on which its achievements, its educators and its contribution to its community are seen and honored.

> Whatever the size of your university, there is a seat for it at this table.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

SIX COMMITMENTS.

ECOSYSTEM OVER ELITISM

Every legitimate institution counts: regional, technical and emerging universities alongside established ones.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INTEGRITY

The university is protected as a place of open inquiry and truth.

INCLUSION

The voices of the Global South are amplified, and the linguistic and cultural diversity of scholarship is protected.

AUTHENTIC SUPPORT

Success is measured by real change in institutions and communities, not by the prestige of a network.

ETHICAL INNOVATION

New technologies, artificial intelligence among them, serve the human mission of education.

LOCAL AND GLOBAL STEWARDSHIP

A university must never be a foreigner in its own land. Humanity over metrics; service over self-preservation.



INDEPENDENT BY DESIGN

TRUSTED BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO NO ONE.

WUF's value to universities depends on one condition: that every university, in every country, can trust it. That trust rests on four principles.

IMPARTIAL

WUF has no political, religious, partisan or national ties, and takes no side between countries or systems.

OWNED BY UNIVERSITIES

The direction of WUF is set with the universities it serves, through open dialogue and shared declarations.

OPEN TO EVERY REGION

Two headquarters, in San Diego, California, and in Antalya, Türkiye, give WUF a home in both the Global North and the Global South.

PLAIN ABOUT ITS WORK

WUF says what it does and publishes what it learns.

TWO HEADQUARTERS

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
ANTALYA, TÜRKIYE

A bridge between the Global North and the Global South.



IN ONE SENTENCE

The World Universities Foundation is the global voice for academia, representing, empowering, advocating for, celebrating and transforming the world's 35,000+ universities and everyone who shapes their future.

TOWARD 2040

THE QUESTIONS ONLY UNIVERSITIES CAN ANSWER TOGETHER.

WUF asks the global university community to look beyond the next accreditation cycle and the next ranking, to the world of 2040 and beyond. The questions are civilizational, and no single institution or region can answer them alone.

1 What kind of graduates will humanity need?

2 Which forms of knowledge must be protected, and which advanced with care?

3 Which ethical lines must hold in an age of powerful technologies?

4 What role should universities play in challenges that cross borders, disciplines and political systems?

WUF's gatherings and declarations exist to give these questions a shared answer, expressed by universities themselves: not a legal instrument, but a moral, intellectual and strategic compass for the decades ahead.

> The university matters too much to humanity to be shaped in fragments.

WHERE WE BEGIN

THE TABLE IS SET.

WUF is building the permanent home that the world's universities have never had: a place to meet, a voice to speak with, and the data, frameworks and support to act.

It begins with a conversation. WUF is opening it with university leaders, policymakers, partners and students in every region, at W-U-F.org and on its LinkedIn page, and it will grow through the gatherings, publications and programs described in these pages.

Every university that shares the conviction that the future of the university must be shaped by universities themselves is invited to take part from the start, as a founding voice rather than a later guest.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

SPEAK WITH US. RE-IMAGINE THE UNIVERSITY WITH US.

1
FOLLOW

The work of WUF at W-U-F.org and on LinkedIn.

2
WRITE

Your university's questions and ideas to info@w-u-f.org.

3
TAKE PART

Bring your voice to the gatherings WUF convenes.

Whatever the size of your university and wherever it stands, there is a seat for you at this table.

> The world is changing, humanity is watching, and universities, acting together, can still lead.

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