

INITIATIVE BRIEF · OCTOBER 2026

State of Universities Annual Report

Where the world's universities stand, and where they must go.

SUAR27 · FOUNDING EDITION 2027 · SUAR28 · FIRST FULL REPORT 2028

WUF
WORLD UNIVERSITIES FOUNDATION

AN INITIATIVE OF THE
WORLD UNIVERSITIES FOUNDATION

SUAR.NEWS

SUAR AT A GLANCE

The world's annual report on the state of the university.

The State of Universities Annual Report, SUAR, is the global reference on where the university stands and where it must go: the challenges it faces, the aspirations it holds, the ideas that are reshaping it and the decisions that will define its future, in every region of the world.

WHAT	A flagship annual report of the World Universities Foundation, WUF, on the state of the world's universities: global in scope, independent in judgment, rigorous in method and forward-looking in purpose.
WHY	The university is entering its most consequential decade, yet no report examines the sector as a whole. Leaders, governments and investors decide the future of 260+ million students on partial and fragmented evidence.
WHEN	Announced in 2026. SUAR27, the founding edition, in 2027. SUAR28, the first full report, in 2028. A new edition every year thereafter.
WHO	For university leaders, governments, international organizations, corporations, investors, scholars and every institution that shapes the future of higher education.
HOW	One global framework applied across fourteen domains of university life and every region, built on evidence verified at the source, reviewed by an independent editorial board and anchored in a complete register of the world's universities.
OUTCOME	The authoritative reference on the university worldwide, renewed every year, setting the agenda for the decade ahead.
THE CALL	Universities: take your place in the report. Governments and organizations: open your evidence. Corporations and partners: stand behind it as founding partners.

CONTENTS

Inside this brief



01	SUAR at a glance	2
02	The imperative	4
03	The initiative	6
04	Why now	12
05	Stakeholders	13
06	Value and outcomes	15
07	How it works	17
08	Roadmap	21
09	Home, governance and sustainability	23
10	Risks and safeguards	25
11	The call	26
A	The seal	27

THE IMPERATIVE

The university is entering its most decisive decade.

The forces now reshaping the university are faster, deeper and more global than any it has known. They reach every campus at once, and they will define what the university becomes for generations.

01	**Intelligent machines**	Artificial intelligence is transforming how knowledge is created, taught, verified and trusted, and with it the very purpose of the university.
02	**A new geography of demand**	The aspiration to higher education is rising in every region, and the institutions that answer it are multiplying and diversifying faster than any record can follow.
03	**The question of value**	Societies, governments and families ask, with new urgency, what universities return to them. The answer will decide public trust and public investment.
04	**Decisions without a map**	Ministers, rectors and investors commit resources for decades on partial and fragmented evidence about the sector they are shaping.

> A sector that cannot see itself whole cannot lead its own future.

THE IMPERATIVE

The largest community of knowledge on Earth deserves a report worthy of it.

The universities of the world educate the professionals, scientists and leaders of every society. Global rankings illuminate a few thousand of them through research output and reputation. The state of the university as a whole, in every region and of every kind, remains unreported.

35,000+
UNIVERSITIES

200+
COUNTRIES

260+ MILLION
STUDENTS

15+ MILLION
ACADEMICS

20+ MILLION
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

1+ MILLION
EXECUTIVES AND LEADERS

> More than 80 percent of the world's universities have no seat at the global table. SUAR brings every one of them into the picture of the world's higher education.

THE INITIATIVE · VISION

OUR VISION

Every decision about the future of the university, in every country, informed by a complete, independent and forward-looking understanding of where the university stands and where it must go.

SUAR is the flagship annual report of the World Universities Foundation on the state of the world's universities. Each edition examines the university in every region and across every dimension of its life, identifies the forces that are reshaping it, and sets out the choices that lie before its leaders. It is published every year, so that the progress of the decade can be read edition by edition.



THE INITIATIVE · WHAT SUAR REVEALS

Five lenses on the state of the university.

The value of SUAR lies in what it reveals. Every edition reads the university through five lenses.

01

The challenges

The pressures universities face, from financing and access to technology, trust and talent, examined region by region and type by type.

02

The aspirations

What universities in every part of the world seek to become, and what their societies ask of them.

03

The ideas

The innovations in teaching, research, governance and service that are already changing what a university can be.

04

The concepts

The models and frameworks that will define the university of the coming decades.

05

The trajectories

The direction of travel, and the decisions that leaders and governments must take now.

THE INITIATIVE · THE QUESTIONS

The questions every edition answers.

01 How many universities does the world have, of what kinds, and where?

02 Who gains access to higher education, and who is still left out?

03 How is artificial intelligence changing teaching, research and the work of the university?

04 Where are universities financially strong, and where are they at risk?

05 What do universities return to their cities, regions and economies?

06 How are academics, staff and leaders prepared for what comes next?

07 Which ideas and models are rising, and which are fading?

08 Where are universities under threat from crisis and conflict?

09 What do university leaders in every region expect of the decade ahead?

10 What must governments, partners and universities decide now?

> SUAR does not rank the university. It reads the state of the whole, and points to the decisions that matter.

THE INITIATIVE · FOURTEEN DOMAINS

Every dimension of university life.

SUAR examines the state of the university across the fourteen domains in which WUF works, so that every edition reads the institution whole: not research alone, not reputation alone, but everything a university is and does.

01	Excellence in Education	02	Innovative Research
03	Sustainable and Smart Campus	04	Staff and Student Empowerment
05	Leadership and Academic Development	06	Total Quality
07	Creative Collaboration	08	Effective Recruitment
09	Higher Academic Ranking	10	AI and Digital Transformation
11	Smart Academic Publishing	12	Financials and Budgeting
13	Smart and Strategic Governance	14	University Influence

THE INITIATIVE · THE GLOBAL REGISTER

The foundation beneath the report.

Beneath every edition stands the Global Register of Universities: the first complete register of the world's universities, in one common framework, renewed every year.

Every institution

Every university and higher education institution in every country, public and private, large and small, long established and new.

One common framework

Type, mission, ownership, size, languages and location recorded in one framework, so that systems can be compared across borders for the first time.

Verified at the source

Each institution confirms its own record, and every entry carries its source.

Renewed every year

A living register that shows how the university world grows and changes, year by year.

> The register is the instrument. The insight is the purpose. SUAR sees the whole so that it can speak for the whole.



THE INITIATIVE · PRINCIPLES

The principles that govern every edition.

01	**Global in scope**	Every region, every type of university and every system is examined on equal terms. No part of the university world is left outside the report.
02	**Independent in judgment**	The findings belong to SUAR alone. No partner, purchaser or sponsor reviews them before publication or shapes them.
03	**Rigorous in method**	One published framework, applied every year, with every finding traceable to its evidence.
04	**Beyond rankings**	SUAR publishes no league table. It measures what universities contribute to their societies, not the prestige they hold.
05	**Forward-looking**	Every edition looks ahead, identifying the trends and the decisions that will shape the decade.
06	**Continuous**	The same core framework from year to year, so that change can be measured and understood across a decade.
07	**Worthy of the world**	Written for leaders in every region, in a language that every reader can trust and act upon.

WHY NOW

This decade will define the university. It must be read as it unfolds.

A report on the state of the world's universities has been part of WUF's plans for years. When WUF set out to establish the most basic fact about the sector, how many universities the world has, the available sources disagreed and none was complete. That finding is the origin of SUAR, and the measure of the gap it closes.

Change is outpacing understanding

New institutions, new models and new forms of learning are emerging faster than any assessment of the sector.

The tools now exist

Modern data, analysis and global communication make a complete and verified report possible for the first time.

The world demands evidence

Governments, investors and societies ask what universities deliver. The answer must rest on evidence, not reputation.

A decade to read

Only a report that begins now can show how the university changes across the decade that will define it.



STAKEHOLDERS AND BENEFICIARIES

Built with the whole university world, for the whole world.

SUAR represents the entire world: every type of university, every region and every stakeholder in higher education.

AFRICA | ASIA | EUROPE | LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN | THE MIDDLE EAST | NORTH AMERICA | OCEANIA | SMALL ISLAND STATES

WHO	WHAT THEY CONTRIBUTE	WHAT THEY GAIN
Universities of every type	Their record, their evidence and their perspective	Recognition, insight and a clear view of their place in the world
University leaders	Their judgment on the state of the sector	The strategic intelligence to lead through the decade
Governments and regulators	National evidence and policy perspective	A complete and comparable view for policy and investment
International organizations	Expertise and existing evidence	A common global reference across systems
Corporations and investors	Partnership and perspective on skills and innovation	Intelligence on the sector they hire from and invest in
Scholars and research institutions	Expertise, analysis and review	A global body of evidence and authorship in a world report
Students, families and the public	Their questions and expectations	A trusted view of universities worldwide

STAKEHOLDERS · EVERY KIND OF UNIVERSITY

Every university has a place in the state of the world.

- Research universities
- Teaching universities
- Technical and polytechnic institutes
- Public universities
- Private universities
- Open and distance universities
- Specialized colleges and academies
- New and emerging universities
- Universities in crisis and conflict



> In SUAR, the oldest university and the newest stand within the same report, read by the same framework, and heard with the same weight.

VALUE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

What SUAR changes, and when.

Short term 2026 to 2027	Medium term 2028 to 2030	Long term The decade ahead
The framework and the fourteen domains set with leaders from every region	SUAR28, the first full report	The global reference for policy and investment in higher education
The Global Register of Universities established	A new edition every year	Every university in the world within view
Partners and contributors in every region engaged	Regional and thematic reports	A decade of comparable insight
SUAR27, the founding edition, published	Impact measures tested and refined	A shared language for the future of the university

> When the university can see its own state clearly, it can choose its own future.

VALUE · WHAT EACH READER GAINS

Strategic intelligence for every decision that shapes the university.

For university leaders

A clear view of the forces reshaping the sector and of the choices that lie before them.

For governments

A complete, comparable and independent view of their system beside every other.

For international organizations

A shared global reference for programs, policy and cooperation.

For corporations and investors

Insight into the institutions that form the talent and ideas of every economy.

For scholars

A global body of evidence on the university, renewed every year.

For the world

A trusted reading of the institutions that shape its future.



HOW IT WORKS · THE ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of every edition.

Each edition follows one architecture, so that every year stands beside the last and the decade can be read as a whole.

01	The State of the University	The global synthesis: the condition of the sector, the forces at work and the decisions ahead.
02	The Five Lenses	Challenges, aspirations, ideas, concepts and trajectories, read across the world.
03	The Fourteen Domains	The state of every dimension of university life.
04	The Regions	Dedicated chapters on every region of the world, including the small island states.
05	The Theme of the Year	One defining question examined in depth in each edition.
06	Foresight	The trends that will shape the next decade, and what they demand of leaders.
07	The Global Register	The complete register of the world's universities, the foundation of every finding.
08	Method and Sources	The framework, the evidence and its sources, published in full.

HOW IT WORKS · THE METHOD

One rigorous method, four movements.

1

Frame

The framework, the questions and the theme of the year are set with university leaders and experts from every region.

2

Gather

Evidence is assembled from official and institutional sources, and from the perspective of leaders and scholars in every region.

3

Verify

Universities confirm their records, findings are tested against their evidence, and every source is cited.

4

Publish

An independent editorial board reviews each edition before it is released to the world.



HOW IT WORKS · THE GLOBAL NETWORK

Built by the world's university community.

SUAR is built with scholars, research institutions and university leaders in every region of the world. Their combined knowledge gives the report a breadth, depth and credibility that no single team could achieve.

Every region represented

Each system is read by those who know it best, within one global framework.

Universities as partners

Universities contribute their records and their perspective, and see themselves in the whole.

Independent review

Every edition is reviewed by an editorial board of scholars from every region.

Recognition of contributors

Every contributing scholar and institution is named in the edition they helped to build.



HOW IT WORKS · THE YEARLY RHYTHM

One cycle, every year.

Frame

The year opens with the framework, the questions and the theme of the year.

Gather

Evidence and perspective are assembled from every region.

Verify

Records are confirmed and findings tested against their evidence.

Launch

The edition is reviewed, published and presented to the world.



EVERY REGION. EVERY KIND OF UNIVERSITY. ONE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK.

ROADMAP AND TIMELINE

From announcement to a global institution.

2026 — Announcement

SUAR is announced. The framework, the fourteen domains and the theme of the first edition are opened for consultation with leaders in every region.

2027 — SUAR27 · The founding edition

The framework published, the Global Register of Universities established, and the first findings on the state of the world's universities released.

2028 — SUAR28 · The first full report

The first complete report on the state of the world's universities, across every region and all fourteen domains.

2029 Onward — Every year

A new edition each year, with regional reports, the theme of the year and foresight for the decade.

Every five years — Review of the framework

An open review of the framework, keeping its core comparable over time.

SUAR · State of Universities Annual Report · the flagship report of the World Universities Foundation, published every year.

ROADMAP · MEASURES OF SUCCESS

How SUAR will measure its own success.

REACH	Every country and every region within the report.
PARTICIPATION	A growing number of universities contributing to every edition.
INFLUENCE	Findings used by governments, universities and partners in their decisions.
AUTHORITY	SUAR cited worldwide as the reference on the state of the university.
CONTINUITY	A complete series of editions, year after year, across the decade.



HOME AND GOVERNANCE

Published by WUF. Governed for independence.

01	**Home**	SUAR is the flagship report of the World Universities Foundation, under its work on data, intelligence and quality.
02	**Editorial board**	An independent board of scholars from every region safeguards the framework and reviews every edition before publication.
03	**Global network**	Scholars, research institutions and university leaders in every region contribute evidence and perspective.
04	**Corrections**	Every university may request a correction to its record through an open process.
05	**Data protection**	SUAR reports on institutions, never on individuals. No personal data on students or staff is published.

> The framework is public. The judgment is independent. The report serves the world.

SUSTAINABILITY

A REPORT BUILT TO ENDURE FOR DECADES.

SUAR is published every year and offered worldwide to governments, universities, international organizations, corporations and individuals. Its revenues sustain its independence and its growth.

The annual report

Each edition is offered to institutions, corporations and individual readers around the world.

Regional and thematic reports

Dedicated editions on regions, systems and defining themes.

Intelligence services

Briefings, benchmarking and custom analysis for universities, governments, corporations and organizations, under the same independent method.

Founding partners

Institutions and corporations that stand behind SUAR from its founding edition.



> No partner, sponsor or purchaser sees the findings before publication, and none can change them.

RISKS, ASSUMPTIONS AND SAFEGUARDS

Built to be trusted.

RISK	SAFEGUARD
Uneven evidence between countries	Multiple sources for every finding, verification at the source, and transparent citation.
Being read as one more ranking	No league table. Contribution to society measured in place of prestige.
Pressure from commercial or political interests	An independent editorial board and a firewall between revenue and findings.
Large systems overshadowing small ones	Every region and every type of university read on equal terms.
Disagreement on definitions	A published framework, open consultation and review every five years.
The scale of the task	A global network of contributors and a framework designed to grow with every edition.
Privacy	Institutional data only. No personal data is published.

NEXT STEPS AND CALL TO ACTION

Take your place in the state of the world's universities.

SUAR will be as strong as the university world that builds it. The founding edition begins now.



Universities

Contribute your record and your perspective to the founding edition.

Governments and organizations

Open your evidence and complete the picture of every system.

Corporations and partners

Stand behind SUAR as founding partners of a report built to last for decades.

Scholars and research institutions

Bring your expertise to the global network behind every edition.

SUAR.news · info@w-u-f.org · W-U-F.org

Prof. Bassem Khafagy
Founder and Secretary General
World Universities Foundation

APPENDIX A · THE SEAL

The seal of SUAR.

The beacon stands for the purpose of the report: to bring light to the whole of the university world and to show the way ahead. The laurel honors the achievement of universities in every region.



THE SEAL · COLOR



LIGHT PAGES AND PRINT



ON DARK BACKGROUNDS



ONE COLOR



EMBLEM · SMALL SIZES

Using the seal

Use it as it is: no new colors, no stretching, no changes to the lettering or the beacon. Keep clear space of one tenth of its diameter. Below 25 mm, use the emblem.

Where the world's universities stand, and where they must go.

The world's annual report on the state of the university: its challenges, its aspirations, its ideas and its future.

STATE OF UNIVERSITIES ANNUAL REPORT · SUAR.NEWS

WORLD UNIVERSITIES FOUNDATION

An initiative of the World Universities Foundation
W-U-F.org · info@w-u-f.org