

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2002, Kardan University has contributed immeasurably to the personal and professional success of students and enriched the intellectual, economic, and social fabric of communities at the local and national levels through the design and delivery of high-quality programs and services. Considering the ever-increasing complexities around the contemporary economic, demographic, and policy imperatives, higher education institutions such as Kardan University must respond proactively and strategically to the changing environmental conditions. Despite the obstacles confronting higher education in Afghanistan, Kardan University must adopt a broader vision of excellence, underscoring academic and professional pre-eminence as the cornerstone of its strategic direction.

Following the successful completion of Kardan University's inaugural strategic plan, Kardan University's second strategic plan sets out our overarching framework of significant priorities and commitments for the years 2021-2025. The strategic planning process is reviewed and led by the University's Strategic Planning Taskforce (PTF) under the leadership of Mr. Roeeen Rahmani, Kardan University's Chancellor. The PTF brings together University leaders, managers, faculty members, and staff to articulate a robust strategic direction for the University over the next five years. Furthermore, the PTF will meet regularly to review, assess and evaluate the departmental plans, initiatives, and their contributions towards the University's overarching strategic plan.

The strategic objectives, commitments, and initiatives outlined in this document are the key pillars of the strategic plan. They are deliberately designed as high-level statements since the University departments and offices will base their tangible and measurable plans based on these overarching plans. Some of the strategic elements are department-focused while others reflect the entire University's ecosystem with overlaps across units, departments, and offices.

This strategic plan is designed to be developed in consultation with our key stakeholders – namely, students, alumni, staff, faculty, and strategic partners who will continue to be key to its effective implementation. Under the direction of the PTF, Kardan University's teams will work collaboratively to integrate our key stakeholders' perspectives into the strategic planning processes, ensuring participatory and inclusive engagement at the assessment, planning, and continuous improvement phases. We will advance a unified stakeholder engagement model and common language in order to promote the exchange of constructive ideas and facilitate the adoption of effective practices as part of our strategic planning process. Among other consultation mechanisms, the Strategic Planning General Assembly will bring together around 101 diverse internal and external stakeholders to review and advise on the design and progress of the strategic plan on an annual basis.

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This document is intended to be a living and dynamic document. It will be updated, assessed, and updated periodically to ensure the most current and relevant strategies are in place towards our collective journey of excellence in higher education.

## **VISION**

*In the spirit of excellence, aspiring for knowledge and growth*

## **MISSION**

*A vibrant university, inspiring academic and professional excellence*

## **ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES**

Kardan University's community believes in six core values that guide the behaviors of our people and reflect our commitment to achieving excellence. Each of these values is chosen by our community and is reflected in everything we do as a value-driven institution.

### **Excellence**

We consistently nurture outstanding ideas in order to help our community achieve academic and professional excellence. Our people are committed to being the best as we strive to learn and grow as innovators and thought leaders in the higher education sector.

### **Collaboration**

We believe collaboration is the cornerstone of a thriving and inspiring institution. By working together and encouraging teamwork, we will support our community to achieve the vision and mission of the institution. We will celebrate and recognize collaborative work as the hallmark of our institutional success.

### **Integrity**

We will adhere to the highest professional and ethical standards. We will act with integrity and commit ourselves to an open and transparent work environment.

### **People**

Our people are our most vital assets, who are critical actors in shaping our strategic direction. We will invest in the well-being, intellectual growth, and professional development of our people.

### **Innovation**

We will constantly strive to redefine the standard of excellence in everything we do. We will challenge the conventional views and drive innovation in the higher education sector. We will pursue innovation with passion, ingenuity, and openness to change.

## **Strategic Objective 1**

### **To broaden the range of academic programs with a focus on excellence in teaching and learning**

Despite the noticeable achievements, the higher education sector in Afghanistan faces significant interrelated challenges, including lack of quality, accessibility, capacity building, and market-driven higher education programs, as highlighted in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF II) 2021-2025. Furthermore, Afghanistan's total tertiary education gross enrolment ratio of 9.7 percent represents one of the lowest indicators in the world (UNESCO, 2018). Thus, there is a demonstrated need for increased and high-quality academic programs to enhance higher education accessibility and effectiveness at the national level.

Since its founding in 2002, Kardan University has distinguished itself as an innovative and quality-driven academic institution. A combination of competitive factors, including national and international accreditations, qualified faculty, technology integration, rigorous academic standards, and a market-oriented approach has contributed towards the increased national demand for Kardan University's academic programs and services. While there is significant demand for graduate programs, there is a growing demand for new and innovative programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Building on Kardan University's demonstrated success in designing and delivering high-quality academic programs, there is a need to further expand the current academic programs to address the market and workforce requirements while effectively contributing to the socio-economic development priorities in Afghanistan as underscored in the ANPDF II. To this end, Kardan University will need to significantly expand access to a portfolio of high-quality academic programs that meet the human capital development priorities in Afghanistan.

This expansion may include degree programs, certificate programs, executive education programs, and customized academic offerings to meet the workforce needs across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Through the design and delivery of innovative and market-oriented academic programs, Kardan University will reassert its position as a leading provider of undergraduate, graduate, and professional education programs in Afghanistan. Kardan University will incrementally strengthen its staff and institutional capacities to enroll 12,000 students by 2025 while strategically advancing Kardan University's core mission and evolving academic priorities. The growth in student numbers will be supplemented by the increased investments in attracting top talent and enhanced learning and teaching environment, including world-class infrastructure, cutting edge student services and facilities.

### **Strategic Commitments**

- *Strategic Commitment 1*
- *Strategic Commitment 2*

- *Strategic Commitment 3*
- *Strategic Commitment 4*

## **Strategic Objective 2**

### **To attract and retain the best students and maximize their potential with a focus on enhanced student and alumni success programs and initiatives**

Every year, around 200,000 high school graduates register for Afghanistan’s nationwide university examination, also known as Kankor, with an estimated 40% of those who pass the examination enrolling at private universities, according to the National Examination Authority (NeXA). In addition, an increasing number of high school graduates aged between 18-23 apply to private universities directly given a multiplicity of factors, including lack of enrolment capacity at public universities, high-quality education at selected private universities, diversity of market-oriented academic programs, and employment prospects after graduation.

Inspiring academic and professional excellence among our students and alumni is at the core of Kardan University’s mission statement. For nearly two decades, Kardan University has created a significant socio-economic impact in Afghanistan through educating and inspiring over 30,000 globally-minded professionals across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. In addition to focusing on rigorous academic standards in the classrooms, Kardan University has contributed towards the students’ professional development through the establishment of Student Success Center – a unique and holistic platform offering students and alumni with lifelong and co/extra-curricular development opportunities, including but not limited to student clubs and societies, job placement and career development services, alumni development initiatives, national and international competitions, and industry engagement. This balanced approach towards student and alumni development has resulted in increased demand for Kardan University graduates in the market, demonstrated by an estimated 88% graduate employment rate, as per the impact assessment conducted for the years 2014-2018. Over the next five years, Kardan University will increase its student recruitment efforts to identify and enroll the best and brightest high school graduates from across Afghanistan. Beyond the delivery of traditional marketing and enrolment strategies, Kardan University will redefine its student recruitment strategies emphasizing greater faculty involvement, high school outreach initiatives, digital media, and context-specific innovative public engagement activities. We will redouble our efforts towards creating the conditions that will enhance student recruitment retention and success. Furthermore, we will seek creative and meaningful ways to develop meaningful student and alumni success programs aimed at inspiring the next generation of globally-minded professionals and leaders.

### **Strategic Commitments**

- *Strategic Commitment 1*
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### **Strategic Objective 3**

#### **To promote research excellence through knowledge generation, dissemination, and impact**

Over the past five years, Kardan University has made achieving research excellence a fundamental strategic priority, as demonstrated through the establishment and strengthening of the Department of Research and Development. As a research-oriented academic institution, Kardan University is ranked among the top universities in Afghanistan with dedicated research capabilities as demonstrated through the publication of ISSN-registered academic journals, formation of a Research Society mobilizing national and international researchers, facilitation of faculty's research publications in leading international journals, as well as provision of research grants, symposia, and conferences. From Kankor examination reform to achieving the sustainability development goals and boosting the national economy in collaboration with the industry partners, Kardan University's researchers continue to examine and help tackle some of the most complex socio-economic challenges in Afghanistan. Over the next five years, we will further strengthen our research capabilities in order to promote a culture of research and effectively contribute towards the development of a knowledge-based economy in Afghanistan. Furthermore, we will make increased investments towards publishing textbooks, including teaching and learning resources, to address the significant gap in the availability and accessibility of effective and relevant educational books and resources in Afghanistan.

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- *Strategic Commitment 1*
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- *Strategic Commitment 4*

### **Strategic Objective 4**

#### **To foster a sense of affinity among Kardan University’s community of individuals demonstrated through the development of enduring relationships and lifelong commitments**

As Afghanistan’s first and leading private University, Kardan University has consistently nurtured a positive institutional image that fosters feelings of belonging, pride and trust among our current and prospective students, employees, alumni, and strategic partners. By advancing academic and professional excellence since it was founded in 2002, Kardan University has distinguished itself as a preeminent brand in Afghanistan’s competitive private higher education landscape. This public recognition as a preeminent institution presents Kardan University with a unique opportunity to further mobilize its critical mass of stakeholders to create a broader institutional and societal impact. A dedicated and systematic focus on achieving enhanced affinity among Kardan University’s community will result in a greater sense of ownership, commitment, and engagement towards the realization of our vision and mission. To foster a sense of affinity and belonging among our community, we will make significant improvements and investments in key growth areas such as recruitment and enrollment, merchandising, student involvement, and academic reputation, in order to reassert our position as the dream university and as the leader in the higher education landscape in Afghanistan. Furthermore, we will seek innovative and creative ways to revamp Kardan University’s brand, enhance public understanding of our brand, engage our internal and external stakeholders, and ultimately create a stronger relationship between Kardan University and our key stakeholders while advancing our core mission.

#### **Strategic Commitments**

- ***Strategic Commitment 1***
- ***Strategic Commitment 2***
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## **Strategic Objective 5**

### **To invest in and develop a thriving campus while strengthening staff, faculty and institutional capacities**

As an innovative and progressive industry leader, Kardan University is renowned for its ability to respond to the evolving higher education requirements and deliver exceptional academic and professional programs aligned with the national priorities. Securing a permanent and custom-built campus for Kardan University continues to be one of the most fundamental strategic priorities as reflected in the Vision of Excellence (2015-2020), our inaugural five-year strategic plan.

Over the next five years, we remain committed to creating an enabling environment where growth will be embraced and institutionalized across the University's ecosystem, including academic affairs and professional services. The strategic growth commitments will be designed and delivered twofold.

First, Kardan University needs to develop a permanent, custom-built campus that effectively responds to our strategic commitments, sustainability imperatives, and future growth-focused ambitions. The current campus environment characterized by leased buildings and limited facilities is unsustainable, increasingly hindering the University's provision of high-quality academic and professional services. Furthermore, the current campuses negatively affect Kardan University's ability to innovate, expand, and deliver world-class services. By investing in the development of a permanent campus in the near future, Kardan University will be uniquely positioned not only to achieve its strategic objectives but will lead the higher education sector through increased innovative, impactful, and market-oriented services and programs.

Second, as the campus development initiative represents a significant institutional expansion, there will be a need to simultaneously strengthen our staff and institutional capacities to meet the growth priorities. We will enhance our administrative and academic systems, policies, and procedures to meet the new campus requirements and future growth imperatives through a comprehensive system development framework. In addition to effective system development, we will continue to attract top talent in our academic and professional units and develop their capacities by designing and implementing robust strategic initiatives. By creating a custom-built campus and focusing on system development in tandem, Kardan University will be able to usher in a new era of excellence in higher education and effectively compete with leading universities nationally and internationally.

### **Strategic Commitments**

- ***Strategic Commitment 1***

- *Strategic Commitment 2*
- *Strategic Commitment 3*
- *Strategic Commitment 4*

## Strategic Initiatives

### **Strategic Initiative I: To design and develop high impact initiatives including the formation of Centers of Excellence that respond to the evolving market needs and national development priorities**

Kardan University is uniquely positioned to contribute knowledge and expertise towards the sectoral and national development priorities given its leadership role in the higher education sector. Consistent with its vision and mission, Kardan University envisions designing and delivering high-impact initiatives that tackle significant developmental gaps across the public, private, and non-profit sectors over the next five years. Building on its success in higher education administration and leadership, Kardan University intends to establish niche Centers of Excellence in targeted fields (e.g., higher education, capacity development, technology) where we have demonstrated strength and leadership. These interventions will contribute to developing responsive and effective national institutions while assisting Kardan University to meet its funding and financial sustainability priorities. By responding to the market needs, Kardan University will be able to reassert its industry lead, address national development priorities, and advance our institutional competitiveness and relevance over the next five years.

### **Strategic Initiative II: To establish the Kardan Foundation as an integral part of Kardan University to advance a knowledge society and contribute to the prosperity of communities across Afghanistan**

Since it was founded in 2002, Kardan University has advanced human capital development and new knowledge through a diverse range of academic and research programs. Furthermore, we have addressed societal needs and market demands by linking Kardan University's work with the broader socio-economic context in Afghanistan as part of a coherent institutional framework. Kardan University's Office of Sustainability coordinates our contributions to society in addition to the strategic initiatives undertaken by our academic and research divisions. As part of our societal commitments, we have sponsored mobile libraries, national and international sports competitions, offered scholarships and financial assistance opportunities to thousands of promising youths, supported diverse charitable causes, and created thousands of internship and employment opportunities. Furthermore, we are the only academic institution in Afghanistan to be recognized for our sustainable development impact in Afghanistan, as demonstrated through our first-time placement at the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (2020). Given the significance of Kardan University's societal contributions, there is a need to streamline and consolidate



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our strategic initiatives by establishing the Kardan Foundation. As initially reflected in our Vision of Excellence (2015-2020), this long-standing strategic commitment will become our primary vehicle to design and deliver impactful socio-economic, cultural, and educational initiatives based on the developmental needs in Afghanistan. The Kardan Foundation will ultimately serve as a precedent and pioneering initiative that will inspire other universities across Afghanistan to institutionalize philanthropic and service-focused work as part of their core mission.