

Beyond MOUs

Building Meaningful U.S.-Uganda University Partnerships Roundtable



STRONGER TOGETHER

U.S. AND UGANDA HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

Building Effective U.S.–Uganda Higher Education Partnerships

Understanding Institutional Differences and
Creating Long-term Collaboration

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Why Partnerships Matter

Universities are among the few institutions that combine education, research, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and international collaboration under one roof.

In almost all contexts, they are among any country's greatest strategic assets.

Universities Create Relationships Governments Alone Cannot.

They provide:

- Long-term institutional trust
- Research collaboration
- Faculty exchanges
- Student mobility
- Entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Science diplomacy
- Regional influence

Universities Anchor Regional Development:

- Stanford → Silicon Valley
- UNC/Duke/NC State → Research Triangle
- Arizona State → Innovation ecosystem

Strong partnerships require understanding—not simply shared interests.

Understanding the Two Systems

United States: Highly decentralized. Accredited by regional bodies. High institutional autonomy and diverse funding (Tuition, Endowment, Federal Grants).

Individual faculty often initiate partnerships

Flexible curriculum

Multiple funding models

Starting Point -> Student or Faculty Exchange



Uganda: Regulated by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). Centralized curriculum standards. Public institutions are state-linked; private institutions are rapidly growing but heavily tuition-dependent.

Institutional approval is often expected

More structured academic programs

Greater dependence on tuition and government support

Starting Point—> joint research



What Can Partnership Look Like

- Student Exchange – full time students, summer programs, study abroad
- Dual Degrees - 2+2, 1+3, 3+1, 1+1
- Faculty Exchange, joint research, delegation visits
- Curriculum sharing or co-design
- Online programs
- Custom training courses
- Centers and Physical presences (co-branded or new entities)

Partnerships can be built directly between institutions without U.S. Embassy involvement—though we are happy to be part of the conversation.

Educational landscape is massive. People know the big names. Be open to new ideas.

Things to keep in mind

Academic Calendars: Uganda's secondary school and university calendars do not match. Public secondary schools typically follow a Feb-Dec cycle, with graduation in December. International schools and universities often follow a Fall/Spring schedule, like the United States with a summer break. Calendars should always be clarified.

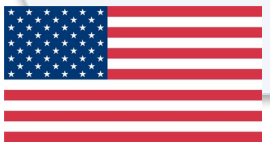
Pedagogical Shift: Transitioning from "Rote Learning" (standard in many Ugandan secondary schools) to "Competency Based Curriculum" U.S. models requires deliberate faculty training.

Relationship-First: Partnerships in Uganda are built on personal trust and institutional visits, not just email correspondence. MOUs often "stall" without a face-to-face handshake. In-person visits make the difference.

Why the U.S. and Uganda Are Good Partners

United States

Research infrastructure
Graduate and Executive education
Interdisciplinary programs
Funding opportunities
Technology commercialization
Global networks



Uganda

Young population
Growing university sector
Strong regional influence in East Africa
National Shift to CBC
Community engagement expertise
High-demand workforce sectors



Historically Great Partners; but why pay attention now?

Education Abroad more attainable- Steady economic growth and expanded access to quality education in Uganda is contributing to more Ugandan students who are willing and able to invest in U.S. higher education.

- The number of Ugandan students studying in the United States has increased almost 90% over the last ten years.
- From 2023-2025, Uganda saw an almost 35% increase in students studying in the United States according to the 2025 Open Doors report.

More Higher Education Options - Public universities increased from six in 2006 to 15 in 2025, and private universities increased from 21 to 48 institutions.

TVET Expansion: dramatic growth in sector and new TVET law passed in March 2025 to modernize and standardize regulatory practices and credentialing across the sector.

The Best Partnerships Connect Countries beyond Institutions

Where Uganda's development priorities intersect with U.S. university expertise, research capacity, technology, and innovation

Health & Life Sciences

Major public health needs + growing research capacity

Biomedical research • Public health • One Health • Medical training • Pharmaceuticals

Agriculture & Agribusiness

Agriculture remains central to Uganda's economy and employment

AgTech • Food security • Value chains • Agricultural research

Energy

Expanding energy access and significant renewable energy potential

Renewable energy • Energy systems • Environmental science

Technology & Digital Innovation

Young population + growing startup and digital ecosystem

AI & data science • FinTech • Cybersecurity • Digital education • Entrepreneurship

Infrastructure & Urban Development

Rapid population growth is driving demand for infrastructure

Engineering • Construction • Smart cities • Transportation • Water systems

Tourism & Conservation

Natural resources create opportunities for sustainable economic growth

Conservation • Hospitality • Ecotourism • Wildlife management • Environmental research

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