



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN
PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

January 31, 2008

TO: Campus Community
FROM: Neil Kerwin, President
SUBJECT: Campus Update

The spring semester is well underway and there are a number of items to report.

Strategic Planning

When I announced the start of a new strategic planning effort, I noted that a steering committee would be formed to assist in developing the plan. Consistent with the general approach to planning outlined in my November memorandum, the steering committee will be broadly representative of the major campus constituencies and will carry out the following functions:

- consider the scope of the plan
- determine the types of information and data needed to support the planning effort
- maintain communication with university constituencies and units throughout the planning process
- coordinate communication with specialized task forces or workgroups focusing on specialized or technical elements of the plan
- hold regular public meetings for the university community to gather input
- review and assess goals and objectives developed by the campus community for inclusion in the plan, and ensure such proposals, regardless of source, are given due consideration and are available for review by the wider community
- develop a number of broad themes that capture the major messages of the proposed plan and will serve as both a preface and executive summary for both internal and external constituencies
- based on proposals and comments from the campus community, develop a draft strategic plan, including commentary, and submit the draft to the community for comment
- following receipt and consideration of comments from the university community, develop a revised draft strategic plan for review by the president prior to submission to the Board of Trustees for formal action

In my November communication, I proposed the following schedule for the planning effort:

Phase 1 (November 2007–February 2008)

- Establish the scope of the plan through discussion and recommendations from campus constituencies on subjects to be covered;
- Compile and distribute information on the status of the university, trends in the higher education environment, and external influences that may be important;
- Convene a steering committee of representatives from campus constituencies and presidential appointees based on input from the university community;
- Submit the scope of the plan to the Board of Trustees for review.

Phase 2 (February 2008–July 2008)

- Discussion constituencies, organizations, and individuals consider available information, review areas included in the scope of the plan, develop proposed goals, and communicate goals (including broad themes) and commentary to the steering committee.
- Steering committee interacts with key constituencies, groups, and individuals to clarify, discuss, and expand proposed goals.
- Board reviews and comments on progress of the plan.
- Steering committee develops a draft strategic plan, proposes metrics to measure performance, and submits plan to community for review and comment; responsible officials estimate costs and draft plan.

Phase 3 (August 2008–November 2008)

- Steering committee meets with key constituencies to hear comments, criticisms, and additional recommendations on draft plan.
- Steering committee completes proposed plan with commentary on major recommendations considered and rejected and forwards the plan to the president for review and action.
- Campus constituencies communicate their views on the proposed plan.
- President presents proposed plan to Board of Trustees for review and possible revision and approval.

Phase 4

- Implementation of the plan begins—by responsible university officials and governance bodies with board oversight, including regular reports to the university community.
- Board action and final strategic plan is reported to the community.

The work ahead for the entire community is substantial and important. The work of the committee will be affected by the quality of participation from the campus community and will require a considerable commitment from each of its members. I am pleased that the following individuals have agreed to serve on this important body:

- Nana An, Executive Director, Budget and Payroll
- Angela Davis, Professor, WCL
- William DeLone, Professor, Information Technology, KSB

- Sarah Irvine Belson, Dean, School of Education, Teaching and Health, CAS
- Brian Keane, President, Alumni Association
- Haig Mardirosian, Dean, Academic Affairs
- Gwendolyn Reece, Associate Librarian
- Anthony Riley, Chair, Department of Psychology, CAS
- Rose Ann Robertson, Associate Dean, Student and Academic Affairs, SOC
- David Rosenbloom, Distinguished Professor, Public Administration and Policy, SPA
- Bishop John Schol, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee, Board of Trustees
- Tiffany Speaks, Director, Multicultural Affairs, OCL
- Aaron Tobler, Correspondence Coordinator, Marketing and Enrollment Services; Chair, Staff Council
- Joseph Vidulich, President, Student Government
- Gary Weaver, Professor, SIS; Chair, Faculty Senate; Member, Board of Trustees

Please note that additional individuals—another member of the Board of Trustees and a graduate student—will be named shortly.

In addition to this steering committee, I will also appoint several working groups to focus on specialized or technical areas of the plan, including one devoted to information, technology, and innovation and another devoted to athletics and recreation. I will rely heavily on the advice of the steering committee to determine if other working groups are needed.

The committee and university constituencies also will have access to expert consultants, as needed, throughout the process. Such individuals can provide important insights about the general environment for higher education, the specific conditions that affect our university, and the things we must accomplish to produce an effective plan for our future.

The committee will be convened shortly to consider the scope of the plan and establish a framework for its work over the coming months. Now is the time for all members of the community to review the scope of the plan suggested in the [November memorandum](#) and recommend changes, either directly or through the leadership of your unit or constituency. I will ask the Board of Trustees to approve the scope of the plan at its meeting on February 28–29.

It is my intention to work closely with the committee throughout the process and provide whatever resources are needed to complete the work. Thank you, in advance, for your participation in this effort, and I know that you join me in wishing the steering committee the best in our work ahead.

Campaign and Alumni Developments

We are pleased to report that the *AnewAU* campaign has surpassed the \$155 million mark, thanks to many donors, including chairman of the board Gary Abramson and his family, who recently made two separate \$1 million commitments, one each to the SIS and SOC building campaigns; his commitments to these vital projects is a continuation of his dedication to supporting AU's most pressing priorities. The successful completion of these two buildings will not only reshape the Friedheim Quadrangle as the heart of AU's campus, but will also

guarantee that SIS and SOC each have facilities that match and advance their world-class programs.

Alumni giving is currently slightly behind last year, but with all indications that we will end the year at or above last year's mark, and with an important uptick in unrestricted giving. Against national trends, giving to this important category of funds is up 17 percent, with a particularly impressive 53 percent increase in the AU Fund for Excellence, which has already surpassed its totals for all of last year.

I just returned from Los Angeles, where I attended another in a series of successful alumni gatherings that began last fall, and similar travels are planned for Boston, Hartford, Miami, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Cleveland for the spring and summer. I also will continue to travel to New York and Philadelphia regularly and to meet individual alumni in various cities across the country. Summer travel to greet alumni in Europe and the Middle East is also being planned.

Searches

Our search to fill the position of provost continues. The committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Robert Griffith and assisted by Dr. Jean Dowdall of Witt Kieffer, have conducted extensive outreach meetings with the campus community. They are actively soliciting applications and nominations and look toward an initial set of interviews in mid-March, followed by the selection of finalists and their on-campus interviews in early April if possible. Searches to fill the positions of vice president of development and executive director of communications and marketing continue with the assistance of consultants. Both are on track for finalist interviews in March or April. Anyone wishing to nominate individuals for these two positions can send the names directly to my office.

International Developments

Interim Provost Broder reports another strong semester for the various study abroad programs that operate under her supervision. Three hundred fifty-one students are participating this spring in our various Abroad at AU offerings, an increase of 11.5 percent over this time last year. At the receiving end of our global efforts, our Washington Semester international component and Abroad at AU have combined enrollments of 153.

As you may have read in press reports, American University was one of a number of colleges and universities to receive a subpoena from the attorney general of the State of New York for information related to our study abroad programs. We are cooperating fully with this request for information and will keep the community informed when we learn more about the specific purposes of the inquiry and as other developments warrant.

Our working relationship with the American University of Nigeria continues. AUN begins its term under the leadership of its new president, Dr. Michael Smith, and with a total enrollment of 650 students. Dr. Smith reports that AUN enrollments will hit the 1,000-student level by this time next year and they are hard at work to ensure the curricular, personnel, and facilities dimensions of the

university are developing apace. To that end, a group of AUN officials will be at AU next month to conduct interviews for faculty positions and will meet with AU colleagues. We are also hosting several students this year from AUN who are doing their study abroad at AU and hope that next year AUN may be able to accept some of our own students for study in Nigeria. Dr. Patrick Ukata continues to lead our American University of Nigeria project office, which serves as the focal point of AU's efforts to assist AUN in its important, path-breaking work.

We were recently informed that American University was again listed among the leading institutions for providing volunteers to the Peace Corps. AU now ranks seventh in the nation among medium-sized universities—up from a ranking of twelfth just two years ago. American University can claim an impressive 718 volunteers who have served in this important program since its inception. While this is one among many examples that demonstrate how AU plays an active leadership role in the world, this ranking is especially important and gratifying, given our mission and values.

Army Corps of Engineers

My communication of last week summarizes where we stand regarding progress at the Glenbrook Road properties. Nevertheless, I remind everyone to visit the Army Corps of Engineers project Web site regularly to stay abreast of important developments and safety procedures. In the meantime, we intend to work actively with the Corps to minimize disruption to normal university activities and inconvenience to the faculty, students, and staff.

Enrollment

Interim Provost Broder reports that spring enrollments are consistent with the patterns seen in the fall. Overall, undergraduate enrollments are slightly below the targets set during the budget planning process of a year ago and graduate enrollments, including the Washington College of Law, are slightly above the target set. The budget effects of these patterns are noted below. The final freshman-to-sophomore retention figure for the entering 2006 class stands at 87.2 percent. Our mid-year retention figure for this year's freshman class is 97.3 percent, a significant increase over last year. The Undergraduate Experience Council, a retention-focused working group convened by Dr. Broder and Gail Hanson, vice president of campus life, is working on a set of goals, policies, and activities that would improve this important enrollment activity and that can be considered during the strategic planning process.

As of this writing, we have more than 15,225 freshman class applicants, slightly below the record numbers of last year. Deposits to hold places in that class are running ahead of last year due to a strong showing in the early decision cohort. Qualitative indicators of the applicant pool are virtually identical to last year's. We still have a long way to go before an accurate picture of the next freshman class can be drawn. Most other categories of enrollment are in even earlier stages of development, but we expect another strong year for the Washington College of Law.

Budget

We continue on course for a balanced budget result for the current fiscal year. Categories of enrollment that performed less strongly than originally predicted will be offset by categories with stronger performance and the funds set aside in the tuition reserve account. One notable development is that Dr. Broder reports a significant increase in sponsored activity during the current year. At present, external awards stand at \$15.8 million compared to \$10.3 million this time last year. Proposal volume has doubled in two years. Congratulations to the faculty and staff engaged in this effort.

Recognition

We received notice that our Office of Campus Life's Study Abroad for Students with Disabilities program, which previously won a NASPA Excellence Gold Award, has also been selected as a Bronze Medal Grand Award winner in this year's NASPA Excellence Award competition. There were more than 200 programs under peer review this year. This recognition underscores OCL's deep commitments to innovation and access and the university's ongoing leadership role in global education.

Inauguration

The latest *American Today* and [the inauguration Web site](#) contain information on a number of activities designed to highlight the core elements of our university mission and our alumni during inauguration week. I urge you to attend as many of these panels, presentations, and performances as your schedule permits. I also hope to see you at the February 8 installation ceremony at 11 a.m. in Bender Arena and the reception that follows at 2 p.m. in the Mary Graydon Center.

I'll write again next month with further information on these and other developments. In the meantime, all the best for a strong start to the new term.

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