



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN
PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

November 3, 2008

TO: Campus Community
FROM: Neil Kerwin, President
SUBJECT: Mid-Fall Update

Since my last letter there have been important developments, both on and off campus.

Current Economic Conditions

We continue to closely monitor and respond to the unprecedented developments in the financial markets and are working to mitigate the impact of these external factors on all aspects of the university's business operations. There has been no disruption of normal operations, but we are mindful that current economic conditions require vigilance and prudence.

In mid-October, we finalized the restructuring of \$61 million in tax-exempt bonds, which was necessitated by the unprecedented conditions affecting all facets of the credit market. Combined with our earlier bond conversions, we have successfully restructured \$200 million, or 90 percent of our tax-exempt bond portfolio this year, in order to protect against significant increases in debt service costs that have been prevalent in the current market environment and which have affected many other institutions.

Economic conditions are a matter of concern for students and parents. Provost Scott Bass and Vice President of Finance Don Myers sent a [letter](#) to students, parents, and the campus community outlining various options for students who may find themselves in need of assistance. Students whose ability to continue their studies is affected by the ongoing economic crisis should contact AU offices that might be able to help on a case-by-case basis. These offices include:

- Financial Aid—202-885-6100 or financialaid@american.edu
- Student Accounts—202-885-3541 or studentaccounts@american.edu
- For law students, the WCL Financial Aid Office—202-274-4040 or finaid@wcl.american.edu.

We will continue to work together during these challenging times to help students continue their academic programs.

We will learn a great deal more about the effects of the larger economic conditions on AU in the coming weeks. In the meantime, I ask all members of the community to exercise their usual careful stewardship of the institution's resources. I am quite confident should challenges arise we will be able to respond without compromising our education mission.

Strategic Plan

In September, the AU Board of Trustees devoted most of its two-day meeting to review the strategic plan process and an interim draft. On October 23, board members again assembled to consider a more developed draft plan, which is now being reviewed by the campus community and was discussed at a town hall meeting on October 28. The [current draft plan](#) includes 10 transformative goals and 5 enabling goals, with starting points for metrics and action steps. Also included is a draft vision statement that reaffirms our fundamental mission and acknowledges the economic, social, and public policy issues facing our country. The expectation is that American University will play an active and significant role as these issues are examined and resolved. The current draft is still a work in progress, but I expect to present the plan to the board for review and action at their November 21 meeting. Please review the current draft if you have not already.

We are indebted to chair Bill DeLone and vice chair Sarah Irvine Belson and to the entire Strategic Planning Steering Committee for their considerable investment of time, effort, and expertise in this extremely important project and for their commitment to make this process inclusive and open.

Two-Year Budget

To commence a process crucial to the initial implementation of the strategic plan, the University Budget Committee held its first meeting in October to review the budget process model, guidelines for budget development, a proposed calendar, and deadlines. I will present budget formulation criteria to the board at their meeting later this month. It is essential that we link initial action steps of the strategic plan with the budget priorities for the next two-year cycle. Town hall meetings will be scheduled for the weeks to come.

Safety and Emergency Communications

Safety, security, and emergency communication remain of highest importance for all college and universities nationwide. A few current issues are of particular importance this semester on the AU campus.

AU Alerts—An increasingly significant part of our emergency preparedness is the AU Alerts system of notification, which is part of our Rave wireless communication capability. AU Alerts is designed to communicate important information, such as campus emergencies, weather delays, school closings, and similar updates directly to your mobile phone; it is a free service that works with any carrier and any phone. While some on campus may already be registered for the Alert DC system, AU Alerts provides AU-specific information. I highly endorse this program as an effective complement to our other methods of

emergency notification. A valuable lesson learned from emergencies across the country in recent years is that multiple means of rapid and constant communication are needed during a crisis, and I strongly believe that AU Alerts can be an important part of this effort.

The AU Alerts system was utilized during Family and Alumni Weekend (October 25) when parts of campus were evacuated (Bender Arena, Mary Graydon Center, Sports Center Garage, Butler Pavilion) or experienced restricted access because of the emergency status invoked by the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department as they analyzed a suspicious package and conducted security sweeps. A number of emergency communications systems were utilized last weekend, and AU Alerts was an important one.

Currently, more than 15 percent of the AU community has signed up; I would like to see that percentage increase so that we can communicate even more effectively during an emergency. To sign up or for more information, go to the my.american.edu portal, click on Emergency Preparedness, go to AU Campus Connect Service, and follow the instructions. Or go to www.getrave.com/login/american (enter your my.american.edu username and password).

Other Recent Incidents—While statistics indicate that the region surrounding our northwest Washington campus is considered among the safest areas in the nation's capital, it is nevertheless important to emphasize that street crimes and crimes of opportunity have occurred during fall semester on some streets close to campus. While these incidents did not take place on campus, some took place only a few blocks away—late at night or early in the morning. AU Public Safety coordinates with the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to inform campus when an incident occurs, and we urge you to take safety precautions at all times. AU students, staff, and faculty should take note of these incidents when reported and take precautions—especially after dark, when traveling on foot or when alone. We urge everyone to become familiar with the Be Safe in the City safety tips, which can be accessed through the Campus Life Web site on the Vice President and the Dean of Students pages. And as always, please notify Public Safety in an emergency (202-885-3636).

Strategic Marketing Initiative

The university has committed to a strategic and integrated approach to marketing and communications to more effectively raise awareness and visibility among key audiences and to increase support to meet our goals. The first step is targeted market research to understand the perceptions and expectations of our key internal and external stakeholders. The views of the AU community and our competitors will inform an effort to promote a public awareness and appreciation for the university representing our distinctive and compelling strengths.

To guide this effort, we have hired Simpson Scarborough, Inc., a firm that specializes in higher education market research and brand strategy. They have worked with a large number of predominant universities and colleges in efforts similar to ours. They are working under the direction of Terry Flannery, our executive director of university communications and marketing. She will assemble a new marketing advisory council to assist in this work.

Research preparations began in October, and data collection (with 13 different stakeholder groups, including surveys of undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff) will begin in November. The research will be finished in early March, and creative strategies for a new brand campaign will begin to take shape. We will host several opportunities for the campus community to learn about the research findings and to consider our strategy going forward.

Recent Accomplishments

The scholarship of our faculty and accomplishments of our schools continue to enhance our academic prestige in numerous ways. A few examples:

- School of Communication—The site visit by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) went very well, as the visiting team recommended reaccreditation as the school met the mark on all nine rating standards. The team's recommendation will be considered by the ACEJMC Accrediting Council in May 2009.
- Washington College of Law—WCL is one of the most diverse law schools in the nation, with 40 percent of the entering class identified as minorities and 55 percent women. For the second consecutive year, WCL ranked third in *Hispanic Business's* listing of the best law schools for Hispanic students and was ranked 10th by the *Princeton Review* as one of the law schools with the best environment for minority students. The *National Jurist* recently ranked WCL as fourth in nation in public interest law, ahead of Stanford University.
- School of Public Affairs—Richard Bennett is the principal investigator for State Department grants totaling almost \$1 million for anti-terrorism and crisis management workshops. Senior officials from the Philippines, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Argentina, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Jordan, Thailand, and Senegal will attend the workshops.
- College of Arts and Sciences—Naomi Baron's book, *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World*, won the 2008 Duke of Edinburgh English-Speaking Union English Language Book Award and was named by the *New York Times's* William Safire as one of the year's most influential books on language.
- Kogod School of Business—A team of four undergraduate students—Michael DeMinico, Andrew Scalise, Robert Sitter and Fan Yang—was named a finalist in the seventh annual Goodman Accounting Challenge, sponsored by Goodman and Co., CPAs. In early November, they will compete in Glen Allen, Virginia, against student teams from Mount St. Mary's, Salisbury State, and University of Virginia, for prizes of up to \$1,500 per team member and \$2,500 for their school. The student team is advised by executive in residence Sheila Bedford.
- School of International Service—Books published this year (2008) by SIS faculty include Robin Broad (with John Cavanaugh), *Development Redefined* (Paradigm); Christine Chin, *Cruising the Global Economy* (Ashgate); and C. Randall Henning, *Accountability and Oversight of U.S. Exchange Rate Policy* (Peterson Institute).
- Campus Life—Senior Casey Roe, policy director for AU club Eco-Sense, worked with the club to recruit more than 1,000 AU students for the

Facebook Power Vote Campaign. Power Vote is connected to the Energy Action Coalition, an organization committed to making clean, renewable energy a priority for elected officials. Casey's efforts won her a meeting with former vice president Al Gore before his live webcast in Nashville, Tennessee, and she watched Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama's speech with him.

WAMU 88.5's Fall Fundraiser

The on-air fall membership campaign, a vital part of WAMU's annual budget, was held October 18–24 and was one of the station's most successful ever. With mail-in contributions still arriving, the station has collected \$1.375 million to-date from more than 10,000 members making donations and pledges. For the first time, an on-air component of the campaign was held on WAMU's HD second channel, Bluegrass Country, which can be heard in stereo on HD channel 88.5-2. More than \$34,000 was raised from more than 230 contributors to support Bluegrass Country's programming.

These totals make a very strong statement regarding WAMU 88.5's reputation in the region and its dedicated audience which supports the very best in news, information, and cultural programming. It also is a credit to the station management, staff, and program hosts who are committed to ensuring that top-quality radio programming reaches one of the most demanding and influential audiences in the nation.

President's Circle Honors

Close to 450 gathered on October 23 for the annual President's Circle Dinner to thank our valued friends, alumni, and donors for their support and generosity. I was pleased to announce that the Campaign for *AnewAU* has now topped more than \$170 million. Special honors were given to two distinguished guests—the President's Award to Thomas Gottschalk, vice chair of the AU Board of Trustees, for his steady hand and tireless commitment as an AU trustee for the past 13 years; and the Cyrus Ansary Medal for service to alumna Angie Reese-Hawkins, president and CEO of the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington. Both have distinguished themselves as champions of American University and ambassadors for all that this university represents. We also recognized our alumni award winners—Alumni Achievement recipient Jim McGovern, Alumni Recognition recipient Ronald “Boots” Nissenbaum, and Rising Star recipient Carmen Iezzi.

Family and Alumni Weekend

Some 718 families—the most ever—registered for the Family and Alumni Weekend activities October 24–26. When combined with returning alumni, some 2,200 guests were on campus from Friday morning through Sunday afternoon. Despite the rain, attendance was impressive at the various events, as almost 1,000 attended the family picnic (moved indoors); 350 attended the welcome reception and *AnewAU* showcase of campus talent; and 400 enjoyed the annual Sunday brunch in the Mary Graydon Center. A highlight was to be the Kennedy Political Union's Saturday night panel discussion in Bender Arena featuring three former White House press secretaries and moderated by AU alumnus David Gregory; unfortunately, the “suspicious package scare” forced us to cancel, and we have

been working on refunds for the 1,200 tickets sold. KPU will hold a similar event in January or February.

Alumni class reunions were held for 5th, 10th, 20th, and 25th reunion classes, and meetings of the Parents' Executive Advisory Council and various school advisory boards were held. Among our celebrants was Dorothy Miller, a member of AU's class of 1933, who celebrated her 75th reunion.

Given the large crowds, inclement weather, and last-minute major modifications to the Saturday night program, I commend the staff from Campus Life, Development and Alumni Programs, Public Safety, Special Events, Facilities, and other offices who worked throughout the weekend to accommodate our visitors and ensure their experience was positive.

Athletics

With fall sports moving toward the end-of-season, here's a summary of our competitive achievements so far:

- Field Hockey—Regular season champions (for the fourth consecutive year) and host of the Patriot League Championship on November 7–8 at Jacobs Field.
- Volleyball—Leading the Patriot League with a conference record of 10-0 and overall record 18-6. The team ranks fifth in the nation in aces per set and ninth in hitting percentage.
- Men's Soccer—Currently vying for a place in the Patriot League tournament, with two league games to play.
- Cross Country—The men finished fourth and the women finished fifth in the Patriot League Championships last Saturday.
- Women's Soccer—Finished the season fifth in the Patriot League.

Winter sports are just getting underway, with hopes high for both men's and women's basketball again this year and the possibility for post-season play.

In closing, I remind everyone that the polls open early and stay open late on Tuesday, November 4, and I ask that everyone exercise their right as a citizen to vote. We encourage supervisors to work with their employees to ensure that everyone eligible has an opportunity to vote and that appropriate arrangements be made should this be necessary during normal working hours. The AU Office of Human Resources can provide more detailed instructions.

I will write again, as developments merit. In the meantime, all the best for a successful fall term.

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