



## MEMORANDUM

February 5, 2009

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

---

We are now in the fourth week of the spring semester and at a good point for an update on a number of important items.

### **External Economic Conditions and the University**

In my last letter to the campus community, I reported that AU's general financial condition remained strong, despite the worrisome conditions in the larger economy, and we would know more following the holiday period and the start of the new term. I am pleased to report that the condition of our operating budget has not changed. While there is some variation in enrollment for spring semester, overall, it is essentially what we had planned. Revenues and expenditures are on track to produce a balanced budget. We will close out this fiscal year with no significant changes anticipated.

### **Strategic Plan Implementation and the Two-Year Budget**

I will report to the Board of Trustees on the first phase of strategic plan implementation at its February 27 meeting. That report, which will be shared with the university community, will outline the objectives we plan to achieve over the next two years, with accompanying action steps and the metrics to measure our progress. The university's senior management, with ongoing and substantial input from the community, has taken the lead in this phase of the planning effort. On January 16, I posted a list of objectives and action steps ([www.american.edu/president/statements/011609.pdf](http://www.american.edu/president/statements/011609.pdf)) that were under consideration and asked for comment and further recommendations. I renew that request for ideas and ask that you submit them as soon as possible.

Considerable effort has also been spent to align the new budget for fiscal years 2010 and 2011 with goals of the strategic plan. To that end I directed that all budget proposals be structured in accordance with the plan. The University Budget Committee has conducted its work, including the recent town hall session chaired by Provost Scott Bass and Vice President of Finance and Treasurer Don Myers, with the strategic plan as its guide.

Important work remains to be done, including deliberations and recommendations from the Faculty Senate, but a few points are important to note. Evidence indicates that the university's current financial condition will remain strong for the foreseeable future. For example, the number and quality of applications for the freshman class are encouraging, and other categories of enrollment also are strong. Our recent financial management has positioned us so that our reserves remain robust. These and other conditions that determine our financial health require constant monitoring and are, of course, subject to change given the weakness of the economy. At present, we are preparing a budget that reflects both confidence in our prospects and the intent to make a strong statement about the seriousness of our commitment to the strategic plan. I will propose to our board a budget with substantial investment in the new plan.

### **Web Launch**

Another very important university initiative, the redesign of our Web site, [www.american.edu](http://www.american.edu), is aligning for launch at the end of March. We have invested significant time and resources into the design of a state-of-the-art site that will proudly reflect the quality and character of our institution. It will also integrate our Web presence across colleges, schools, and divisions and introduce features that engage users and invite them to share content. As we near the launch date—targeted for March 30—I know that many across campus are working very hard to create and migrate content that will effectively highlight your part of American University. I know and appreciate that it has been a tremendous community-wide effort that has required diligence, patience, and collegiality. It will pay off soon. Thanks to everyone who is helping to bring our vision to reality.

### **Middle States Five-Year Accreditation Update**

In June 2009, AU is required to submit a mid-term report to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Accreditation, detailing institutional progress since our formal reaccreditation for 10 years in 2004. A coordinating committee, made up primarily of former members of the 2003–2004 Middle States Self-Study Steering Committee, is working to develop that report. It is co-chaired by David Culver and Karen Frosliid Jones, with Stacey Snelling, chair of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Team, and Nana An, executive director of budget and payroll, also providing leadership on this important project.

The report will include AU's response to the recommendations made by the 2004 visiting team related to assessment and program review. It will also report on challenges and opportunities, enrollment and finance trends, progress on institutional and department assessment, and the links between institutional planning and budget. Because the report covers many of the areas AU discusses in other forums, the coordinating committee will rely heavily on the work already completed by the Strategic Planning Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Team, among others.

A Web site of the committee's work will be created this month, and the team will reach out to the AU community in the form of information sessions. A report draft will be available for community review and comment in late April. To view the original 2003–2004 Self-Study

Report, contact Karen Froslid Jones ([kfroslid@american.edu](mailto:kfroslid@american.edu)) or view it online ([www.american.edu/middlestates](http://www.american.edu/middlestates)).

### **Capital Campaign**

The Campaign for *Anew*AU currently stands at \$176 million. Obviously, this is a challenging time for fundraising, but Tom Minar, our still-new vice president of development and alumni affairs, is working to strengthen our communications with alumni and friends and increase awareness of the opportunities and services available at the university for career development and lifelong learning. We will continue an ambitious program of visits and events to ensure that all of our communities of interest understand that giving to American University yields great results.

### **President's Inauguration**

Prior to the inauguration of President Barack Obama, I informed the campus about a number of related activities and circumstances and expressed the hope that our community and our many guests would enjoy those remarkable events. From all accounts, the AU community did just that. Virtually every member of the university participated in some fashion, and many, many people deserve our thanks. I commend the Office of the Vice President of Finance and Treasurer—especially the staff in Facilities Maintenance and Public Safety for their long hours and professionalism; Campus Life—particularly the staff in Residence Life, the Student Health Center, Student Activities, and the University Center for hosting and supporting nearly 1,000 guests in the halls; colleagues in Food Services for dealing with so many additional patrons; Development and Alumni Relations for the successful seminars and celebrations they organized on the Saturday preceding the inauguration; Athletics and Recreation for working with MPD to host close to 5,000 police officers from around the country for “just-in-time” training and to be deputized for work on inauguration day; and our academic units for adding to the understanding of the moment. American University thrives on making the most of the opportunities that surround us in the nation’s capital to witness (and participate in) history being made.

### **Recognition**

We are pleased to join the chorus of congratulations for two professors in the Department of History. Allan Lichtman’s book, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (The Atlantic Press, 2008), is a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; and Alan Kraut appeared in the documentary *Forgotten Ellis Island*, which was shown on PBS stations nationwide on February 2. This is great work by two fine scholars and AU colleagues.

AU’s Alternative Breaks program has been selected by NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education as the Excellence Award Gold Winner in the program category that includes service learning and community service programs. This is Campus Life’s third gold-level award in three years. In addition, AU has been named to the 2008 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for

National and Community Service. The honor roll recognizes commitment to service and civic engagement on campus and in the nation. This is also our third year on the honor roll.

AU's community service programs are prominently featured in the new edition of *Guide to Service Learning—Colleges and Universities*, a publication that highlights colleges "where the classroom meets the real world." The guide is produced by Student Horizons, Inc., and published by Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

There are many students, staff, faculty, and alumni who work diligently to make AU a better place. Nominations for the 2009 university awards are now being accepted, and I encourage you to take a moment to nominate persons deserving of this honor. Information about the awards process, deadlines, criteria, and past recipients is available online ([www.american.edu/universityawards](http://www.american.edu/universityawards)).

## **Facilities**

In closing, our newest campus facility, the \$14 million Kogod building addition, opened for business at the start of the semester. The 20,000- square-foot building, which is connected to the existing Kogod structure, features seven classrooms, three breakout rooms, and three student lounge areas. A state-of-the-art financial services lab, an IT lab, and the Kogod Career Service Center are in the final stages of completion. The building is the first structure on campus to be built entirely with philanthropic dollars, including a substantial gift from Robert and Arlene Kogod, for whom AU's business school is named. A grand opening is slated for April.