AU | AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

SELF-STUDY 2024

Submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

MIDDLE STATES
SELF-STUDY

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1 INTRODUCTION

American University (AU) is a student-centered research institution located in Washington, DC, with highly ranked schools and colleges, internationally renowned faculty, and a reputation for creating meaningful change in the world. Its students distinguish themselves through their service, leadership, and willingness to wrestle with global and domestic issues, turning challenges into opportunities.

As a private doctoral high research institution chartered by an Act of Congress in 1893, the university was established to train and support public servants seeking a graduate education. The inaugural class graduated in 1916, and by 1925, the first undergraduate students were admitted. The university was founded under the auspices of what is now the United Methodist Church.[1]

From the beginning, AU has been groundbreaking in its commitment to inclusion. The first 28 students included five women—even before the 19th Amendment granted them the right to vote. The university also enrolled Black/African American students, even as the city of Washington, DC, was segregated. And the Washington College of Law, incorporated in 1898, is the first ever founded by women.

Throughout its history, American University has been dedicated to academic rigor, interdisciplinary inquiry, high-impact research, and public service. Passion becomes action at AU, as students actively engage the world around them, and today's leaders train tomorrow's changemakers. AU strives to combine the best aspects of a major research university with the student-centered qualities of a liberal arts college.

AU has been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education since 1928 and was last reaffirmed in 2014. Since the last *Self-Study*, much change has taken place in higher education and the country. The pandemic required institutions like AU to pivot from residential to online, and it created economic challenges that necessitated careful use of funds. The increased awareness of racism and the call for action necessitated a thoughtful review of all policies, practices, and procedures. The changes in the demographics of likely college-going students and the increased competitive nature of financial aid all create challenges that private select institutions like AU must address. In short, this *Self-Study* is written at a pivotal time in the life of the university. This chapter introduces AU to those less familiar with the institution and explains AU's approach to self-study.

ABOUT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Student Body and Educational Offerings[2]

As of fall 2023, American University enrolls just more than 13,000 students—7,817 undergraduates and 5,202 graduate students—across its seven schools and colleges: College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), Kogod School of Business (Kogod), School of Communication (SOC), School of Education (SOE), School of International Service (SIS), School of Public Affairs (SPA), and Washington College of Law (WCL). It also offers professional and executive programs managed by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Students hail from all 50 states and more than 111 countries. Fewer than 6 percent of its undergraduate students come from the District of Columbia itself.

Overall, the 2023 student body identifies as less than 0.1 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, 6.5 percent Asian, 9.5 percent Black or African American, 12.3 percent Hispanic or Latino, 4.8 percent multiracial, 0.1 percent Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 50.9 percent White, and 10 percent international. (Six percent of students did not report their identities.)

The university offers a broad range of degree programs; the most popular are among the social sciences and humanities. It boasts growing enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs. As of fall 2023 it offers 79 bachelor's programs, 115 master's programs (including 20 online programs), and 12 doctoral programs (one online). In law, it offers four stand-alone degrees (JD, SJD, LLM, and MLS) and one online program (MLS). It offers a large variety of undergraduate and graduate certificates. Additionally, 63 programs offer a combined bachelor's/master's, and 26 are dual-degree graduate and professional programs.

Admission to the university at any level is selective. AU's 2023 first-year undergraduate admissions rate is 47 percent. AU's graduate programs attract high quality students, and many are considered some of the top in their fields. Examples of some of AU's highest ranked graduate and professional programs include the Washington College of Law's *U.S. News & World Report* Rankings (#89 overall and specialties such as #1 in Clinical Training, #5 in International Law, and #7 in Intellectual Property Law); School of Public Affair's *U.S. News* rankings

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1 While the United Methodist Church has been instrumental in forming and supporting the university, active management of the corporate affairs of the university is vested in its Board of Trustees, and the university is nonsectarian in its educational philosophy and academic programs.

2 See *Academic Data Reference Book*, section I available online at https://www.american.edu/provost/oira/academic-data-reference-book.cfm. See also Student Headcount, IPEDS report.

(#4 in Public Management and Leadership, #6 in Non-Profit Management, and #10 for Schools of Public Affairs); School of International Service (#8 for Top Master's Programs for Policy Careers in International Relations); and Kogod School of Business (#16 in International Business).

Administration, Faculty and Staff[3]

In June 2017, Sylvia M. Burwell[4] became American University's 15th president and its first woman president. She came to AU with decades of executive management and leadership experience. President Burwell held two cabinet positions in the US government. She served as the 22nd secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services from 2014 to 2017. Before that, she was the director of the Office of Management and Budget, deputy chief of staff to the president, chief of staff to the treasury secretary, and special assistant to the director of the National Economic Council. In the private sector, President Burwell held positions at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Walmart Foundation. A Rhodes Scholar, she possesses an intellectual curiosity that has enabled her to push the boundaries of knowledge to address complex problems necessary to lead a global university.

In August 2023, President Burwell announced she will step down as AU's president effective summer 2024. A presidential search committee has been formed by the Board of Trustees, and the university has hired an executive search firm to assist in finding the next president.

President Burwell's cabinet is composed of respected leaders committed to the mission and values of AU:[5] Sarah G. Baldassaro, chief of staff and counselor to the president; Matthew Bennett, vice president and chief communications officer; Bronté Burleigh-Jones, chief financial officer, vice president, and treasurer; Traevena Byrd, vice president, general counsel, and board secretary; Nkenge Friday, vice president of inclusive excellence; Seth Grossman, vice president of administration and chief administrative officer and counselor to the president; Steve Munson, vice president and chief information officer; Raymond Lu-Ming Ou, vice president of student affairs; Courtney Surls, vice president, university advancement; Evelyn Thimba, vice president of undergraduate enrollment; William Walker, director, athletics and recreation; and Vicky Williams, acting provost. As of fall 2023, 58 percent of the cabinet are women, and 42 percent identify as people of color.

Provost Wilkin's team includes Wendy Boland, dean of graduate and professional studies; Diana Burley, vice provost of research; Monica Jackson, deputy provost and dean of faculty; Prita Patel, vice provost of academic administration; Bridget Trogden, dean of undergraduate education and academic student services; and Jeffrey Wang, vice provost for global and immersive studies. Many of AU's deans are relatively new to the university. Joining AU in 2022 were Linda Aldoory, dean, College of Arts and Sciences; Shannon Hader, dean, School of International Service; and David Marchick, dean, Kogod School of Business. Other deans include Roger Fairfax, dean, Washington College of Law and Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, dean, School of Education. Alison Jacknowitz is acting dean, School of Public Affairs, and Leena Jayaswal is acting dean, School of Communication. As of spring 2024, 78.6 percent of the academic leaders are women and 50 percent identify as people of color.

American University's mission is carried out by 485 full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty, 477 non-tenure-track faculty, 820 adjunct faculty, and 1,763 full-time staff (fall 2023). AU's community recognizes the unionization of non-supervisory academic affairs staff (represented by Service Employees International Union or SEIU), adjunct faculty (represented by SEIU), graduate student employees (represented by SEIU), and content staff in its NPR affiliate, WAMU 88.5 (represented by SAG-AFTRA). Union negotiations are underway at the time of this *Self-Study* submission.

University Governance[6]

The legal powers of the university are vested in its Board of Trustees. The 2023-2025 officers are Gina F. Abrams, chair, and Charles Lydecker, vice chair. The board comprises 24 current members, three *ex officio* members, two faculty members, and one student member.

Buildings and Facilities

American University is located on a scenic 90-acre campus in northwest Washington, DC. Designated as a national arboretum, the campus has more than 4,000 trees and is recognized as one of the most beautiful urban campuses in the country. While its campus is located at 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, the law school is located at 4300 Nebraska Avenue, and additional classroom and office space at 4801 Massachusetts Avenue. The university has several administrative buildings close to campus on New Mexico Avenue.

A significant recent addition to campus facilities is AU House. Gifted by Mary Weinmann, an admired Washington, DC, philanthropist and civic leader, AU House is the home of current and future American University presidents and

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3 Organizational charts for the institution, including divisions and units, are available on the AU website. https://american.edu/about/upload/-au-organization-chart.pdf. [SVII.C1 and SVII.C4]

4 Sylvia M Burwell biography available online at http://www.american.edu/president.

5 AU Cabinet biographies available online at: http://www.american.edu/president/cabinet.cfm. [SVII.C3b]

6 AU Board of Trustees information is available at http://american.edu/trustees. [SVII.C1, SVII.C2]

their families and a place of community gathering for AU students, staff, faculty, alumni, and friends.

Finances

The university has a history of strong positive operating performance. As of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023, the university had assets of $2.4 billion, net assets of $1.5 billion, and an endowment value of $961 million (after year-end adjustments). In January 2023, Standard & Poor's reaffirmed the university's A+ rating, and in January 2023, Moody's reaffirmed the university's A1 rating. The Board of Trustees approved the university budget for FY23 and FY24 at its meeting on April 8, 2022. The final budget is focused on investing in people and advancing the strategic plan.

Highlights include:

- budgeting an additional $32 million over the two years in undergraduate, graduate, and Washington College of Law financial aid;

- investing an additional $76 million over two years to further support faculty and staff in areas including compensation, market and retention adjustments, increased benefits, and hiring; and

- funding a wide range of initiatives and enhancements that will further the *Changemakers for a Changing World* strategic plan and investing in priorities including faculty research, diversity and inclusive excellence efforts, athletics, residence hall upgrades, health and wellness, technology, and the Change Can't Wait campaign.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

As a community much has been accomplished in the years before this *Self-Study* was written. Important developments under President Burwell's leadership include:

- completing and implementing a new strategic plan (detailed on page 8);

- unveiling in fall 2021 the new Hall of Science, a 125,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility that is home to the biology, environmental science, chemistry, and neuroscience departments;

- launching the comprehensive Change Can't Wait: The Campaign for American University—the university's call to address the world's most complex challenges by transforming the student experience, advancing research with impact, and building stronger communities— which, as of February 2024, has raised 92 percent of the $500 million goal;

- launching a bold, new brand narrative, Challenge Accepted, that reflects the AU community's engagement, passion, and commitment to tackling the world's most complex challenges;

- approving a new campus plan, which calls for the development of academic facilities to further the university's academic and research missions and additional student housing to encourage students to remain on campus during their time at AU;

- achieving carbon neutrality before any other research university in the United States and two years before AU's internal deadline;

- growing exponentially in scope and impact AU's faculty scholarship and research, with externally funded research more than doubling since FY2021 to reach $51 million in FY2023;

- introducing several new research centers and institutes, including the first antiracist policy and research center affiliated with a university as well as the Sine Institute of Policy and Politics, which has hosted more than 125 events and 175 speakers between 2018 and 2022, including foreign leaders, governors, former US cabinet secretaries, prominent journalists, and business leaders. Other new centers include the Shahal M. Khan Cyber and Economic Security Institute, Veloric Center for Entrepreneurship, and Center for Neuroscience and Behavior;

- progressing significantly on implementing *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence*, which maps current and future action steps towards a more equitable future, including American University Experience (AUx) courses that focus on inclusivity and the student experience;

- implementing hybrid work modalities to meet the rapidly changing needs of the community amid the pandemic;

- demonstrating strong interest in undergraduate offerings, as evidenced by more than 19,000 first-year applications in fall 2023;

- developing an ambitious plan to improve retention and graduation rates;

- implementing an entirely new general education program—AU Core;

- improving the way AU works through technology, including implementing Workday for finance/payroll/HR and plans for Workday Student; and

- navigating successfully the economic and academic challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

MISSION

Mission and Vision[7]

American University developed a new mission statement in 2018,[8] replacing the previous iteration crafted in the 1990s. The current mission, developed with significant community input under President Burwell's leadership, is:

> To advance knowledge, foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership.

The university's vision is:

> American University is a leading student-centered research university where passionate learners, bold leaders, engaged scholars, innovators, and active citizens unleash the power of collaborative discovery. We partner with key organizations in the Washington, DC, region, and around the globe to better the human condition, learn from a vast array of experiences and internships, create meaningful change, and address society's current and emerging challenges.

Strategic Plan[9]

AU's strategic plan, *Changemakers for a Changing World,* is a culmination of a robust strategic planning process and draws on an extensive analysis of AU's strengths, opportunities, and positioning relative to its peers; an examination of best practices and trends in higher education; and, most importantly, robust input and feedback from a broad swath of the AU community at all stages of development.

The plan's three themes and strategic imperatives (SIs, similar to what some institutions may call goals) are as follows:

Scholarship

SI1: Invest in **areas of strategic focus** that enhance understanding and have the power to make an extraordinary impact on our world. Fields include health, data science and analytics, security, and social equity.

SI2: Grow sponsored **research** and expand faculty-student research collaborations.

Learning

SI3: Provide a first-rate **student experience** that promotes access, thriving, retention, and graduation.

SI4: Focus on **learning** for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students that prepares them to engage in the world.

SI5: Excel in providing traditional and emerging forms of education to promote **lifelong learning.**

Community

SI6: Lead and model **inclusive excellence.**

SI7: **Work with the Washington, DC, region** to be a responsive partner, ensuring that we are a part of, not apart from, our local community.

SI8: Form and expand **partnerships** to leverage the university's strengths and extend its reach.

SI9: Improve **how AU works** to cultivate a work environment that enables its faculty and staff to thrive.

The work of implementing the plan is conducted by teams comprising more than 150 faculty, staff, students, and administrators from across the campus. The results of the plan are shared with the AU community to create an opportunity for offering feedback and suggestions.

ABOUT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY'S SELF-STUDY[10]

The self-study offers AU the opportunity to advance AU's strategic priorities in ways that complement, support, and assess the current plan implementation. In order to leverage the self-study for assessment and planning, the institution has chosen a priorities-based approach to its work. One key intended outcome of the study is to demonstrate best practices in institutional assessment by analyzing how well AU is meeting key institutional priorities related to its mission and the strategic plan. By organizing the work around key priorities, AU can use the results of the self-study to inform future strategic planning initiatives. The following institutional priorities serve as the organizational structure of the self-study:

1. **Advancing and Supporting the Mission of American University**—This chapter puts the entire *Self-Study* in context by studying the appropriateness of the mission and strategic plan (standard I). The chapter addresses standard VI in order to evaluate how well the university's resources are used to advance its goals.

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7 https://www.american.edu/about/mission.cfm [SI.C1]

8 [SI.C1, SI.C2]

9 American University strategic plan. http://www.american.edu/strategicplan [SI.C2]

10 See http://www.american.edu/middlestates. The self-study itself is an assessment of the university's mission and goals. [SI.C4]

2. **Scholarship: Enhancing Capacity for Distinctive and High Impact Research[11] and Scholarship—**Scholarship is one of the three strategic themes of the university's strategic plan, which aims to advance the scholar-teacher ideal. AU is committed to amplifying the impact of its scholarship and pursuing opportunities that address the most pressing issues facing our local, national, and global communities. Although scholarship is not covered well in the standards for accreditation, it is important to AU's mission.

3. **Thriving: Improving the Student Experience—**The holistic student experience is part of the learning theme of the strategic plan. Building on the strength of AU's high-quality teaching and curriculum (discussed in priority four), AU focuses on enhancing the overall student experience and offering strong cocurricular, extracurricular, social, and growth experiences. It strives to improve retention and graduation, with a key focus on student involvement in enrichment opportunities (such as internships), social connectedness, and sense of belonging. This chapter examines the student experience from admission to graduation and beyond and aligns most with standard IV. It studies the degree to which AU admits students who can be successful. It examines how the university supports students and how AU provides an overall experience that enables students to not just graduate but thrive.[12]

4. **Learning: Creating an Enriching Learning and Scholarly Environment for Students—**Learning is another one of AU's three strategic themes. AU aims to create an innovative, inclusive, and rigorous learning and scholarship environment for faculty and students of all levels. AU's students will be prepared to be changemakers locally, nationally, and globally following graduation. This chapter focuses on student learning and aligns with standard III and standard V. It studies how well the university provides a comprehensive, integrative curriculum that includes core[13] curriculum (for undergraduates), learning in the major, and other learning opportunities. This priority looks for evidence of mission-centered learning outcomes, high-quality faculty, engaging coursework, and evidence of student learning.

5. **Community: Embodying Its Values through Inclusive Excellence[14] and Effective Partnerships—**The third theme of the strategic plan, community, examines how well AU has followed through on its commitment of building an inclusive, functional, and trusting community for students, faculty, staff, and others. It examines how well AU has improved ties with one another and with the DC region, the nation, and the world. It examines how well AU builds effective partnerships both across schools at AU and between AU and the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. AU's vision statement is related to this chapter.

While these priorities are the focus of the *Self-Study*, throughout each chapter AU examines its successes and opportunities through the lens of its experiences with the new learning and work environment brought by COVID-19. (AU was fully online with all faculty and staff working remotely from March 2020 to August 2022.) The goal of advancing inclusive excellence and SI9,[15] how AU works, runs through every chapter.

Selected Institutional Priorities Aligned with Middle States Standards

Although the *Self-Study* is organized around AU's institutional priorities, the report draws clear connections to the Middle States standards and criteria. Figure 1.1 demonstrates how chapters align with the 13th edition of the standards of accreditation.

Middle States Self-Study Organization

AU leadership assembled a team of faculty, staff, and students with a broad range of experience to serve on the steering committee. Members have demonstrated commitment to advancing AU's mission, an ability to assess AU's goals in a fair and impartial manner, and knowledge relevant to the priorities of the self-study. Members of the steering committee have exemplary leadership qualities and were able to facilitate university-wide discussions of the committee's work.

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11 High impact research was defined by a 2015 Task Force on High Impact Research to include positive impacts on society, generation of new knowledge, transmission of knowledge, positive recognition by peers and enhanced national recognition, and generation of new or revised professional practices.

12 The term thriving is used in the strategic plan. Thriving expands the definition of student success to envision a more wholistic approach to student well-being. Details of the definition of thriving are provided in the thriving chapter.

13 AU's general education program is known as the AU Core Curriculum, AU Core, or the core. [S1.C3, SIII.C5]

14 For a definition of inclusive excellence, please see *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence*. Evidence that the institution has set goals that include diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. Evidence of alignment between mission, strategic goals, and diversity, equity, and inclusion principles. [SI.C3]

15 Strategic initiatives are described more fully in the mission chapter.

Figure 1.1. Alignment of the selected institutional priorities with Middle States Standards

Self-Study Strategic Priority	Middle States Standards Covered	AU Strategic Imperatives (SI) Covered	Overarching Themes
Introduction	Standard VII (Leadership, Governance, and Administration)	Entire Strategic Plan	Each chapter considers how the impact of COVID-19, commitment to inclusive excellence (SI6) and how AU works (SI9) impacts its work.
Advancing and Supporting the Mission of American University	Standard I (Mission) and Standard VI (Planning and Resource Allocation)	All	
Scholarship: Enhancing Capacity for Distinctive and High-Impact Research	Standard I (Mission), Standard III (Design and Delivery of the Student Experience), and Standard VI (Planning and Resource Allocation)	SI1 (Areas of Strategic Focus), SI2 (Research)	
Learning: Creating an Enriching Learning and Scholarly Environment for Students	Standard III (Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience) and Standard V (Educational Effectiveness Assessment)	SI3 (The Student Experience), SI4 (Learning for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Students), SI5 (Lifelong Learning)	
Thriving: Improving the Student Experience	Standard II (Ethics and Integrity) and Standard IV (Support of the Student Experience)	SI3 (The Student Experience), SI4 (Learning for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Professional Students)	
Community: Embodying Our Values through Inclusive Excellence and Effective Partnerships	Standard II (Ethics and Integrity) and Standard VII (Governance, Leadership, and Administration)	SI3 (The Student Experience), SI6 (Inclusive Excellence), SI7 (Working with Washington), SI8 (Partnerships), SI9 (How AU Works)	

Source: American University Self-Study Design June 20, 2022

In addition to the Steering Committee, the work of the self-study is undertaken by five subcommittees, one for each priority. The Steering Committee was advised by a core committee of AU leadership that provided feedback and support. After the first town hall, the Middle States Accreditation Student Advisory Group was formed, comprised of students interested in helping to ensure that a student perspective was included in the document. A supporting documentation working group composed of members from subcommittees and headed by the associate director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, assisted with ensuring that it is a data-driven report. Details of the membership and organization of the self-study (including subcommittee membership) are available on the university's Middle States self-study website.

About the *Self-Study* Document

Each chapter answers the lines of inquiry, or study questions, outlined in the *Self-Study* design approved by Middle States and posted on AU's Middle States website. AU began the self-study process under the 13th edition of the Middle States standards and is required to undergo its review using this addition. The 13th edition is available on the Middle States website at https://www.msche.org/standards/thirteenth edition/. The *Self-Study's* supporting documentation, which was built in 2022, is updated (to the extent possible) to include additional materials listed in Middle States's new "Evidence Expectations by Standard Guidelines.") The guidelines go into effect for institutions beginning self-study in 2023, but AU had much of the documentation readily available.

The chapters include footnotes that identify the evidence used in the analysis. A numbering convention is used to identify the evidence that ties to Middle States' *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, Thirteenth Edition.* For example, a document that supports standard I, criterion 2 has a naming convention that includes SI.C2. Middle States does not allow the use of links within the *Self-Study* unless the link is also made available in PDF form to the external visiting team. For this reason, we limit direct links to many documents. Any link included in the report is done so that the AU community may view the documentation. A PDF of such links is available in the portal used by Middle States. Key websites that will be referenced throughout the document include:

- Middle States Self-Study Website: http://www.american.edu/middlestates
- Strategic Plan Website: http://www.american.edu/strategicplan
- American University Catalog: http://catalog.american.edu
- Key Policies and Procedures: http://www.american.edu/provost/policies.cfm
- University Finances: http://www.american.edu/finance

For more information about the *Self-Study* or to provide comments and feedback on this document, please email middlestates@american.edu.

Figure 1.2. Steering committee members

Member	AU Position	Division/School/College	Role
Sheila Bedford	Senior Professorial Lecturer	Kogod	Co-Chair
Karen Froslid Jones	Assistant Provost, Institutional Research and Assessment	Provost	Co-Chair
Sharon Alston (2021–2022)	Vice Provost for Undergraduate Enrollment, Campus Life	Campus Life	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Tricia Bacon (2023–2024)	Associate Professor	SPA	Scholarship and Research Subcommittee
Sarah Baldassaro	Chief of Staff	President	Mission, Planning, and Resource Subcommittee
Robin Beads	Associate Director, Institutional Research and Assessment	Provost	Supporting Documentation
Rachel Borchardt	Librarian	Bender Library	Scholarship and Research Subcommittee
Nicole Bresnahan	Assistant Vice President and Controller	Office of Finance and Treasurer	Mission, Planning, and Resource Subcommittee
Jeffrey Brown	Interim AVP, Student Affairs	Student Affairs	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Diana Burley	Vice Provost for Research	Provost	Scholarship and Research Subcommittee
Traci Callandrillo (2021–2023)	Assistant Vice President, Campus Life	Campus Life	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Corbin Campbell	Associate Dean, Academic Affairs	SOE	Learning Subcommittee
Elizabeth Deal	Assistant Vice President for Community and Internal Communications	University Communications and Marketing	Communication Subcommittee
Larry Engel	Associate Professor, Film and Media Arts	SOC	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Gihan Fernando	Executive Director, Career Center	Provost	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Andrea Felder (2022–2024)	Vice Provost, Undergraduate Enrollment	Enrollment	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Geralynn Franceschini	Executive Director, Strategic Implementation	People and External Affairs	Mission, Planning, and Resource Subcommittee
Benjamin Leff	Professor	WCL	Learning Subcommittee
Jackie Mabry	Executive Director, Principal Gift Strategies	Development and Alumni Relations	Mission, Planning, and Resource Subcommittee
Garret Martin	Senior Professorial Lecturer; Faculty Senate Chair (2021–2022)	SIS	Community Subcommittee
Jadyn Newman	Undergraduate Student (2021–2023)/ Alumna (2023–2024)	SPA	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Bryant Oskvig	Chaplain	Campus Life	Student Thriving Subcommittee
Mike Schroeder	Associate Dean for Graduate Education	SIS	Learning Subcommittee
Amanda Taylor	Assistant Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Inclusive Excellence	Community Subcommittee
Rene Thomas	Director of Graduate Studies, Staff Council	Kogod	Community Subcommittee
Karen Perez Torres (2023–2024)	Graduate Student	SIS	Steering Committee
Paula Weissman	Senior Professorial Lecturer	SOC	Learning Subcommittee
Nuria Vilanova	Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Associate Professor	CAS	Learning Subcommittee
Joe Young	Professor	SPA/SIS	Research Subcommittee

Source: American University Self-Study Design, revised assignments spring/summer 2023

2 Advancing and Supporting the Mission of American University

American University works as a community to develop a fully integrated strategic plan covering mission, vision, and values that guides the university as it navigates demographic, economic, social, and public health challenges buffeting the entire higher education sector. Forward looking and purposeful, these touchstones accelerate the pace of change at American University. This strong foundation was integral to American University's ability to weather the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the greatest existential threats to higher education in generations, as well as to continue steady progress towards its goals.

The strategic plan *Changemakers for a Changing World, AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence, 2021 Campus Plan* (facilities plan), and the comprehensive fundraising campaign Change Can't Wait aligned to enable American University to grapple with, adapt to, and, in many ways, embrace broader societal changes across higher education and beyond. As just two notable examples, American University is proud to be the first university in the United States to achieve carbon neutrality and the first to create an antiracist research and policy center. The spirit and ethos of this coordinated approach are embodied in the university's public-facing narrative, Challenge Accepted, that illustrates through multimedia storytelling how members of the AU community are working together to make a positive impact.

This chapter:

- studies the appropriateness of the mission and strategic plan and how well the university is meeting standard I;
- examines whether AU's mission and goals are clearly defined and were developed with extensive community involvement;
- studies whether AU's institutional goals, as embodied in its strategic plan, are realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with its mission;
- reviews whether AU's goals focus on student learning and related outcomes and institutional improvement; and
- examines how AU's mission and goals have been assessed periodically to ensure they are relevant and achievable.

This chapter also addresses standard VI in order to evaluate how well the university's resources are used to advance its goals. This will detail the alignment between AU's institutional objectives and planning and improvement processes, including financial planning and budgeting and AU's human resources, physical, and technical infrastructure.

MISSION AND PLAN DEVELOPMENT[16]

The strategic planning process was a collaborative effort spanning a year and a half. It involved teams of faculty, students, staff, alumni, parents, and Board of Trustees members. The process began in fall 2017 with President Burwell meeting with more than 1,000 faculty, students, staff, alumni, and other community members about what distinguishes AU, what AU should consider changing, and what needs to stay the same. In December 2017, AU appointed a Strategic Planning Committee, which consulted extensively with stakeholders on and off campus to develop a set of strategic imperatives that became the core of the plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee formed subcommittees and working groups to review and revise strategic imperatives. Teams led by members of the President's Council, which includes the cabinet and academic deans, created the plans based on the strategic imperatives. A revised strategic framework was presented to the campus community for feedback. The Board of Trustees approved a draft plan, and, finally, the strategic plan was completed in December 2018.

To keep the AU community informed, the plan's development and progress was shared and communicated through written reports from President Burwell to the AU community, updates via internal news announcements, reports to the Board of Trustees, and a website dedicated to the plan.[17]

THE MISSION

American University's seven-year strategic plan, *Changemakers for a Changing World 2019–2025*, was developed to meet the demands and needs of a changing future. As part of the process of creating the strategic plan, the university adopted the current mission, vision, and values statements in November 2018:

Mission

To advance knowledge, foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership.

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16 Evidence of strategic plan and mission development processes. See specific section on the planning process at http://www.american.edu/strategicplan [SI.C1a-g, SI.C4]

17 For an example of communication, see "Back to School," September 4, 2018, from president's website. See Board of Trustees Memo, November 27, 2018 from Board of Trustees website to verify official approval of mission and plan (these are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders) [S1.C1f]; evidence of strategic plan and mission development processes [S1.C1a]; and evidence of participation and approval by governing body. [S1.C1c]

Vision

American University is a leading student-centered research university where passionate learners, bold leaders, engaged scholars, innovators, and active citizens unleash the power of collaborative discovery. AU partners with key organizations in the Washington, DC, region and around the globe to better the human condition, learn from a vast array of experiences and internships, create meaningful change, and address society's current and emerging challenges.

Values

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Human dignity
- Community
- Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusive excellence
- Free inquiry and seeking truth
- Impact

The mission, vision, and values are incorporated into AU's strategic plan and are also located on the university's website.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN[18]

AU's strategy is organized into three overarching themes of scholarship, learning, and community. These themes and their nine corresponding strategic imperatives (similar to what some institutions might call goals) define the university's focus under the strategic plan.

Scholarship[19]

As a Carnegie-classified R2 doctoral high research university, scholarship is central to AU's future. The university is committed to developing areas of strategic focus that draw on fields where AU already excels, fields where AU's expertise crosses schools and disciplinary boundaries, and fields that hold promise for the future. In addition, the university will establish new centers; maintain, improve, and expand support of existing centers; and pursue endowed chairs to support the work of faculty across a range of disciplines.

Strategic Imperatives:

1. Invest in areas of strategic focus that enhance understanding and have the power to make an extraordinary impact on our world. Fields include health, data science and analytics, security, social equity, and sustainability.
2. Grow sponsored research and expand faculty-student research collaborations.

Learning[20]

As the university prepares for tomorrow's opportunities, AU will continue to embrace highest-quality teaching while exploring new frontiers of learning and scholarship. The university will expand opportunities for lifelong learning experiences that are more flexible, personalized, and accessible.

Strategic Imperatives:

3. Provide a first-rate student experience that promotes access, thriving, retention and graduation.
4. Excel in providing traditional and emerging forms of education to promote lifelong learning.
5. Focus on learning for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students that prepares them to engage in the world.

Community

AU is an institution deeply committed to building community—locally, nationally, and globally. Through its strategic plan, AU will continue to build and strengthen its ties to communities, internal and external.

Strategic Imperatives:

6. Lead and model inclusive excellence.
7. Work with the Washington, DC, region to be a responsive partner, ensuring that AU is a part of, not apart from, our local community.
8. Form and expand partnerships to leverage AU's strengths and extend AU's reach.
9. Improve how AU works to cultivate an environment that enables its faculty and staff to thrive.

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18 American University Strategic Plan: *Changemakers for a Changing World 2019–2025 at* http://www.american.edu/strategicplan. [S1.C2, SVI.C3]

19 Details of how the strategic plan meets S1.C1e are in chapter three.

20 Evidence that the institution has set goals that address student learning outcomes and attainment can be measured using student achievement data including graduation rates, retention rates, transfer rates, and job placement rates. [SI.C3]

Implementing the Plan, Assessing Progress, and Engaging Stakeholders

AU hired an external expert in strategy implementation to oversee AU's multiyear plan. The plan's implementation is guided by a governance framework with a three-tiered management structure. At the strategic level, the president and steering committee (consisting of senior leadership) set the overall mission and goals for strategy implementation. Each strategic imperative has a team that includes an executive sponsor, who is accountable for results, and an imperative director, who leads a team. Strategic imperative teams create working groups (called workstreams) responsible for implementing specific projects. The strategic imperative team and workstream members are charged with the day-to-day tasks of implementing the high-level task plan. At any given time, approximately 160 people work on strategic plan implementation through one of the various workstreams or teams. A pictorial representation of this framework is presented in Figure 2.1.[21]

The steering committee meets monthly with all strategic imperative directors to guide implementation and ensure achievement of the strategic plan's four key outcomes: improve retention and graduation rates,[22] achieve operational excellence throughout AU, enhance AU's reputation, and diversify and grow revenue. Through monthly steering committee meetings and strategic imperative monthly progress reports, AU assesses progress and adjusts approaches toward achieving outcomes. A combination of best practices used in various industries were adopted by AU to foster stakeholder engagement, implement AU's strategic plan, assess progress and make course corrections. This approach includes key elements mentioned in the Middle States standards such as clear decision-making processes and assignments of responsibility.

AU continues to iterate its strategy execution approach to adjust to the increasingly changing macro environment and organizational culture to build university-wide capabilities and realize strategic opportunities. In 2021, AU assessed its planning processes and incorporated feedback from interviews of steering committee members and strategic imperative directors into a redesigned strategy implementation approach for 2022, alternating executive monthly meetings for deep dives and decision-making with broader round table meetings focusing on roadmap implementation progress. AU redesigned its strategy implementation approach for 2023 to include a fifth-year assessment of its four strategic plan key outcomes and identification of critical focus areas for the final two years.

Figure 2.1. Strategy implementation governance framework
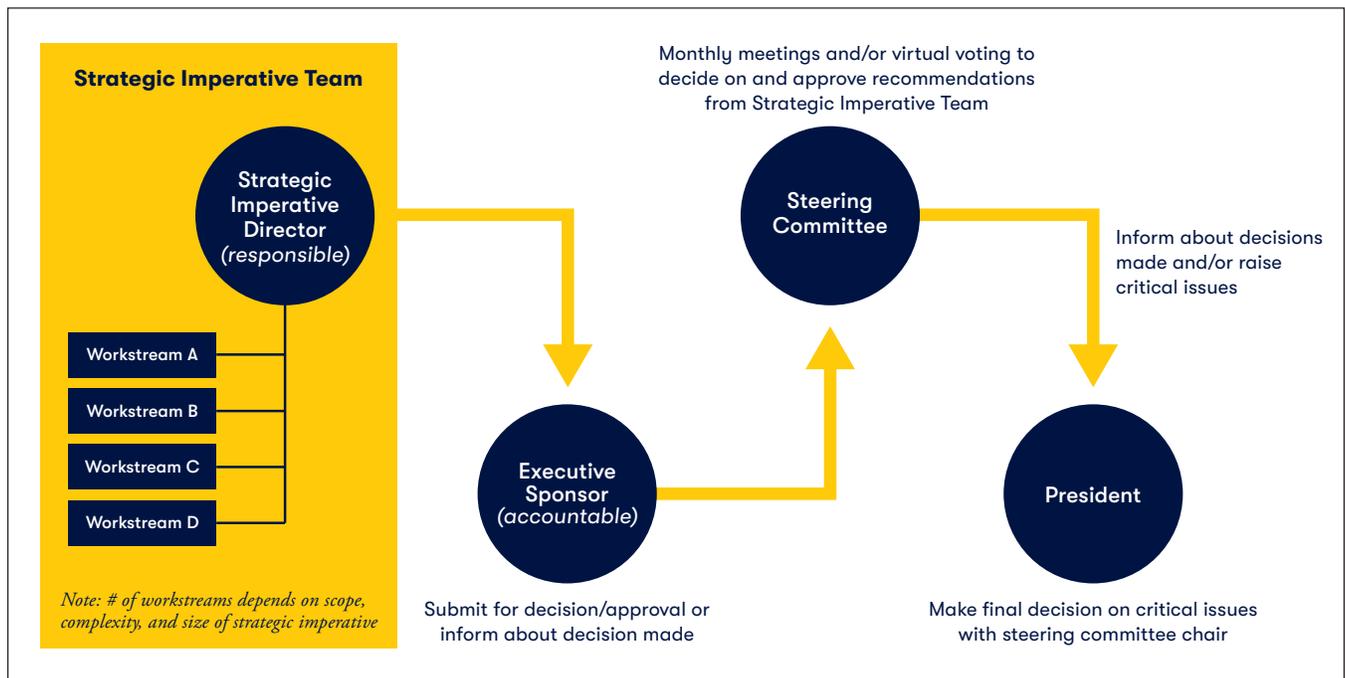
Source: Office of People and External Affairs

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21 An example of SVI.C5.

22 An example of SI.C3. Details on retention and graduation rate metrics/outcomes are discussed in the thriving chapter. (The chapter provides evidence and trend analysis of the institution's progress at meeting the established student achievement goals using at least four years of student achievement data as appropriate to institutional mission and disaggregated by relevant populations.) [S1.C3]

The Strategic Plan as a Flexible Document

The strategic plan was designed to enable AU to deal with big shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and to evolve alongside the university's priorities, such as its increased emphasis on inclusive excellence. It has provided a structure and mechanism to address challenges and the evolving needs and expectations of current and prospective students, faculty, and staff.

As one example, the university modified its strategic plan to explore how to implement a hybrid working environment as part of its return to campus planning during the summer of 2021. The hybrid modality, which is permanent, combined the opportunities of remote work with the benefits of campus presence. This approach supported SI9, How AU Works, and staff attraction, retention, and job satisfaction. Assessment of this goal finds that the implementation has been a success. In a 2022 staff survey, 94 percent of staff reported that "my team has found effective ways to collaborate while working in a hybrid environment" and 92 percent of supervisors say they were "confident that my team can deliver our goals while working in a hybrid work environment." In both the 2022 and 2023 surveys, staff overwhelmingly commented that hybrid work helped them balance work and life, fostering their well-being by allowing more time for family, exercise, and other personal activities, as well as reducing stress.

As a result of what has been learned from assessments such as workplace surveys and focus groups, the university enhanced the hybrid workplace modality to increase the flexibility of summer schedules for eligible full-time staff. It also created new hybrid modalities for certain staff positions.

It does not take major shocks for AU to adapt. AU continues to engage its stakeholders, learn from course corrections, incorporate input, and assess and communicate progress. The strategic imperative teams often propose course corrections, adapting to the changing world around them. For example, the SI1 and SI2 teams pursued the agile launch of strategic research initiatives in lieu of launching more complicated research centers.

In addition to the university's dedicated website to provide updates on the plan's progress, annual community progress reports, and Board of Trustees updates, AU leadership continuously engages stakeholders through meetings, emails, newsletters, publications, and social media channels.[23]

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE[24]

AU was an early institution to make inclusive excellence a priority, with formal work starting in 2017. The initiative was born from the need to address differences in the campus experiences of people of color compared to their white counterparts, as well as a responsibility to learn from, and not replicate, the inequities of the past and present. Using the Association of American College and Universities' inclusive excellence framework, AU began its inclusive excellence work with the idea that diversity, equity, and inclusion are catalysts for achieving institutional and education excellence through:

- compositional diversity of administrative leadership, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees;
- alignment of policies and organizational structures;
- innovative nature of AU's curricula and cocurricular programs; and
- ability to welcome, value, and affirm all members of the AU community.

AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence's first phase outlined a two-year action plan with specific goals in five key areas, informed by campus survey data, external consultations, and meetings with more than 1,000 community members. Early progress included more inclusive and equitable practices, honest assessments of the challenges AU faces, and programs to increase all community members' sense of belonging. Key achievements include:

- increasing new tenure-line faculty who identify as faculty of color from 39 percent in 2018 to 56 percent in 2019;
- opening of Black affinity housing for students and an increase in the number of faculty and staff affinity groups.
- obtaining a grant from the National Science Foundation supporting a study of racial and gender equity among STEM faculty.

Phase two of the inclusive excellence plan launched in February 2021 and built upon the foundation of phase one to focus on enhancing racial equity with a clearly defined accountability structure and metrics. Major investments since the launch of phase two include:

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23 For communication of outcomes see outcomes section of the strategic plan website at https://www.american.edu/about/strategic-plan/outcomes.cfm. [S1.C1f]

24 *AU's Inclusive Excellence Plan* is available at https://www.american.edu/president/diversity/inclusive-excellence/index.cfm. Evidence of the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion principles in the development and implementation of the institution's strategic plan and resource allocation. (Not required in the 13th edition of the standards but in the 14th edition at SVI.C4.)

- establishment of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee by the Board of Trustees, with a committee chair who also sits on the Executive Committee;

- development of a new inclusive hiring toolkit and training program by Human Resources for members of the community involved in the hiring process and a new onboarding program that incorporates our values of inclusive excellence for all new hires;

- development of a new set of interactive tools and dashboards to track progress toward its inclusive excellence goals; and

- creation of a new vice president of inclusive excellence position to lead strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and to enhance alignment of key work and services.

The inclusive excellence plan has an important place in advancing AU's mission. In the following chapters, specific components of the plan will be discussed in the areas of student thriving, scholarship, learning and community.

ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE PLANNING[25]

The work of the university's subunits, academic and non-academic, are guided by AU's strategic plan. Some examples of this integration include unit-level strategic planning, unit-level goal setting, and unit-level resource allocation.

Each summer, academic divisions develop goals, based on the strategic plan and informed by important unit initiatives. Division goals inform the goal-setting process for offices and divisions and, ultimately, individuals.

While not all units have formal strategic plans, the ones that do have been successful. The university librarian designed and launched a strategic planning process starting with the review and discussion of the university's three strategic themes and nine imperatives.[26] The University Library employed a multipronged approach when conducting SWOT analysis, developing mission, vision, and values statements, and collecting internal and external feedback from diverse library stakeholders about library services and programs. This collaborative approach to understanding and applying AU's strategic plan to the development of the library's strategic plan builds buy-in from key stakeholders and is foundational for successful implementation and alignment to AU. The Pence Law Library also has a strategic plan.[27]

The Kogod School of Business's formal plan was reviewed by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business in 2023. It found that the strategic focus on sustainability is widely supported. "The peer review team initially had thought that this had been a top-down strategic planning process that may not have included faculty engagement. We were pleasantly surprised that when we met with the department chairs, tenured faculty, and center directors that they all had contextualized sustainability within their respective functional areas and embraced it as an overarching way to brand the school to distinguish it from its competitors. It was also

Figure 2.3. AU's academic and administrative planning cycle

Early Summer	Late Summer	Fall	Spring
Individual staff use performance review process to report on last year's goals	Divisions write annual reports detailing how goals have been met	Goals reviewed by cabinet	Individual staff report progress on goals
Annual reports by units based on last year's goals	Staff units and divisions discuss upcoming goals and how they align with strategic plan	Units and staff conduct goal setting detailing how they align with division and strategic plan goals	Teaching and Learning Conference has session related to strategic goals
	Faculty Senate sets priorities for the next academic year	Board of Trustees reviews progress on strategic plan	

Source: Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

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25 Evidence of unit planning and evidence of consideration and use of appropriate assessment by key institutional and unit stakeholders for identifying opportunities for innovation and/or the improvement of educational effectiveness at division/unit levels. [SVI.C1]

26 Evidence of alignment between institutional goals and unit level planning. Evidence of planning for infrastructure, and technology, library strategic plan at https://www.american.edu/library/about/strategic-plan/index.cfm. [SI.C3, SVI.C1 and SVI.C6]

27 Pence Law Library Strategic Plan at https://www.wcl.american.edu/impact/library/documents/pence-law-library-strategic-plan-2020-2023/. [SI.C3, SVI.C1, and SVI.C6]

clear that this branding did not detract from other strategic initiatives within the school, and departments and centers conceptualized how their respective areas could align with the broad sustainability focus envisioned by the Kogod School," its report said.[28]

Division and academic unit annual goals align well with the university's strategic imperatives. For example, University Advancement (UA) has unit goals that support SI6:

Inclusive Excellence: Advance three inclusive excellence priorities in partnership with University Advancement Inclusive Excellence Committee:

- develop an inclusive hiring process that includes mandatory training for hiring managers, including those who supervise students and part-time employees, and guidelines for executing searches;
- create a written communications review process to ensure all UA-focused communications are evaluated with an IE lens; and
- include an IE training component to each all-staff meeting to include industry-specific training components.

Academic Affairs provides an example of how goals may vary by school or college. In annual reports, such as those submitted

Figure 2.4. Academic affairs research goals and results, examples from 2022–2023

School	Goal	Result
SIS	Strengthen research leadership by creating the associate dean of research (ADR) faculty position and appointing an interim ADR while completing an external search. Strengthen Office of Research as investment in long-term growth and sustainability of research enterprise Ramp up research promotion activities and cultivate business and culture change to reduce barriers to increased extramural funding.	Created new ADR position and appointed an interim ADR who was instrumental to many FY23 successes. Expanded Office of Research to include a media/communications specialist for external amplification of research products and two grants and contract project officers to provide concierge pre-to-post grants management support to principal investigators funded with investments of Dean's Fund and sustainability projections through extramural funding expansion.
SPA	70 proposals for external funding at $15 million. $3 million in expected awarded proposals.	74 proposals for external funding submitted for $15,230,206. 38 grants funded for $7,160,408.
CAS	Create opportunities for centers to work together and with others across the university in increasing grant opportunities.	Held inaugural center summit, bringing together all CAS centers for a day of dialogue, strategic planning, and networking. One initiative from the summit is ongoing workshops for center directors on key needs with the first held on how to increase visibility.
SOE	Increase external funding and diversify granting institutions.	Secured new funding secured from Gates Foundation, Benedict Silverman Foundation, National Science Foundation, and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

Source: 2023 Annual Reports, Academic Units

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28 Evidence of individual units and strategic planning. See Kogod School of Business AACSB Accreditation in supporting documentation. [SVI.C1]

in summer 2023, results of goals are reported. As an example, specifics related to research are listed in Figure 2.4.

Examples provided by the Office of the Provost demonstrate active planning and alignment with the university plan. Many of the plans are discussed at the deans' level but are not necessarily widely shared with community members. As such, faculty and staff may not be familiar with the specific unit goals.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

University Financial Resources Overview

Budget development at the university includes a deliberate and disciplined effort to align the values and goals delineated in the strategic plan with the necessary resource allocations needed for its advancement. The university uses a hybrid approach of centralized incremental budgeting and responsibility center management budgeting for select units.

The university's recent budgeting process considered the impacts of COVID-19, which required enhanced compensation strategies and marked increases in financial aid offerings, additional academic program offerings, investment in student thriving support functions, and reimagining campus operations based on the lessons learned from the pandemic and external environmental factors. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the university maintained strong financial health through three key hallmarks that relate both to process and resources:

- transparent and inclusive budget development and implementation processes;

- a solid financial position in terms of assets and operating resources that allows for resource optimization and operational efficiency; and

- deliberate and targeted resource allocations that support the realization of the university's strategic goals and objectives and allow for consistent and growing investments in its people, technology, and infrastructure to further the institutional mission.

Budget Development and Implementation Process[29]

Typically, American University's budget development process operates on a two-year cycle and provides a direct link between resource allocations and the university's strategic goals and imperatives. During budget development, all new resource allocations are explicitly joined to one of the university's nine strategic imperatives, ensuring direct alignment between each new resource allocation and the strategic plan. The two-year budget process enables the university to both address multiyear financial implications and achieve operating efficiency annually.

A diligent effort is made to ensure the university's budget and the formulation process that results in its development is transparent to all campus stakeholders and provides opportunities for participation and input by the university community. Context is also provided for the university community through a series of open forums, which address not only the university's budget parameters and resource constraints, but also developments in its larger operating environment, including the coming demographic changes affecting higher education. These campus-wide community forums for faculty, staff, and students are held each fall and spring semester, with input and participation from the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and Student Government. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Provost's Office regularly collaborate with university leadership on presentations to faculty and staff in each school/college and administrative division. Furthermore, a biennial budget report from the president and CFO detailing the university's approved budget allocations is shared with the university community after the adoption of the president's budget proposal by the Board of Trustees and remains available to the community on the website of the University Budget Office (UBO) throughout the implementation of the two-year budget.

Recognizing the importance of ongoing community engagement, the University Budget Committee (UBC) in fall 2022 was made a standing committee with a year-round meeting schedule. This change transformed UBC from a committee with limited ad hoc responsibilities each biennial budget cycle to an actively involved committee that engages directly with the finance office, Faculty Senate, and Staff Council. The UBC's charge is to advise the president's cabinet on major issues of institutional resources and planning. UBC monitors and makes recommendations on all policies and programs affecting the generation and application of the university's financial resources. It examines revenues and expenditures for past years, receives updates in real time, and makes recommendations for future budgets.

UBC membership is carefully calibrated to ensure broad representation from all university constituencies and stakeholders, and is as follows: CFO; provost, UBC cochair; two university vice presidents; three university deans; three Faculty Senate representatives; one staff member whose position description includes serving as a unit budget manager; one nonexempt staff member; one Staff Council representative; one representative each from the undergraduate, graduate, and law school student populations; and three nonvoting members who serve as resource persons from the Provost's Office and UBO.[30]

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29 Documentation demonstrating alignment between budget allocations and mission and institutional goals. [SI.C1, SVI.C3] Evidence of participation in the development and use of strategic plan in budgeting, planning, and resource allocation. [SI.C2]

30 Evidence of participatory decision-making making decisions on resource allocation. [SI.C1b]

Financial Position and Financial Management Assessment[31]

The university's two-year operating budget for the FY23–24 cycle was approved at $850 million for FY23 and $894 million for FY24. This funding plan provided support for recurring annual operating needs, the university's long-term financial obligations for debt service and capital maintenance and improvement, and resource allocations for strategic goals and objectives as laid out in the strategic plan. As with many higher education institutions, AU's operating revenues are significantly influenced by student-generated resources, with approximately 80 percent tuition dependency and another 10 percent derived from student housing and meal plan revenues. The remaining 10 percent is generated from other sources, such as endowment and investment income, sponsored research activity, and donor contributions and gifts.

As a result of ongoing financial and student enrollment analyses that are conducted throughout the year and at the end of the fall 2022 recruitment cycle, the university forecasted a $30 million shortfall for the FY24 budget. This projected revenue shortfall included anticipated challenges in meeting both undergraduate and graduate enrollment targets for the upcoming year. To ensure an appropriate and thoughtful institutional response, a series of budget forums were hosted across the university to engage the full campus community in the development of comprehensive mitigation strategies to be implemented on July 1, 2023, at the start of FY24. Based on AU's efforts to date, which include expanded revenue and expense management actions, the university is positioned to resolve the FY24 shortfall.

While AU is managing the FY24 budget, it is concurrently crafting a one-year FY25 budget that reflects community values and the principles of previous budgets, including affordability and access, research, student thriving, experiential learning, revenue growth and diversification, inclusive excellence, and investing in compensation and benefits for its people. Extensive work is also underway to evolve and strengthen our enrollment and retention strategies (see the thriving chapter), which directly impact budget planning and ultimate financial outcomes. The one-year FY25 budget will provide our teams with the opportunity to make substantial progress in these areas as we negotiate the full range of decisions required to achieve a balanced budget. Additionally, AU will use 2024 year to thoughtfully review how it approaches its work to help inform future strategy and budget decision-making before returning to a two-year (FY26 and FY27) budget cycle, which will also allow the next AU president the opportunity to engage in this critical work.

AU's financial health is strong and built upon its solid leadership and sound financial management. Throughout the year, several procedures ensure sound budget management and measure progress toward meeting the university's goals. Examples include:

- annual financial statements audit with unqualified audit opinions;[32]
- Sarbanes-Oxley self-audit requirements;
- periodic budget-to-actual performance reviews;
- annual performance and five-year historical trend reviews; and
- quarterly finance forums for unit budget managers.

AU's strong credit rating is a testament to its sound budget processes and fiscal policies and procedures. The university's S&P rating, reaffirmed in January 2023, is A+, and its Moody's rating is A1 with a positive outlook, which was also reaffirmed in January 2023. AU's endowment value is $961 million, and its total assets as of June 2023 amounted to $2.4 billion, with its net assets at $1.5 billion.[33]

University Reserves

In addition to having a well-balanced operating budget, the university ensures there are reserves to safeguard against unexpected challenges and pursue strategic opportunities in five categories: 1) strategic initiatives to support new initiatives or new program development; 2) infrastructure for capital projects, technology enhancements, etc.; 3) enrollment contingency that safeguards against unanticipated reduction in the university's largest revenue source; 4) compensation including healthcare, merit/equity, etc.; and 5) operating budget contingency for other operating budget challenges.

These five reserve categories serve as a contingency to protect the university from external conditions that may impact the university operations negatively in the future. The recommended balance for each reserve is determined based on a methodology that accounts for not only the needs as of today, but also anticipates future needs as the university's operational expenses grow.

To arrive at the recommended fund balance, the university performed an analysis of all reserve accounts, their funding sources, and their spending histories. The result of that analysis allowed the university to make a significant transfer of funds from the university's working capital investments into the university's strategic quasi endowment. The additional income generated from the investment in the strategic quasi endowment is used to fund scholarships and compensation as

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31 Evidence of financial sufficiency and sustainability over the last four years. See financial statements: https://www.american.edu/finance/annual-report/financial-statements.cfm/. [SVI]

32 See independent audit in supporting documentation. [SVI.C7]

33 Supports standard VI, specifically SVI.C8.

part of the comprehensive operating budget. Outside of the one-time transfer, the university funds the reserves annually with a transfer equal to 1 percent of the operating budget into the five reserve categories from operating resources.

With the reserves established, university management continues to perform annual assessments to determine how the reserve funds should be allocated between working capital and endowment reserves. The determination is based on the annual needs for each fund and an analysis of the historical uses of reserves over the last 20 years.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought several unexpected challenges both operationally and financially for the university. Leadership was able to navigate these challenges, in part due to the availability of financial reserves.

Strategic Plan Resource Alignment and Allocations

AU aligns its resource allocations directly with its mission and strategic focus and goals. Existing resource allocations, as well as funding for new strategic imperatives identified in each budget cycle, are classified according to the nine strategic imperatives included in the Changemakers strategic plan. The president and CFO's biennial budget report to the university community for the current budget cycle details investments in strategic objectives amounting to approximately 55 percent of the university's overall operating expense budget for FY23 and FY24, with dedicated resources being allocated across all nine imperatives for specifically identified strategic initiatives.[34]

Resources to support the university's mission and strategic goals largely come from operating revenues, primarily tuition and fee revenues. AU's high degree of tuition dependency is a significant limiting factor in terms of resource availability to fund additional strategic investments. Therefore, the university has identified the diversification and growth of its revenue as one of four desired outcomes of the Changemakers strategic plan and seeks to accomplish this by generating more income from the endowment, fundraising, sponsored research, and new revenue initiatives in the areas of lifelong learning and summer conferences.

Endowment

Building a strong endowment and robust endowment income stream is a top strategic priority for American University, and the primary pillar of its revenue diversification and growth plan. The university's endowment consists of more than 600 individual funds and includes both donor-restricted endowment funds and funds designated by the Board of

Trustees to function as endowments. In 2022, the university performed a decennial review to analyze the performance and related processes of the university's alternative asset advisor. One of the recommendations was the creation of a standalone investment committee. The committee allows for expanded expertise in complex types of investments and strategies and enables more time on critical issues that affect the endowment. In November 2022, the Board of Trustees approved creation of the new Investment Committee. The initial committee includes eight members, including both trustees and non-trustees, and takes an active role in overseeing the university's endowment by developing the asset allocation policy and spending rule, approving investment managers, and monitoring the managers' performance.

The endowment has grown 58.5 percent since AU's last self-study in 2014 when the endowment was valued at $587 million. As of the end of FY22, the university's endowment market value increased at a lower rate when compared to the previous year due to rising inflation and a weaker economy. As of June 30, 2022, the university's endowment had an annual return of -2.79 percent and was valued at $930.9 million. The 10-year history of the endowment market value compared to the National Association of College and University Business Officers returns is shown in Figure 2.5 on page 22.

In April 2020, as part of its comprehensive commitment to sustainability, American University divested all its public fossil fuel investments from its endowment. The board and university leadership have actively considered issues related to fossil fuel investments since 2014, when they established a Fossil Free Investment Fund within the university's endowment. Input from AU students, faculty, and staff throughout this time has been thoughtful and helpful. Making these changes allows the university to fulfill its commitment to students and the entire AU community.[35]

Beginning in fall 2022, American University launched an interdisciplinary program—Environmental, Social, and Governance Funds—that will provide students with real-world experience in sustainable investing within the university's endowment portfolio. Led by AU's Kogod School of Business, the new course engages students in the university's financial future by featuring student-faculty collaboration to research and recommend investment opportunities to the Board of Trustees. Investments from the program will be funded with a 1 percent allocation of the endowment or approximately $9 million based on current market levels, making it one of the largest student-advised investment funds in the country. Committing this level of university endowment resources makes this program unique in the nation.

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34 Reconciles the financial plan to the institution's strategic, operating, and other plans, and assesses the institution's financial capacity and risk factors. [SVI.C3]

35 Evidence of the alignment of resources with mission. [SVI]

Figure 2.5. Endowment market value (in millions)
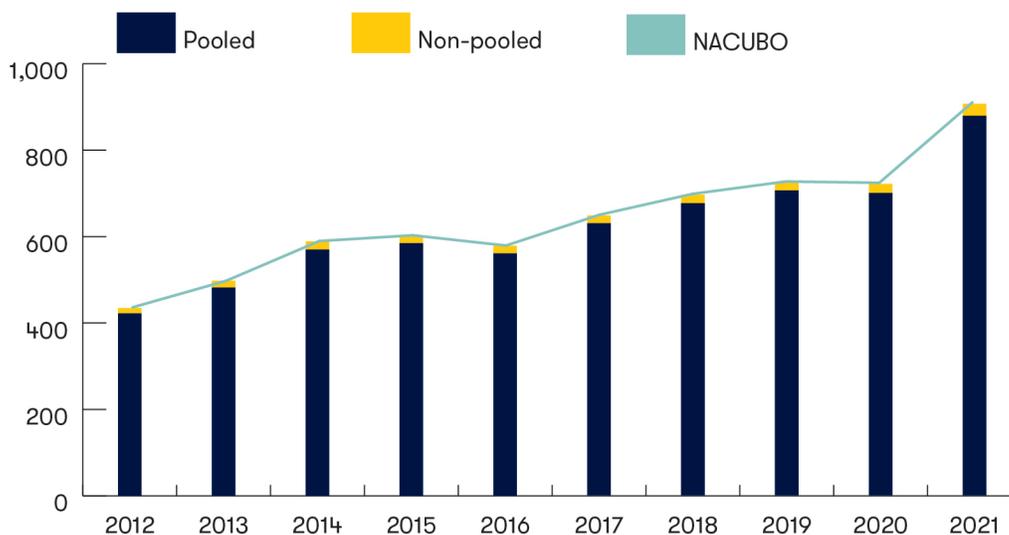
Source: *National Association of College and University Business Officers (NCUBO)*

Change Can't Wait: The Campaign for American University

Comprehensive fundraising campaigns are an important tool for university advancement, providing a source of financial resources, an opportunity to articulate and market the university's priorities and vision, and a vehicle to engage key stakeholders in advancing the university. In May 2021, AU publicly launched Change Can't Wait: The Campaign for American University, with a goal to raise $500 million. As of February 2024, AU has raised 92 percent of its campaign goal.

To prepare for the university's first comprehensive campaign in nearly two decades, several key enabling projects were completed, including a campaign readiness assessment, divisional restructure in University Advancement, feasibility study with key stakeholders, campaign plan, and simultaneous brand narrative, Challenge Accepted. Several infrastructure and procedural updates were also necessary and required coordination across university divisions, including a new set of major policies related to gift acceptance, gift counting and reporting, and naming policies; a cross-divisional effort to bring greater efficiency to the university's administration and to award more than 300 donor-funded scholarships managed by AU; and a multiyear effort to migrate from a flat database to a customer relationship management technology to increase fundraising capacity, enhance efficiency, and scale up fundraising efforts during the campaign.

The Board of Trustees Alumni Affairs and Development Committee provides governance oversight of the campaign, while the newly created University Campaign Committee, composed of major stakeholders and donors to the university, provides strategic guidance on the campaign.

The launch of Change Can't Wait provided an opportunity to engage in a campus-wide planning process in consultation with the academic and programmatic units, aligning campaign goals with university priorities. University Advancement engaged school and unit leaders to identify priorities and then directly align them with the strategic plan. These efforts resulted in the creation of a priorities framework, as well as overarching goals related to unrestricted philanthropy and endowment to further support the strategic plan and university budget.

The priorities for the campaign are organized into three pillars:

Elevate: transforming the student experience (gifts to scholarships, experiential learning, and projects that promote student thriving);

Lead: funding research with impact (gifts to support faculty positions and research, university centers, and facilities that allow for collaboration and innovation); and

Inspire: helping build better communities (gifts to unrestricted funds, WAMU 88.5, and initiatives that build stronger communities in Washington, DC, and beyond).

Growth in fundraising has been identified as one important way to diversify and grow AU's financial resources, a key outcome outlined in the strategic plan and the university budget. Change Can't Wait has been structured and executed to set the university on a trajectory to increase new philanthropic commitments over the course of the campaign in the short term and create a sustainable fundraising model that supports ongoing fundraising at a level that is closer to peer institutions over the long term. The alignment of AU's major plans has positioned the university to secure a greater volume of philanthropic commitments and larger gifts with direct impact on stated university priorities, as well as to achieve better alignment of overall fundraising with important budget goals to grow the endowment and increase unrestricted revenue.

Through the creation of a new lead annual giving team, enhanced engagement with existing boards and councils, and increased mass marketing, AU is on track for annual

unrestricted cash gifts to reach $1.2 million by the end of the FY23–24 budget. Additionally, more than 18 percent (or more than $66 million) of the funds raised so far in the campaign are designated as endowment. It is important to note that more than half of these endowment funds are bequests, meaning the university will not realize the value of these assets for several years. These two important indicators highlight the progress AU has made and underscore the long-term nature of significantly diversifying and growing revenue through philanthropy.

In addition to the two indicators described above, AU is also beginning to see philanthropic trends emerge that are more in line with peer institutions. AU's five-year annual fundraising average is now more than $60 million, fundraising totals include a larger percentage of major and principal gifts, and larger investment by members of the university's Board of Trustees are more consistent.The campaign is also advancing key strategic priorities. Steps taken so far include:

- increasing by 34 percent funds that support inclusive excellence;

- raising more than $30 million raised for scholarships toward a goal of $60 million;

- launching the Elevate Scholarship Initiative to raise $25 million in endowed support for enrolled students with financial need, which is matched with a $25 million budget commitment from the university;

- raising more than $13 million for faculty support toward a goal of $40 million, including the university's first Eminent Scholar Chair in Behavioral Neuroscience; and

- raising $22 million for the new Student Thriving Complex toward a goal of $42 million, including a $15 million naming gift for the Meltzer Center for Athletic Performance.

Through the end of the campaign, AU will prioritize completing fundraising for the Student Thriving Complex and Elevate Scholarship Initiative, as well as making greater progress toward its goal for faculty support.

PERSONNEL, TECHNOLOGY, AND FACILITIES

Human Resources: Faculty and Staff[36]

AU has thrived through challenging times because of its staff and faculty, and with the FY23 and FY24 budget, the university has made extensive investments in its people. This includes $76 million in compensation pools, which is the largest increase in the entire budget, and contains resources to provide both across-the-board compensation increases and address targeted merit, equity, and retention needs.

Between March 2020 and August 2021, AU switched to an online-only environment. AU made a deliberate and concerted decision during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid staff layoffs and other drastic measures negatively impacting its workforce. Through a combination of budget impact mitigation efforts that included a hiring freeze, pause in the employer-sponsored retirement contribution, one-week university-wide furlough, and use of the university's financial reserves, the university was able to largely maintain its existing workforce and support its community of faculty and staff through the pandemic. As a result, AU was able to quickly bounce back once the pandemic subsided without being faced with a severely reduced labor force.

Table 2.1. AU employees by IPEDS occupational categories, total and select categories FTEs

	Fall 2022 FTE	Fall 2018 FTE
Total	2,957	2,910
Instructional Faculty	1,098	1,055
Research Faculty and Staff	45	36
Executive/Management Staff	459	418

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)[37]

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36 Evidence of adequate human resources and alignment between institutional goals and unit goals. Evidence of fostering a climate of respect. Evidence of human resources strategic initiatives tied to the strategic plan. https://www.american.edu/hr/initiatives/. [SI.C1,SVI.C6, SII.C2]

37 Faculty headcount and administrative and staff headcount. [SIII.C1c, SVI.C4]

In addition to financial investments in faculty and staff, AU is committed to improving staff sense of belonging and thriving through the strategic imperatives on how AU works and inclusive excellence. AU's managers play a critical role in advancing these objectives, successfully executing the hybrid modality, and furthering AU's culture of inclusion, respect, and belonging for staff and the broader community. Based on feedback from managers and staff, the Office of Human Resources has developed the Supervisor Academy to support this work. The university successfully piloted the Supervisor Academy during summer 2022. After incorporating lessons learned from this initial effort, the Supervisor Academy was finalized for supervisors to enroll. The series is available for new supervisors to build their skills and organizational understanding and for experienced professionals to refresh and share what they have learned.

Facilities[38]

American University has 58 buildings and 10 garages, totaling 4,790,778 gross square feet. Thirteen of these buildings are residence halls with a capacity for more than 4,200 beds. The entire 90-acre campus is an accredited Level II arboretum and employs two International Society of Arboriculture certified arborists. The university is supporting student thriving by creating and updating campus spaces that are fundamental to our students' success. With a $103 million investment supported by the Change Can't Wait campaign and university resources, the new Student Thriving Complex (STC) will be the heart of campus with three vital hubs for student life, including:

- home for student well-being which includes academic support services, physical and mental health resources, and wellness programs;
- the Alan and Amy Meltzer Center for Athletic Performance, for athletics recreational programs; and
- the renovated Mary Graydon Center, including a new student engagement commons.

Part of the investment in STC included projects that moved AU's market into a more suitable space and brought the bookstore to a more accessible location. The university also makes an annual investment in renovating and updating its residence halls to create a housing environment that meets students' needs and further contributes to student thriving.

Campus Plan[39]

The *2021 Campus Plan* is an integral component of the successful implementation of American University's strategic plan, *Changemakers for a Changing World*, setting forth a thoughtful approach to managing campus growth and development over the next 10 years to reflect the university's commitment to the communities of which it is a part. At the same time, the *2021 Campus Plan* played a critical role in informing and incorporating the key priorities of the Change Can't Wait fundraising campaign. The fundamental components of the plan have been envisioned and developed—and will be collaboratively implemented over the next decade—in partnership with university and community stakeholders to ensure that the campus will adapt to and meet the changing needs of AU students, faculty, and staff while at the same time respecting and enhancing the quality of life of those who live within the neighborhoods surrounding campus.

AU is cognizant of the impact that new campus development, student enrollment, and transportation capacity can potentially have on the residential neighborhoods surrounding campus. Accordingly, the university has worked closely with AU Neighborhood Partnership and a wide range of campus and community stakeholders to gather input on the planning concepts and priorities considered by AU throughout the planning process. As a result of this dedicated and collaborative effort, the university and AU Neighborhood Partnership have reached consensus on the objectives, proposals, and commitments set forth in the *2021 Campus Plan*, including:

- strategic and measured enrollment management at a level lower than the student cap established in 2011, when adjusted to reflect the revised student count methodology set forth in the city's updated zoning regulations;
- a balanced development program of academic/administrative, residential/campus life, and athletic uses, on a scale significantly reduced from the program proposed in the *2011 Campus Plan*, aimed at research and teaching facilities and strengthening and invigorating a student-centered living and learning campus experience. The plan includes enhancing the landscape and open space elements that are distinctive to AU's urban campus and actively advancing the university's culture of sustainability; and
- a focus on providing student housing opportunities that encourage more students to remain on campus during their time at AU, while also implementing robust engagement initiatives with students who choose to live off campus to equip them to be responsible members of the community and promote positive relationships between students and their neighbors;
- continued commitment to effective transportation demand management strategies aimed at promoting sustainable transportation options that reduce the use of single-occupancy vehicles and the demand for on-campus

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38 Physical infrastructure. [SVI.C4]

39 Comprehensive planning for facilities including space for instruction. [SVI.C6] Space utilization studies. [SVI.C9] Goals that address external constituencies. [SI.C1b]

parking, along with vigilant enforcement of AU's existing off-campus parking policies to preserve on-street parking capacity for members of the community.

While the COVID-19 experience informed AU's thinking and influenced the planning effort, AU fully anticipates strong and ongoing demand for its on-campus, face-to-face academic programs, research opportunities, and vibrant residential student experience, all of which will support and depend upon the types of high-quality facilities proposed in its 10-year campus plan.

Information Technology[40]

One of the strategic plan's imperatives is to improve how AU works, and an integral element of achieving that imperative is enhancing how technology is supporting AU's strategic plan. As part of the university's ongoing effort to continually improve its systems and processes, Workday has been selected as the new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system for human resources, payroll, finance, and budget functions across the university to replace the current system. The ERP is the core system to manage the day-to-day operations and critical administrative functions of the university. Workday's system provides a user-friendly experience that is optimized for mobile devices. It enables easy access to a single source of trusted data, which will support daily work and decision-making.

Workday went live to support these functions in January 2024. Implementation of Workday was a university-wide effort, and the more than 80-person project team included representatives from Human Resources, Finance and Treasury, Academic Affairs, Information Technology, and University Communications and Marketing. The 17-month implementation actively engaged more than 200 members of the community to provide input on the new business processes and prepare for the implementation.

Key investments are also made in new customer relationship management (CRM) functionality in recruitment and admissions and a new web content management system. Both investments are not only key in improving the way that AU works, but also support the university's strategic efforts to advance access and retention, improve applicant and student experiences, and promote scholarship and learning through an effective web interface.

In addition, a central component of the strategic plan is developing and implementing a new digital strategy to drive the development of digital learning initiatives and guide a growing portfolio of online programs, including delivery, infrastructure, and processes to support their success and the financial foundations upon which they sit.

In summer 2020, American University began its migration to the Canvas learning management system (LMS). Prior to Canvas implementation, LMS use was limited to 30 percent of courses offered at AU. The migration was completed in fall 2021, and the percentage of courses on Canvas has consistently been 80 percent of courses offered at AU. Between 2022 and 2024 a great number of online courses have migrated to the AU Canvas environment. This migration is an indication of faculty and administrator confidence in the Canvas ecosystem including many of the integrations—Turnitin, Respondus, Kaltura, Zoom, NameCoach, Springshare, and others, as well as custom built integrations, such as Photo Roster.

BUILDING UPON A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT[41]

The ongoing assessment embedded in the university's strategic plan, related integrated initiatives, and major operations is emblematic of a larger culture of assessment at American University.

Assessment Philosophy

American University is an institution dedicated to fostering a culture of continuous improvement. It sets clear goals and encourages the use of information to assess the degree to which goals are being met.

The AU assessment program is based on the recognition that, to best meet AU's mission, goals and objectives, all must strive to clarify goals and link them to the overall university mission; implement actions and activities designed to advance the mission; measure progress; and apply learning by taking actions to better meet the ultimate objective: providing students with an excellent learning experience.

The university's programs of assessment are characterized by:

- solid foundations in the overall mission, goals, and objectives;
- centralized support with decentralized ownership of assessment;
- commitment to assessing all aspects of the university, including student learning, student experiences, and overall institutional effectiveness;
- recognition of the importance of using a combination of formative and summative approaches to assessment;
- incorporation of assessment at different levels of the university, such as in individual courses, programs, and institution-wide;

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40 Section is evidence of a technical infrastructure to support operations [SVI.C4] and comprehensive plans for facilities, equipment, and supplies; information technology master plan. See *Moving Forward: Office of Information Technology Year in Review: 2021–2022* at https://www.american.edu/oit/upload/oit_annual_report_2022.pdf. [SVI.C6]

41 Addressing institutional assessment. [SVI.C9]

- support for using a wide range of data-gathering techniques, including both qualitative and quantitative assessment measures;
- emphasis on using multiple direct and indirect measures to capture evidence of success;
- encouragement to use results for learning and improvement versus solely satisfying administrative or external requirements;
- recognition that successful assessment requires broad participation by students, faculty, staff, and administrators; and
- provision of informal and formal development opportunities to move the university community toward more strategic and sustainable assessment plans over time.

Assessment Resources

The university has made significant improvements to the assessment data that is available to the individual units and to the academic community as a whole. The university publishes a fact book, known as the *Academic Data Reference Book*, which contains key statistics on enrollment, admissions, courses, graduation, retention, and faculty. It also publishes its Common Data Set. It has a robust student survey research program that includes benchmark data from the National Survey of Student Engagement and campus-specific information from surveys delivered throughout the student life cycle.

As discussed in the following chapters, advances to assessment information include:

- investment in a robust MicroStrategy data system, providing the ability to create reports on topics such as admissions, enrollment, student characteristics, and housing;
- development of a suite of dashboards for university leadership that track key metrics on strategic goals, including budget goals and retention;
- creation of a new set of staff surveys that allow for inclusion of mission-specific questions while also providing comparison data. The survey vendor provides analytics that facilitate the targeted use of results;
- subscription to *U.S. News & World Report* data that enables the university to benchmark against aspirational institutions and understand what the impact of strategic investments may have on rankings;
- development of a new faculty activity reporting system that better captures faculty diversity and equity work and enables the university to capture all aspects of scholarship and creative activity; and
- implementation of an upgraded academic assessment collection system (Nuventive) that provides academic

units with clear analytics on strengths and challenges related to assessment of student learning.

Assessment Use[42]

Examples of how assessment is used to evaluate progress toward the strategic plan and to advance specific goals are presented throughout the *Self-Study*. Typically, assessment results are used and shared in the context of advancing or understanding specific initiatives. Often this takes the shape of discussing assessment results in university committees. That said, results are often published on AU websites, such as the President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion, strategic plan, We Know Success, and Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. While the focus is on using data for institutional improvement, interest in data is often more widespread than to only those involved in decision-making. There may be additional opportunities to educate the university community about where to find results.

Next Steps: Comprehensive and Integrated Reviews

AU is at an important time in its history. New members of the cabinet, relatively new deans, and changes in other key positions offer an opportunity to reflect on AU's strengths and imagine how key functions of the institution can be stronger. In preparation for a new president, academic leadership is taking the 2023–2024 academic year to undertake a comprehensive assessment of important academic, financial, and other functions. As a letter to the university community on October 17, 2023, states, "…we will use this year to thoughtfully review how we approach our work to help inform future strategy and budget decision-making. This includes our academic vision; our student support services; our research; our people structures and support, including our ongoing investments in compensation; our resource management; our revenue diversification including the endowment and the post-Change Can't Wait fundraising priorities; and our expense management and operational efficiencies." The *Self-Study*, and its recommendations, are helping to guide this review.

Although some institutions might wait for a new president to begin such a comprehensive initiative, the culture of AU is to move forward. Such a review will provide the new president with data that can inform the next two-year budget and advance immediate and long-term goals.

CONCLUSION

American University's mission is "to advance knowledge, foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership." The mission is consistent with AU's values. Since the institution was founded by John Fletcher Hurst, a respected Methodist bishop, American University has

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42 Evidence of regular evaluation of mission statement and institutional goals. [SI.C4] Documentation of an implemented, systematic, and sustained institutional assessment process linking planning, assessment, and resource allocation decisions. [SVI.C9]

embodied academic excellence and a commitment to leadership and service. The strategic plan advances this mission.

AU has been intentional and deliberate about connecting its academic, financial, and operational planning in support of its mission, with the strategic plan as the hub. This has created synergy and alignment and has continually reinforced how the strategic plan, developed with extensive community input, and its related planning processes, have well positioned American University to continue to meet evolving challenges and opportunities for institutional improvement.

At the university level, this coordination is being driven by university leaders who are serving as executive sponsors and supported by community input and shared governance through dedicated working groups for each strategic imperative area. Progress has been made in extending this integrated approach, aligned with the strategic plan, at the school and unit level. Expanding this effort to include more robust and coordinated school and unit-level planning and assessment will help bring these efforts to the next level.

Budget planning and implementation have been a strong example of this aligned and integrated approach. Budget planning and implementation are guided by the university's strategic plan and assessed continuously. Resource allocations are directly linked to strategic imperatives, and significant progress has been made in recent years in making both the budget process and institutional resource prioritization more transparent to the larger university community through open forums and budget presentations to faculty, staff, and students, as well as the biennial budget report. Furthermore, a broad representation of campus constituencies participates in the budget development and evaluation processes through the UBC, which was made a standing committee with a year-round schedule. While strides in this area have greatly increased the community's understanding of the budget process and resource prioritization at the central institutional level, there is more work to be done in increasing the community's understanding of resource prioritization in areas that directly affect students, faculty, and staff locally. Many decisions around specific resource allocations for student life, faculty research, and academic programming are decentralized and made at the unit (school and departmental) and divisional levels. The community is a highly engaged one, and community members are asking for more transparency in these areas, presenting an opportunity for the university to engage more broadly in critical conversations about strategic resource prioritization, revenue diversification, and fundraising, and to take budget transparency to the next level.

The landscape of higher education has significantly changed in recent years in light of the challenges of COVID-19, social movements, demographic changes, and advances in technology, all of which have significant resource implications. AU is facing many of these challenges head-on to ensure our resources can continue to match our ambitions. The university's continuing dependency on student-generated revenue from tuition and fees (80 percent of the operating budget) and housing and dining operations (10 percent) remains an area of challenge and puts an ongoing pressure on the operating budget. While it is

unlikely that AU will be able to significantly decrease its tuition dependency soon, revenue diversification will need to remain a key strategic priority. Concerns around college affordability and accessibility nationwide constrain the university's overall tuition pricing strategy. At the same time, rising costs for academic programs, student support and financial aid, as well as administrative services require significant additional financial investments. The university will need to continue to focus on generating new revenues from non-traditional programs and activities. Also, continued fundraising endowed scholarships and chairs will relieve pressure on its operating budget. Only then will the university be able to stay true to its values while also managing its financial constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Plan
Build on the connectivity of planning, budgeting, and fundraising at the university level, prioritizing more robust and coordinated school and unit-level strategic planning.

Strengthen efforts to ensure all university constituencies understand and are informed of the strategic plan development and implementation.

Financial Resources
Build on the progress made at the university level on bringing more transparency around the budget and resources at not only the aggregate level but also at the divisional level. This will ensure faculty, staff, and students have more engagement and understanding at a local level.

Expedite efforts to reduce the university's tuition dependency and overall dependency on student-generated revenue. Under the guidance of the new Investment Committee, maximize the university's endowment to further investments in our people and support student thriving.

Assessment
Leverage the implementation of the new enterprise resource platform, Workday, to further enhance our assessment capabilities to make more data driven decisions.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Examples of key documents used to inform this chapter:

Mission and Vision Statement

AU Strategic Plan

Inclusive Excellence Plan

AU Campus Plan

Change Can't Wait: The Campaign for American University

Fiscal Years 2023–2024 Budget Report

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Report

Fiscal Years 2020–2021 Budget Report

AU Financial Statements

3 SCHOLARSHIP: Enhancing Capacity for Distinctive and High-Impact Research and Scholarship

Scholarship is core to American University's mission and serves as one of the three central themes of AU's strategic plan, which states that scholarship is also central to AU's future.[43] The university has focused on increasing its research output and impact in recent years, and the university now prides itself on its equal excellence in teaching and scholarship embodied by the scholar-teacher ideal.

This chapter will describe the university's ongoing efforts to improve research as it looks to refine the role scholarship plays in the larger AU mission for the university and for individual researchers. Seven aspects of the pursuit of scholarship will be discussed in this chapter: excellence in scholarship, progress in distinctive and impactful scholarship, incorporating values-led research and evaluation, sponsored research, student research and the scholar-teacher ideal, strategic plan research progress, and research responses to a changing world. The chapter will close by examining the limitations of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as the university continues to develop its research identity and associated goals.

EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP

American University is a high research institution (based on Carnegie classification, also known as R2).[44] Research is part of the university's core mission, as reflected in AU's strategic plan, which calls for an increase in scholarly excellence. In line with these goals, American University sees itself as a research university on the rise. Data shown later in the chapter supports the assertion that AU faculty are publishing comparable to its peer institutions. American University's vision for scholarship, however, also relates to several university-level initiatives, including advancement of the scholar-teacher ideal, as described in the overview of AU's strategic plan's scholarship theme, as well as its plan for inclusive excellence.

Scholarship has a broad definition at AU, as the portion of American University's mission that relates to the production of original contributions to the author's field of knowledge. In the Faculty Manual, scholarship is defined as "research, scholarship, and creative or professional activity," leaving more specific interpretations of this broad definition

to the university's individual schools and departments. Different disciplines at the university operationalize the idea differently, which is appropriate. Scholarship includes traditional academic research products, such as a peer-reviewed journal article or a university press book. Creative activity, such as an art installation or fiction essay, are also appropriate forms of scholarship in different contexts. The 2015 Task Force on High Impact Research defined high-impact research as research that results in "positive impacts on society, generation of new knowledge, transmission of knowledge, positive recognition by peers and enhanced national recognition, and generation of new or revised professional practices." Establishing the appropriate output and quality of this scholarship is specific to schools, departments, and disciplines, but the overall goal is to produce high-quality output recognized nationally and internationally by peer institutions. That goal aligns with the 2015 task force report's broad definition, though when combined with the definition of scholarship, high-impact scholarship is a more appropriate term.

Research is somewhat easier to define. According to most federal regulations, research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.[45] In short, research is a subset of scholarship but not a synonym for it, and many scholar-teachers at American University who do not do research by this definition do produce scholarship.

According to the university's commitment to the scholar-teacher ideal, both scholarship and teaching are equally valued. With that said, the university has not yet articulated how the scholar-teacher ideal affects individual faculty on tenure, term, and adjunct contracts, nor has it explored how to properly distribute resources to fully support all faculty in their work toward this ideal. Given this heterogeneity, a scholar-teacher ideal is just that. It is an ideal point which any individual or unit may not reach but something that each member of the faculty and unit strives to become. AU values contributions and connections between scholarship and teaching through student research and mentoring as well, but the reward systems for excellence in these kinds of labor-intensive activities are not well defined beyond a few internal faculty awards.

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43 The strategic plan theme aligns with "mission and goals that… include support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity." [SI.C1e, SIII.C2a]

44 Carnegie Classifications (see American University profile and classification, Carnegie classifications website).

45 Code of Federal Regulations 46.102. https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-A/subchapter-A/part-46/subpart-A/section-46.102

PROGRESS IN DISTINCTIVE AND IMPACTFUL SCHOLARSHIP

In 2015, the university's efforts to improve scholarly output, combined with a change in Carnegie classifications, resulted in a new designation as a High Research Activity (R2) institution. This change was the culmination of many efforts to heighten scholarship expectations and expand scholarship opportunities at the university, including a renewed focus on scientific research that helped drive the university's new Hall of Science.[46] The university now finds itself at a crossroads when deciding the next steps in its path toward excellence in scholarship, driven by a unique portfolio of researchers and research outputs and the desire to define excellence in ways that are more closely aligned with our unique scholarship strengths and university goals.

AU is engaged in a wide variety of scholarship output, in line with varied disciplines and subjects covered by its schools. Some schools and departments, such as creative arts, value forms of scholarship such as creative works or performing arts, while other schools like the School of Communication (SOC) are built upon professional standards such as journalism and filmmaking, which produce scholarship in a wide variety of outlets. Overall, AU is strongest in the applied social sciences, with the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and School of International Service (SIS) both receiving recognition as being among the top schools in the country, though these rankings are influenced by, but not directly based on, research measurements.[47]

AU has a variety of expectations and associated scholarly output, which makes a full assessment of the total production of AU scholarship difficult. Journal publications are a common expectation for many, but not all, areas of the university. Book publications are also highly valued by many schools and departments, and some areas like computer science and the University Library value conference presentations.

AU utilizes complementary measures to gauge excellence in scholarship, primarily for tenure-line faculty and other faculty with research expectations. At the school and departmental level, each unit has its own guidelines indicating not only what are considered valued scholarly outputs, but also what excellence in scholarship looks like for those units. A university-wide Committee on Faculty Actions serves as part of the review process for tenure, promotion, and reappointment for most faculty as well, and accordingly, considers whether and how well candidates are meeting these expectations.

University-wide, AU utilizes a faculty activity reporting system to track research outputs. In 2021, a new system, Digital

Science Elements, was implemented. This new system facilitates data reporting, while also improving the process for faculty by importing scholarship from a variety of external sources. As demonstrated in Table 3.1, Elements gives AU a fuller picture of the breadth of scholarly and creative works.

Dimensions, another Digital Science product, is a database that tracks a variety of research outputs along with citation counts to facilitate tracking and benchmarking of university-level research output, as demonstrated below. While Dimensions' indexing is relatively wide in scope, it does not adequately capture the full breadth of AU scholarship, particularly book publications. In 2022, AU faculty reported 400-plus percent more total scholarly and creative works than are tracked in Dimensions, as shown in Table 3.1.

As of late 2023, for the purposes of research evaluation as well as benchmarking, there is no definitive source that tracks all of AU's output. Databases like Dimensions are powerful tools for research impact measurement and benchmarking, but like many research impact metrics and tools, they were primarily built to track journal articles in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. That excludes a significant portion of AU scholarship, including the vast majority of AU-authored book publications. Keeping this significant limitation in mind, many of the university's research outputs can still be tracked over time and compared to benchmark the university's research progress. Looking at tracked publications in Dimensions (Figure 3.2), a steady rise in publications over time is demonstrated, showing overall improvement in the university's output, primarily journal articles.

Again, due to the university's strong social science focus, along with the tendency of publications in STEM disciplines to accrue citations at higher rates than other disciplines, and a relatively limited number of otherwise relatively comparable institutions, it is difficult to find appropriate institutional benchmarks for research comparison. Few other private institutions at the same Carnegie ranking have a similar combination of research disciplines, particularly ones without a medical, engineering, or a similar STEM school. However, three institutions near American University in the 2023 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings that are also private R2 universities with more similar research portfolios can be used for comparison. The universities chosen: Southern Methodist University, Marquette University, and Fordham University. The results demonstrate that AU's scholarly production is similar to that of the benchmark institutions with similar progression pathways (Figure 3.3 on page 33).

Moving from research output to impact, Dimensions can also benchmark AU's citation count against comparable universities,

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46 AU's Hall of Science opened in 2021. [SVI.C6]

47 According to *U.S. News & World Report,* AU has the top school of public affairs in the DC area and #10 program in the country in 2023; *Foreign Policy* magazine ranks SIS as the #8 best master's program in the world in international relations as of 2018. [SIII.C6]

Table 3.1. 2022 AU faculty-authored scholarly and creative work totals

(N/A categories are not tracked in Dimensions.)

Scholarly/Creative Work	Elements	Dimensions
Book	49	0
Chapter	171	68
Composition	9	N/A
Conference	339	32
Dataset	1	32
Exhibition	17	N/A
Journal Article	708	530
Media	62	N/A
Media Interview	582	N/A
Online-Only Publication	154	N/A
Other	75	N/A
Performance	47	N/A
Poster	22	N/A
Preprint	40	50
Presentation	616	N/A
Report	26	N/A
Software/Code	8	N/A
Total	2,937	718

Source: Dimensions and Elements data generated June 6, 2023

Figure 3.2. Publications output growth by year
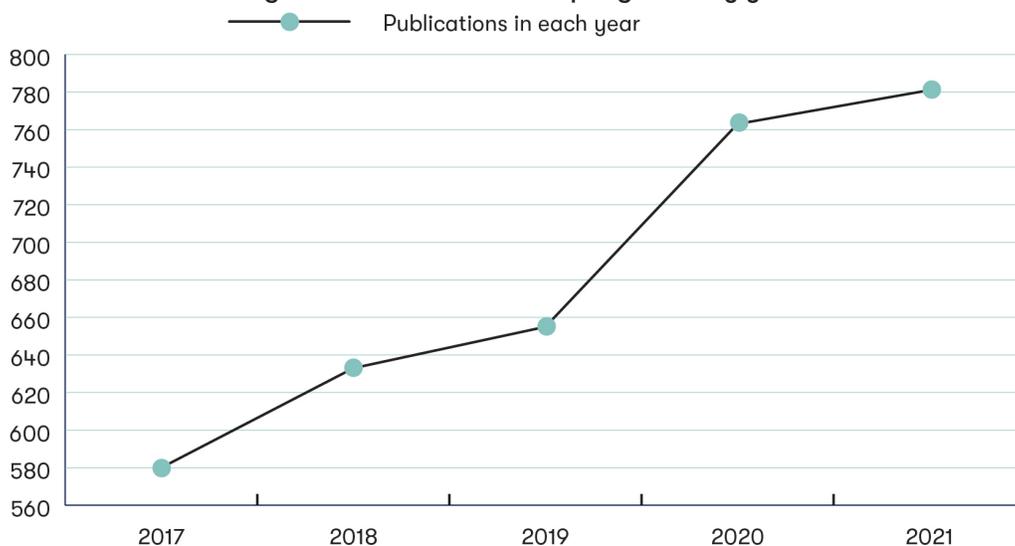
Source: Digital Science Dimensions database, September 2023

keeping the same limitations in mind regarding the ability to track both outputs and their resulting citation counts.

Analyzing total citation counts for benchmark peers divided by the total number of tenure-line faculty as reported by Carnegie for 2021 shows that overall scholarly impact is similar and is close to or above the university's peers in each year (Figure 3.4). Note that this does not consider any changes in faculty over time, at AU or elsewhere, but assumes that each university has had similar changes over time. It also does not account for research contributions from researchers not on the tenure track.

Citation-based, scholarly impact, however, does not tell the full story of AU's impact. Given the breadth of disciplinary research, the university's impact goals are also varied. While citations are always notable and are generally well incorporated into existing research evaluation methods such as tenure, different schools have different indicators of impact excellence. SPA, for example, tracks congressional testimony as an impact indicator, though this cannot be measured or benchmarked against other universities. Many of the university's best impact indicators come from real-world contributions rather than quantitative metrics, like these cases of faculty members making a difference in AU's community and beyond:

- College of Arts and Science's (CAS) literature faculty member Rachel Louise Snyder's 2019 book, *No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us,* is used to train 911 operators throughout Colorado.

- CAS chemistry faculty member Raychelle Burks, along with two AU alumni, were among 120 women in STEM profiled by the Smithsonian exhibit, #IfThenSheCan, featuring three-dimensional printed statues and biographies of each individual.

- SPA and School of Education faculty member Cynthia Miller-Idriss is an MSNBC opinion columnist, focusing on extremism and current events.

- Washington College of Law (WCL) faculty member Hilary Allen recently testified three times in Congress: before the US House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services on climate as a systemic risk to banking in June 2021; and before the US Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs twice: on stablecoins in December 2021 and on the FTX crypto crash and customer impact in December 2022.

- In 2023, Kogod School of Business (Kogod) faculty member Sonja Grier won, for an unprecedented fifth time, the American Marketing Association's Thomas C. Kinnear Award, which recognizes the most significant recent contribution to the understanding of marketing and public policy issues.

- The Antiracist Praxis Research Guide, a practitioner guide created by writing studies and library faculty, has been cited multiple times, including in a *Washington Post Magazine* article by Damon Young discussing anti-Blackness in childhood.[48]

- American University's partnership with the *Conversation* allows researchers to create translated research outputs to reach a broader audience. To date, AU has published 309 articles, which are regularly picked up and published by a variety of news outlets.[49]

- American University's robust community-based research and service-learning programs aim to improve the lives of local community members, while also contributing to valuable experiential learning opportunities for the students.[50]

- Cross-campus research podcasts highlight, discuss, and contextualize faculty and related research on specific topics, for example, Lobes and Robes (CAS, SPA, WCL/neuroscience and policy), Big World (SIS), and Faculty Cross Talks (cross-campus/topic-focused).

Despite limitations in scholarship impact tracking in some areas, Digital Science product Altmetric allows AU to track, measure, and compare policy mentions, or faculty scholarship that is cited in a policy memo or document. For this comparison, aspirational policy peers were chosen from colleges and universities with highly ranked public affairs programs, as measured by *U.S. News & World Report*, including two DC-area universities. The institutions chosen are George Washington University, Tufts University, Georgetown University, University of Denver, University of Southern California, and Dartmouth College. However, these schools are all universities with a strong STEM research focus, where multiauthored publishing and high citation counts drive impact measurement, when compared to AU. As expected, their scholarly output totals for 2018–2022 are uniformly higher than AU's, even when similarly adjusted for tenure-line faculty size to normalize output size (Figure 3.5 on page 34).

48 "The anti-Blackness of 'the Black kids teased me for talking White,'" *The Washington Post*, 11/21/2022. https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2022/11/21/damon-young-anti-blackness-black-kids-teased-me-talking-white/

49 Various articles authored or co-authored by American University faculty, the *Conversation,* multiple dates https://theconversation.com/institutions/american-university-1187

50 American University Learning Communities as an example of sufficient learning opportunities. https://www.american.edu/learning-communities/cbrs/ [SIII.C4]

Figure 3.3. Benchmarked publications per faculty member
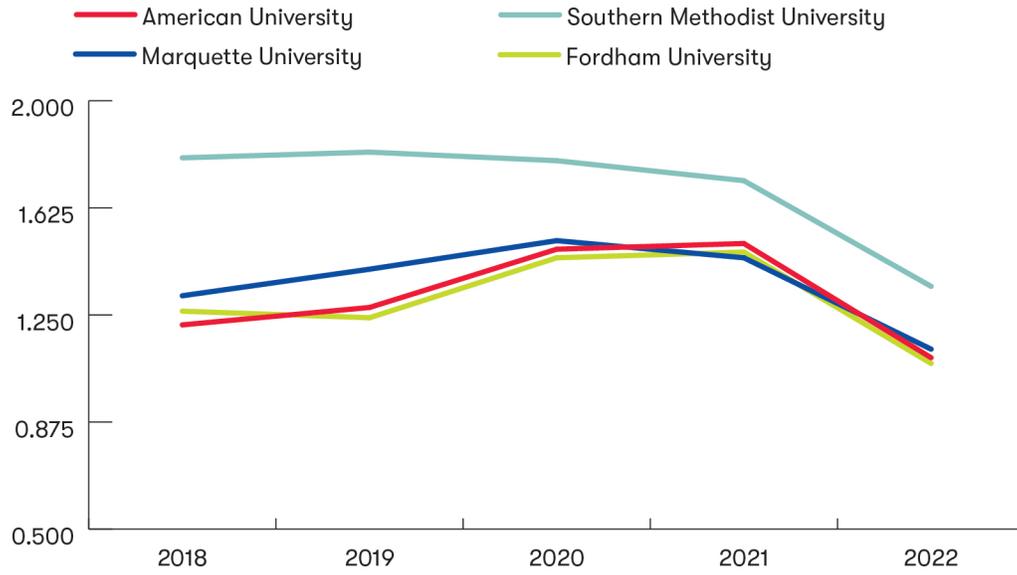
Source: Digital Science Dimensions database, November 2022

Figure 3.4. Average citation counts per faculty
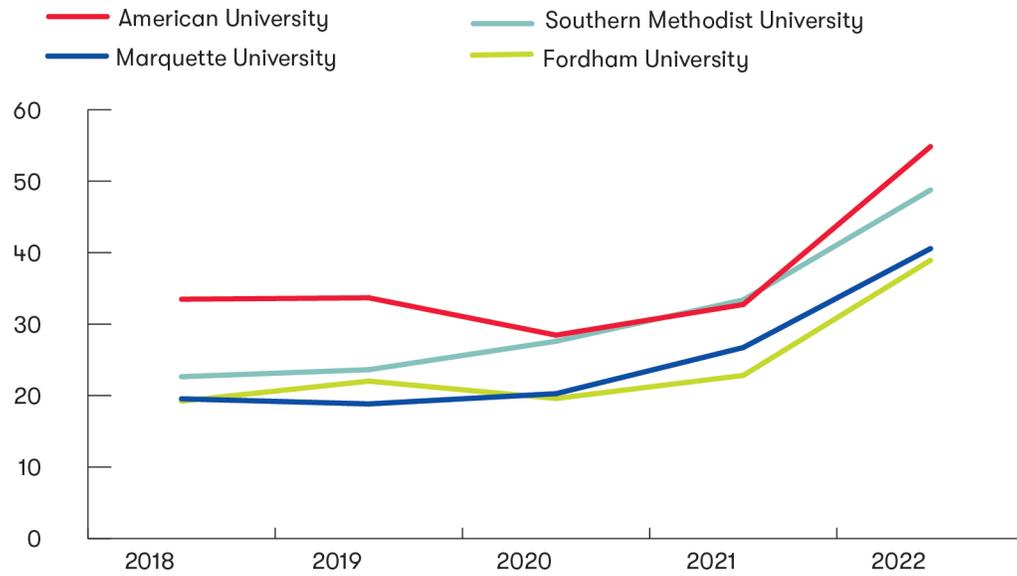
Source: Digital Science Dimensions database, November 2022

Figure 3.5. Publication count benchmark against top policy schools
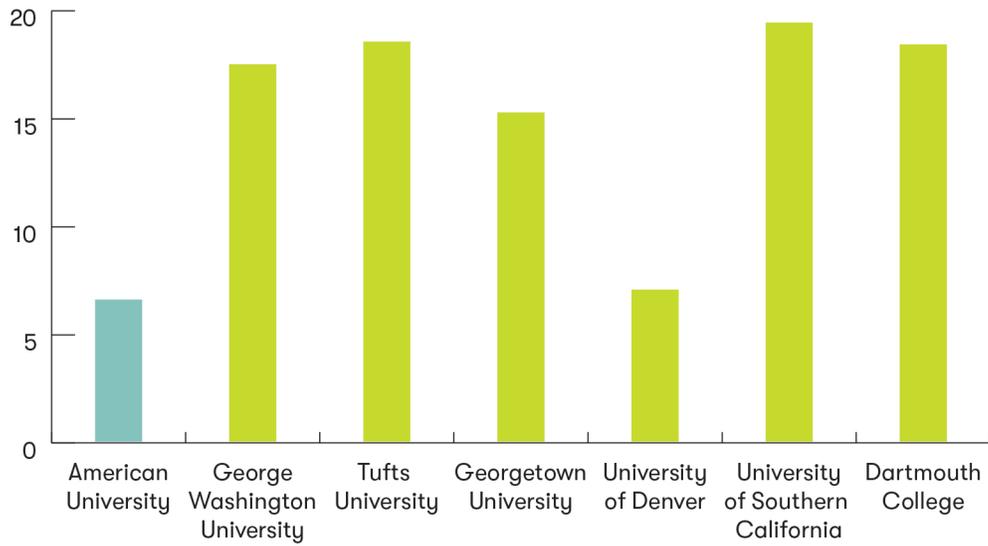
Source: Digital Science Altmetric for Institutions, November 2022

Figure 3.6. Policy mentions benchmark against top policy schools
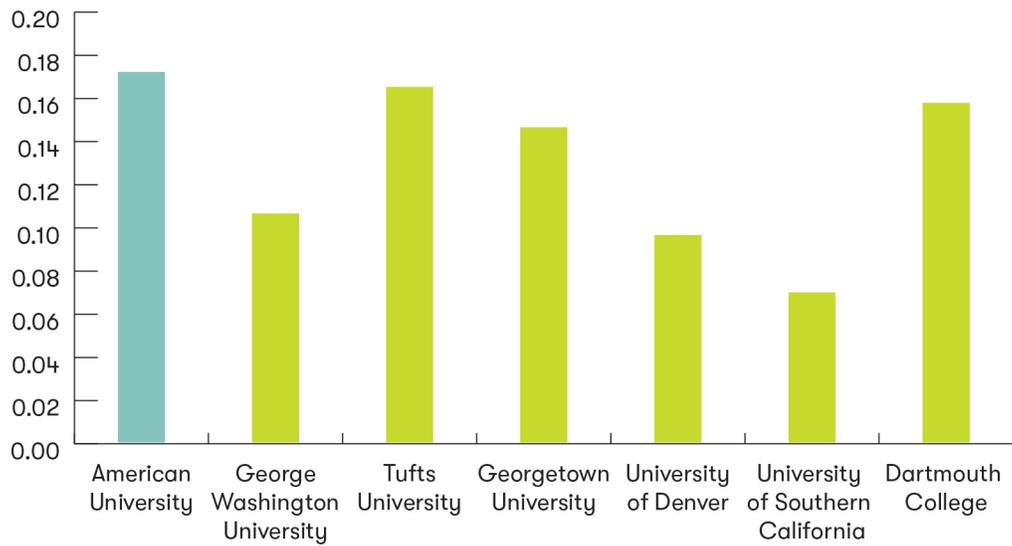
Source: Digital Science Altmetric for Institutions, November 2022

However, when comparing the average publication count per faculty with the total number of policy mentions in the same timeframe, 2018 to 2022, a different picture emerges: AU appears to be a national leader for policy impact, an area of key importance to the university (Figure 3.6 on page 34).

Impactful scholarship has been historically measured at AU and elsewhere by citation counts, journal prestige as measured by journal impact factor and other metrics, and scholarly impact. These metrics, however, were developed for measuring journal-based scholarship for STEM disciplines. As an institution with a strong social sciences focus, books form a larger percentage of research output than other universities with a stronger STEM focus, but the scholarly impact of books is much more difficult to track at an institutional level given available databases. The Dimensions database includes 42 AU-authored book publications dating back to 1957, representing only a small fraction of the total book output in that timeframe. This limits the ability to measure and benchmark research impact of these outputs.

While quantifying AU's research impact with disparate audiences such as scholars, policymakers, and the general public comes with many limitations, the role of translated research outputs, such as authoring a policy brief, creating a patent, or adoption of a researcher-created story through the *Conversation* in news media, have yet to be fully incorporated in merit, tenure, and promotion evaluation processes and are thus even more difficult to categorize and contextualize within scholarship.

INCORPORATING VALUES-LED RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

As reflected in the strategic areas of research focus and changemakers theme, American University has long been a leader in incorporating values such as sustainability, antiracism, and social justice into its scholarship. As discussed in the mission chapter, diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and inclusive excellence have long been shared institutional values that guide many aspects of strategic planning and execution. *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence* guides efforts to further incorporate these values in all aspects of campus life, including the research enterprise. Goal five of this inclusive excellence plan focuses on research, scholarship, and creative work.

Accordingly, these values serve as central themes running throughout a wide and varied range of scholarship in every school and department, including in research centers and strategic research initiatives. Even if they do not focus their research on issues that directly focus on DEI, these values guide how faculty with a wide array of scholarly focus areas approach their scholarship, including how they hire research assistants, select and engage with partners, analyze and interpret data, and disseminate findings with the wider public.

The Task Force on Equity in Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure, and Merit was convened to provide recommendations on the incorporation of our values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into tenure guidelines.[51] The final report was completed in 2020 and has prompted a lengthy process of overhauling tenure guidelines across campus, with each school and department separately reviewing and updating guidelines. Through a series of guidelines, units are encouraged to take an inclusive and additive approach to this process. The guidelines do not mandate that faculty attend to values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in scholarship, but aim to build pathways to reappointment, tenure, and promotion that incorporate DEI values in various ways, from focus on equitable selection and treatment of research participants, collaborators, and partners to equitable models of publishing and sharing outputs and products through open access scholarship. As of January 2024, 15 departments or schools have submitted updated tenure, promotion, and reappointment guidelines, while many others are currently working on revisions. Once finished and reviewed, the university has an opportunity to be a leader in this area, by showing how this process can serve as a model for other institutions wishing to reflect inclusive excellence values in their scholarship.

While this revision process to promotion, tenure, and reappointment policies did not include a mandate that researchers focus their research on DEI topics or issues, most schools have attended to AU's values of inclusive excellence when considering tenurable scholarship profiles, as it is[52] recognized that diverse research is not commonly published in core disciplinary journals. Many units have created a director or associate dean of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and some of them are helping support their units in incorporating attention to these values in the tenure and promotion process as well. The director in SPA, for example, is developing a grant opportunity for faculty researching areas related to DEI, while CAS now offers two two-year academic diversity post-doc fellowships each year.

There is evidence of incorporation of these values in research activity across campus. Larger research initiatives include the National Science Foundation's (NSF) ADVANCE grant to study racial and gender equity for STEM faculty, an NSF award to study Black STEM post-secondary student experiences, a Gates Foundation award to advance equity-based teaching, and more than 40 Antiracist Research and Policy Center faculty affiliates across the university.

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51 Task Force on Equity in Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure, and Merit (see "Planning for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion"). [SVI.C4]

52 "Less 'Prestigious' Journals Can Contain More Diverse Research, by Citing Them We Can Shape a More Just Politics of Citation," *Impact of Social Sciences* (blog), 10/11/2021.

Concurrently, areas of research support on campus are also prioritizing this work. For example, the University Library has expanded support for equitable publishing and evaluation practices through the appointment of a scholarly communication librarian, adoption of a framework to prioritize support for open access publishing in its budget, a new institutional repository for supporting research materials that are openly accessible faculty, student, and staff, and addition to the library's base budget of a fund to support open access publishing. The AU Summer Scholars and Artists Research Fellowship (Summer Scholars) encourages applications through active outreach to student organizations and campus partners who support BIPOC (individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color) and other underrepresented minority students. Our values-led research is evident in several research areas of priority including social justice and sustainability, and in many research centers and scholarship priorities across campus, such as the ongoing focus on sustainability within Kogod, the SOC's Center for Media and Social Impact, and the SPA's PERIL lab, which focuses on community-centered education and outreach to counteract political polarization and violent extremism.

The inclusive excellence plan has identified some preliminary actions to support DEI-focused research but has not yet identified more robust actions regarding the incorporation of inclusive excellence values into the larger research enterprise. The tenure guideline revision process holds promise for expanding the tenure pathway for those incorporating DEI into scholarship in many different ways, but it is still a work in progress. Research has shown that more prestigious journals tend to publish less diverse research, which must be acknowledged as an area of potential misalignment between the university's goals of advancing its research impact and supporting diverse forms of scholarship.[53] Traditional metrics, which determine "top" disciplinary journals, will not generally publish values-led research, so success in pursuing this kind

of scholarship will look different from traditional models of research impact and will require alternative measurements in order to both track and communicate our success in pursuing values-led research and achieving real-world impact.

Finally, initiatives like the expansion of the Summer Scholars program are well-aligned with inclusive excellence and scholar-teacher goals. However, this expansion was made possible due to a surplus of end-of-year funds, which cannot be relied upon for sustainable growth. A more detailed mechanism for not only initializing but also operationalizing such initiatives that closely align with the university's different strategic priorities and mission will help ensure that the university is building programs and services that are sustainable, long-term, and further its mission and goals.

SPONSORED RESEARCH AND SUPPORT

Increasing sponsored research funding has been a priority, as indicated by its inclusion in the current strategic plan. Sponsored research generates revenue for the university that can partially support its scholarly mission and supplement the funding for research infrastructure. There has been a significant increase in funding since the FY17–18 fiscal year (shown as FY18 below, Figure 3.7 on page 37).

The most recent indications for fiscal year (FY23) exceeded the previous high total, set in 2021–2022 (FY22), with a modest 5 percent increase from FY22 to FY23. A historic $15 million total funded research award for the Multiscale RECIPES for Sustainable Food Systems food waste research project constituted a significant portion of the FY23 total, and it remains to be seen whether such large single amounts will be awarded to AU in support of research in the future. Either way, five-year trends remain encouraging, with total sponsored research awards up 48 percent from FY18 to FY23.

Table 3.2. Sponsored research award quarterly totals for FY 2022–2023

Quarter	Direct Costs	Indirect Costs	Indirect %	Total Awarded
Q1	$22,433,196	$3,350,649	13%	$25,783,845
Q2	$12,020,841	$2,097,188	15%	$14,118,030
Q3	$4,597,328	$890,015	16%	$5,487,343
Q4	$4,907,464	$737,870	13%	$5,645,334
Total	$43,958,829	$7,075,723	14%	$51,034,552

Source: AU Office of Sponsored Awards and Research Administration

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53 https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2021/10/11/less-prestigious-journals-can-contain-more-diverse-research-by-citing-them-we-can-shape-a-more-just-politics-of-citation/

Figure 3.7 Sponsored research award totals for direct and indirect costs, FY18–FY22
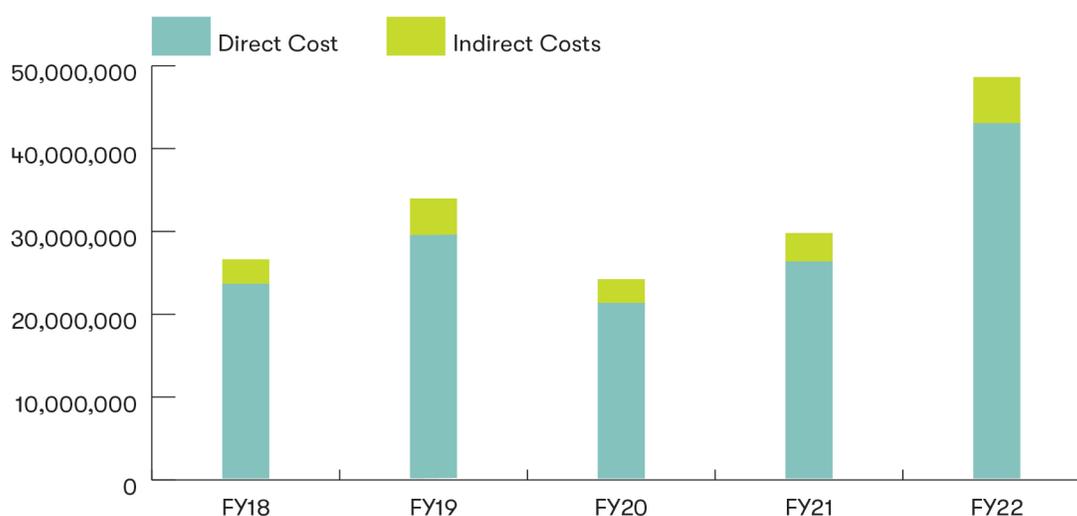
Source: AU Office of Sponsored Awards and Research Administration

Sponsored research provides funds that can advance AU's research mission, individual research projects and hire limited-term positions but are insufficient for advancing the university's sustainable research infrastructure. Likewise, while goals to increase the sponsored research portfolio advance the university's research mission, a more robust model of research success would assist in identifying existing research strengths and help align university-wide goals with sponsored research targets. For example, while the current strategic plan identifies a goal of increasing indirect cost percentages, which AU is meeting and exceeding, a more robust set of metrics could include not only sponsored research fund totals and indirect percentages, but also the total number of awards, amount of sponsored research funds expended, size of awards, and federal, private, and industry awards. These data points would help establish more specific measurable research targets that align with more diverse research goals, such as the role sponsored research plays in developing external partnerships as well as working toward inclusive excellence goals.

Whether using traditional data or more advanced metrics, most of this data that would be useful to document and track different trends in funded research do not exist in aggregate form. This requires manual aggregation, which is time- and personnel-intensive. Without this data, it is hard to articulate appropriate targets. Workday, a new management tool discussed later in the chapter, will allow for more reports, as well as additional Cayuse (research software) add-ons, which would allow for better reporting and analysis. But again, this would require research support staff to process and analyze, and these staff are already in short supply.

STUDENT RESEARCH AND THE SCHOLAR-TEACHER IDEAL

The highest award for faculty at American University is the Scholar-Teacher of the Year, which demonstrates how highly the scholar-teacher ideal is valued. A scholar-teacher at AU is actively engaged in some form of scholarship as defined above. They may be a chemist who works in a laboratory or an anthropologist who studies a rare language in a remote location. Similarly, the scholar-teacher may be a creative writer or a documentary filmmaker. What makes each unique from a pure scholar or pure researcher is that they incorporate this scholarly expertise into their teaching and mentoring, and likewise their scholarship may be informed by teaching and mentoring activities. More generally, teaching and research endeavors are connected and inform each other, are interrelated, and include undergraduate and graduate students. At highly intensive research universities, the most outstanding researchers may never teach an undergraduate student or very few students of any kind. At AU, the scholar-teacher could be a nationally or internationally recognized expert and educator who brings this expertise into the classroom or some other learning experience. AU scholar-teachers could also engage their students, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, in knowledge creation. This is a similar connection as that seen in other R2 universities that prize both excellent teaching and research.

Similar to other universities in this group, American University offers a liberal arts education with a strong research/scholarship focus, and many opportunities exist for both undergraduate and graduate students to partner with faculty on research and scholarship projects, which also aligns with AU's scholar-teacher model.[54] According to a 2023 report from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) on High-Impact Practices, 30 percent of AU undergraduate seniors reported engaging in research with faculty, which is significantly higher than the 23 percent average of all schools that participated in the NSSE survey in 2022–2023. Those collaborations have included many opportunities to partner with individual faculty and research centers across campus. In addition to the undergraduate research opportunities, there is provost-level support for undergraduates to present their research at scholarly conferences. For example, Summer Scholars funded by the Provost's Office provides stipends for student-faculty scholarship collaboration over the summer.[55] These scholarships were expanded to accept more scholars in the summer 2022 cohort.

Several schools offer scholarly conference opportunities for undergraduates to present posters or papers. In addition, undergraduate and graduate journals across the university are published by students but supervised and supported by faculty. For example, the Department of Economics in CAS publishes an undergraduate journal, *Global Majority E-Journal*.[56] SPA publishes an academic journal for graduate students, *Public Purpose*.[57] The law school has several student-run publications, all of which publish student scholarship and most of which publish faculty scholarship. Every law student is also required to meet the upper-level writing requirement, which for some students leads to publication. Other research opportunities include focused cohort programs, such as the Olson Scholars in SIS, student research conferences or poster sessions such as CAS' Robyn Rafferty Mathias Student Research Conference, and research competitions such as the NASA DC Space Grant Consortium Student Research Competition, which awarded three prizes to AU students in 2021.

At the graduate/PhD level, students work with doctoral supervisors or an equivalent senior faculty member, sometimes publishing with their supervisors and on their own. Each semester many undergraduate science students take advantage of the opportunity to work with faculty members, in the lab or in the field, as part of research teams that include graduate students, professional staff, and sometimes postdoctoral researchers. These undergraduates hone their research skills across multiple semesters on the same research team. They often use this experience for preparing and increasing their competitiveness for advanced training in graduate science programs or medical school, while faculty members both appreciate and rely on the research collaboration and assistance that graduate students provide. Declining graduate enrollment numbers, however, could threaten this relationship and damage faculty research productivity.

The scholar-teacher ideal is an expectation for tenure-track and tenured faculty. Term (non-tenure track full-time faculty) and adjunct faculty have different expectations, mostly related to teaching and service to the university. Most of these faculty are expected to stay current within their relevant field in order to contribute to continued teaching excellence. This expectation of remaining current in the field allows term faculty to pursue professional development opportunities but does not require scholarly or professional contributions. Still, a number of term faculty engage in scholarship. Term faculty have the opportunity for promotion to associate and professor ranks in similar ways as tenure-track and tenured faculty, including consideration of external letters from senior peers in their scholarship domain and a vote by senior faculty. Several term faculty have been successfully promoted using this process. Some term faculty also negotiate to have scholarship expectations included as part of their contracts. These scholarship-active term faculty also exemplify the scholar-teacher ideal. For example, term faculty are actively engaged with research initiatives such as the Initiative on STEM Education and the Center for Environment, Community, and Equity, and term faculty regularly produce impactful scholarship across campus.

Given their typically higher teaching loads, scholarship-active term faculty are likely engaged with more students than faculty with defined scholarship expectations, and yet, they pursue the scholar-teacher ideal. Nationally, one data source suggests a trend of fewer tenure-track and tenured opportunities and more term or contingent positions. According to a 2022 AAUP survey of universities, 54 percent of these institutions replaced tenure lines with contingent appointments as opposed to a similar survey in 2004 that found only 17 percent did so.[58] As discussed in the learning chapter, trends in AU faculty distributions are consistent with these national trends.

Term faculty have, as discussed above, a pathway for promotion if they are research/scholarship active like their tenure-track/tenured peers. What they generally lack is the robust and sustained research support that tenure-track/tenured faculty receive. While resources are limited, there may be opportunities to support research-active faculty and increase

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54 For more information on student research visit the student research webpage: https://www.american.edu/research/students.cfm.

55 AU Summer Scholars program. See "Student Opportunities for Research and Scholarship" in supporting documentation. [SIII.6]

56 *Global Majority E-Journal.* [SIII.6]

57 *Public Purpose.* See graduate "Student Opportunities for Research and Scholarship." [SIII.6]

58 See "Tracking the Evolution (and Erosion) of Tenure," *Inside Higher Ed*, May 17, 2022.

research outputs throughout the university. Additionally, the degree to which the scholar-teacher ideal should be applied to non-tenure-track faculty with these varying degrees of research activity and support has not been articulated.

STRATEGIC PLAN RESEARCH PROGRESS

The two imperatives associated with the scholarship theme of the university's strategic plan concern the development and refinement of strategic areas of focus and an increase in multiple research indicators. AU has made significant progress in both respects.

The strategic plan itself outlines four areas of strategic focus for the university: health, data science and analytics, security, and social equity.[59] A fifth focus, sustainability, was added later. With these areas established, AU convened a working group, the Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee on Research and Centers (AACRC), to implement several scholarship imperatives within the strategic plan.[60] One imperative, the evaluation and streamlining of existing research centers, was executed by the working group. The working group also invited and evaluated applications for development of new university-wide research centers in line with one or more areas of strategic focus, an objective outlined in the strategic plan. As a result of this initiative, two new university-wide research centers were announced in June 2020, the Center for Environment, Community, and Equity and a reconfigured Center for Neuroscience and Behavior. Both new centers are multidisciplinary, bringing together faculty from the sciences, social sciences, and more to advance interdisciplinary research, pursue sponsored research opportunities, and related activities. These two centers joined the Center on Latin American and Latino Studies, previously the only university-wide center.[61]

In 2022, AU's Signature Research Initiative Program launched, with a threefold mission to elevate AU's research reputation, grow external sponsorship, and accelerate impact.[62] Two new initiatives were announced in July 2022, both in line with AU's strategic plan areas of research focus: Inclusive Technology Policy and Changing Aid: Understanding and Transforming Aid in Violent, Insecure, and Crisis-affected Environments. The Signature Research Initiative Program aims to identify and support interdisciplinary, high-impact scholarship at the university

that has potential to produce policy-relevant outputs with student involvement.

Professor Terry Davidson was named the inaugural Trone Family Eminent Scholar Chair in Neuroscience and Behavior in 2021, fulfilling another strategic plan priority to increase endowed positions in the university, while also advancing the university's goal to expand and strengthen in the sciences. The university now has 22 endowed chair positions and is working to increase that total to continue to attract and retain top scholars.

The second strategic plan imperative, research, includes advancement of the scholar-teacher ideal and expanding student-faculty research opportunities, as discussed earlier. The plan also calls for an additional PhD program to expand "STEM our way,"[63] and discussions continue for the establishment of an interdisciplinary science program. This new PhD program will help build on current momentum to expand research capabilities that bring together the sciences and social sciences to partner on relevant and engaging research that aligns with our strategic areas of research focus.

Finally, the strategic plan calls for an evaluation of the existing research infrastructure. AACRC completed this report in 2020, evaluating deficits and inconsistencies in the research process and support systems for campus stakeholders and recommending infrastructure changes. The report found uneven staff allocations dedicated to research support at the school level, below-average levels of satisfaction with most of the support for stages of the research life cycle, and confusion regarding the support system for sponsored research. The task force also noted frustration with the larger research support system outside of sponsored research support, but evaluation of these systems fell outside of the committee's charge.

This report has spurred several important changes to improve the research infrastructure. The Office of Sponsored Programs and the Office of Grants and Contracts Administration, which separately supported researchers applying for and receiving sponsored funding pre-award and post-award, merged in 2022 to become the Office of Sponsored Awards and Research Administration. This merger was designed to provide seamless support through the sponsored research lifecycle and enhance service delivery through the Office of Research. Additionally, AU is currently working to implement Workday enterprise resource planning software, which should improve the efficiency of grant tracking and HR processing as well as other university-wide processes.

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59 AU strategic plan scholarship theme areas of focus on the strategic plan website. See goals that "[include] support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity." [SI.C1e]

60 Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee on Research and Centers Report.

61 For a complete list of research centers, go to https://www.american.edu/centers/.

62 For more on the Strategic Initiative Program, including the 2023 research initiatives, see https://www.american.edu/research/sri.cfm.

63 "STEM our way" is language used in the strategic plan and commonly used across campus and refers to what STEM means to AU. [SI.C1e-f].

Despite these changes, questions remain about what the best research infrastructure would be to properly support and enhance the rise in scholarly output and funded research. Questions also remain about how to best align and clarify research expectations. Research at the university is guided by a strategic plan, an inclusive excellence plan, as well as individual administrators' goals that are not always fully documented. One of the challenges is how these changing individual administrator goals and objectives shift with new leaders and what this means for the university's strategic priorities. Priorities can also vary by school and department and may not reflect larger university strategic priorities, and university-level strategic planning likewise may not always consider school and department-level initiatives and areas of focus.

RESEARCH RESPONSES TO A CHANGING WORLD

Consistent with most US institutions, COVID-19 dramatically affected AU's ability to carry out the scholarship section of its strategic plan, partly by delaying funding and the full launch of the two new university-wide centers. COVID-19 also impacted scholarship at AU by limiting researchers' ability to conduct field work, attend professional conferences, and pursue research opportunities involving travel. Despite these impacts, AU's overall research trajectory showed positive trends in terms of publication output and externally funded research.

Among other things, COVID-19 impacted individual researchers' timelines. This occurred both directly through impediments to conducting research, and indirectly through changes in teaching workload and expectations, work/home environment, family care and support structures, and beyond. Some impacts of COVID-19 on the workforce, on research, and particularly on women and people of color have been researched and documented in the scholarly literature.[64] But COVID-19 brought about a new era in the understanding of higher education.

The Task Force on Equity in Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure, and Merit also was asked to make recommendations on how AU should account for COVID-19's effects on scholarship production, particularly as they impacted faculty seeking tenure and promotion. The task force's report included specific recommendations such as the ability to request a delay in tenure and promotion as needed due to COVID-19's impact on individual researcher productivity. This quick and timely response to the changing conditions that COVID-19 presented ensured that affected faculty were evaluated fairly, and the university's expectations for scholarship did not outweigh the needs of the faculty who

were conducting scholarship. Moving forward, this process can serve as an excellent model for how the university can adapt to changing conditions with both agility and equity in mind.

CONCLUSION

AU's rapid rise in research productivity, impact, and sponsored research funding is evident from both traditional and alternative metrics. Overall, this progress is consistent with the strategic plan's call for scholarly excellence and with the goals and priorities of the university's administration.

A review of faculty scholarship finds that AU has a record of excellence in both citations by scholars and practitioners and through engagement with the general public and the policy community. AU's research productivity, impact, and sponsored research funding is comparable with current and aspirational peers using traditional and alternative metrics. AU is advancing its inclusive excellence plan to guide our efforts to address our values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in scholarship. It has been challenging to develop a diverse and clearly defined set of goals and measures of success that allow the university to measure and benchmark its progress beyond our current sponsored research targets. Also, it is difficult to capture how AU's research productivity and scholarly impact is different than that of most universities with high levels of research output.

AU has increased research expectations and expanded research opportunities at the university in recent years. The university uses a number of complementary measures to gauge excellence in scholarship, primarily for tenure-line faculty and other faculty with research expectations. It is developing ways to recognize its unique portfolio of researchers and research outputs and to define excellence in ways not necessarily recognized by national-level rankings and classifications.

In line with its mission, AU remains a leader in incorporating values such as sustainability and inclusive excellence into its scholarship. The university's values-led research decisions are guided by its ideals rather than traditional metrics, like citation counts. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are institutional values that guide many aspects of strategic planning and execution. The next phase of our inclusive excellence plan will enhance our efforts to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in the broader research enterprise.

AU is meeting and exceeding its externally funded research goals, which is a priority in the strategic plan. It has significantly increased funding in recent years, which generates revenue for the university, supports individual research projects and funds limited-term positions. It is working to diversify funders, develop the university's sustainable research infrastructure, expand the model of research success, and better track trends to identify appropriate targets for the future.

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64 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9779983/

As a high-research institution, AU has broadly defined scholarship in a way that is consistent with its scholar-teacher ideal. Faculty incorporate scholarly expertise into their teaching and mentoring, and, conversely, their scholarship may be informed by teaching and mentoring activities. The university has developed promotion pathways for non-tenure track faculty to pursue this idea, and there would be benefits to more robust and sustained research support to such faculty.

AU has made substantial progress toward the university's strategic plan goals of developing and refining strategic areas of focus and increasing research indicators. The AACRC report prompted improvements to the research infrastructure, an approach that can support and enhance the rise in scholarly output and funded research in the future.

Finally, AU is undertaking steps to account for COVID-19's impact on scholarship. The Task Force on Equity in Faculty Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure, and Merit served as a model of how the university can adapt to unexpected challenges. Overall, our research trajectory showed positive trends in terms of publication output and externally funded research despite the hardships of COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal Alignment
Assess the tenure guideline revision process for evidence of integration of our inclusive excellence values into scholarship, which can inform future progress toward meeting goals of integrating, evaluating, and rewarding values-led and inclusive excellence-mindful research across campus.

Align university-level priorities to inform scholarly goals and measures, including the strategic plan goals, inclusive excellence plan, and scholar-teacher ideal.

Sponsored Research
Develop a more robust set of sponsored research metrics and targets to measure overall progress as well as progress on more diverse measures, such as average award size, diversity of sponsored research partners, and indirect costs.

Scholarship Support and Communication
Develop standardized practices for supporting term faculty who may engage in scholarship, including mentorship programs and availability of resources for term faculty, and recognizing and communicating term faculty scholarly contributions.

Define university research and scholarship support services and resources beyond sponsored research, and inventory current support services for gaps in order to improve university-wide and school-centered research and scholarship support and communication.

Develop a communication strategy to increase awareness of how AU's internal values and research reflects its internal values and impacts external stakeholders.
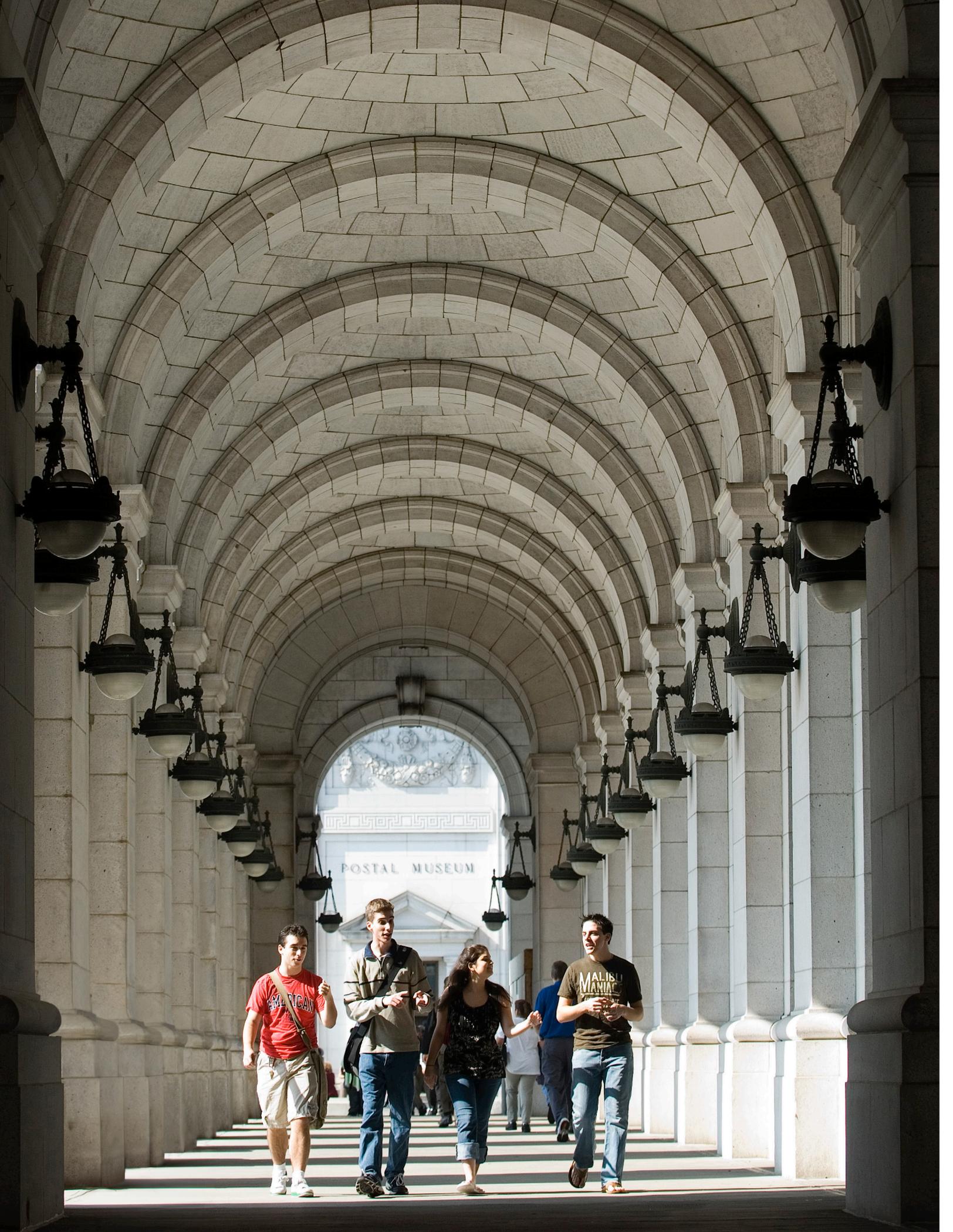
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Examples of key documents used to inform this chapter:

   Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee on Research and Centers Report

   Research Centers and Institutes

   Student Research Webpage

   Office of Sponsored Research Webpage

   Center for Teaching Research and Learning

   Elements Reports

POSTAL MUSEUM

4

THRIVING:
Improving the Student Experience

cademic and cocurricular experiences are integral to the student experience, but a holistic approach also requires attention to activities and services that promote mental, physical, and emotional wellness. When students thrive, they are, as Schreiner, Lewis, and Nelson note, "not only succeeding academically but also engaged in the learning process, investing effort to reach important educational goals, managing their time and commitments effectively, connected in healthy ways to other people, optimistic about their future, positive about their present choices, appreciative of differences in others, and committed to enriching their community."[65] To enable all students to thrive, American University faculty and professional staff have developed policies and programs to identify and support students who may face challenges in achieving their educational goals. For purposes of this chapter, American University will adopt the Schreiner definition of student thriving.

The student experience is fundamental to the educational experience at AU, which builds on its high-quality teaching to create impactful learning opportunities by offering cocurricular, extracurricular, social, and growth opportunities as a complement to academic offerings. The university's strategic plan imperative to "provide a first-rate student experience that promotes access, thriving, retention and graduation, with improvement in indicators of student inclusion, belonging, satisfaction, rigor, and engagement" speaks to its commitment to this work. In fact, the term thriving reflects a more holistic approach to supporting the well-being of students.

The commitment to the student experience is not only a focus of the most recent strategic plan but goes back even further to the RiSE (Reinventing the Student Experience) initiative[66], a task force created in 2015 by then provost Scott Bass, which focused on identification of barriers (academic, financial, administrative, etc.) that negatively impact the undergraduate student experience and modification of systems and processes to address these challenges.

This chapter examines the student experience from admission to graduation and beyond as it addresses standard IV through the lens of student thriving.[67] It studies the degree to which AU admits students who can be successful. It reviews how the university supports its students and how AU provides an overall experience that enables students to not just graduate but also to thrive. It discusses the efforts to improve student retention and graduation. The chapter also identifies areas of challenge and plans for addressing and improving student support.

ENROLLING STUDENTS[68]

Admissions and Student Thriving

To what extent does the university effectively recruit and admit students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings and financial support? Admissions and thriving are inevitably linked as how the admissions staff describes the student experience during recruitment to prospective students and the financial support provided at time of admissions will inform students' experiences. As a student-centered research university, American University seeks to recruit and enroll students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels who are passionate learners who wish to engage with the array of scholarly and experiential opportunities to create meaningful change and address society's current and emerging challenges. The university is intentional in admitting students whose profiles provide a reasonable expectation of their success and whose interests, abilities, and goals indicate a match with AU's mission. The university also recognizes that students thrive most when they are exposed to a robust set of ideas and when they interact with people from a range of lived experiences, perspectives, and identities. As diversity is an important value of the university, the composition of each incoming undergraduate class, especially regarding race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, geography,

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65 Schreiner, L.A. (2020). "From Surviving to Thriving during Transitions." In L.A. Schreiner, M.C. Louis, and D.D. Nelson (Eds.), *Thriving in Transitions: A Research-Based Approach to College Student Success*, *2nd Ed.* (pp. 17-32). University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.

66 RiSE initiative, documentation of regular evaluation and assessment of student support services, consideration of results, and follow-up when warranted. Please see RiSE presentation in supporting documents. [SI.C6]

67 This chapter focuses on undergraduates, but graduate thriving is also included. Many of the services and experiences discussed in it are also available to graduate students.

68 [SIV.C1]

Table 4.1. First-year class profile, fall 2019 to fall 2023

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Number of Applicants	18,545	20,036	19,650	19,510	17,786
Number Admitted	6,691	7,744	12,594	7,926	8,427
Percent Admitted	36%	39%	64%	41%	47%
Number Enrolled	1,754	1,607	2,372	1,768	1,856
Percent Enrolled	26%	21%	19%	22%	22%
High School GPA (Average)	3.69	3.79	3.80	3.80	3.80
Percent Underrepresented Minority (URM)*	23%	27%	20%	22%	24%

*AU URM includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (US Department of Education racial/ethnic categories). *Data excludes international students and students not reporting.*

Source: AU Academic Data Reference Books and AU MicroStrategy reports

first-generation status, etc., is as important as meeting annual enrollment targets. (Note: Targets are set for the overall new first-year and transfer students. Targets are not set by individual programs or majors.) The Office of Enrollment (OE), which includes undergraduate admissions, financial aid, enrollment marketing and communications, operations, and data analytics, takes a mission-centered and data-informed approach to achieve the university's new undergraduate student enrollment targets. Additionally, the OE team is guided by the understanding that college choice is all about finding the right academic, social, and financial fit. Therefore, the team utilizes a variety of recruitment methods to provide prospective students with as many opportunities as possible to learn about and experience AU firsthand. These efforts are guided by strong ethical guidelines for recruitment and marketing and have resulted in OE consistently meeting its enrollment targets.

Recruiting and Marketing to Undergraduate Students

To ensure that AU admits undergraduate students who align with the institution's mission, OE utilizes a strategic recruitment outreach plan to guarantee diversity among its applicants and admitted pool of students. As an early adopter of the test-optional admission policy first piloted in 2010 and made permanent in 2012, the Admissions Office uses a holistic application review process that gives priority to the entirety of the student's academic record and potential to succeed. The office has also been intentional in evaluating the effectiveness of its enrollment practices and removing other barriers to the enrollment process in support of AU's

inclusive excellence goals. Many of the efforts to remove barriers in admissions and enrollment are informed from a report, *Toward a More Equitable Future for Postsecondary Access*, sponsored by the Lumina Foundation, National Association of College Admission Counseling, and National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Efforts as of 2023 include elimination of a long optional application essay, acceptance of self-reported standardized test scores when applicants choose to have their test scores considered as part of their application, decrease in the number of letters of recommendation required to complete the application for admission, greater transparency regarding the availability of application fee waivers, and waiver of the enrollment deposit for admitted Pell-eligible students.[69]

Evidence of Undergraduate Success

OE and others across campus assess whether admission policies and practices support student success.[70] It has been found consistently that students from many different backgrounds do well at AU. For example, a review of the test-optional policy found that student retention and graduation rates for students who were admitted without a test score were similar to rates for students admitted using test scores. A 2022 review of international students admitted through AU's English Pathway Program in conjunction with Shorelight Education found that their grades, while slightly below the overall student average, were well within an acceptable level with a first semester GPA of 3.03 to 3.08 between fall 2018 and fall 2022 compared to 3.36 and 3.44 first semester GPA for entering first-year students over the same time period. Additionally, the current cumulative GPA

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69 An example of evidence of regular evaluation of admissions practices. [SIV.C1]

70 [SIV.C6]

for Shorelight students and first-year students entering in fall 2022 stands at 3.03 and 3.44, respectively.[71]

Feedback from new students confirms that AU admits undergraduate students who are likely to succeed and are aligned with the university's mission. In the 2023 Summer Transition Survey,[72] 70 percent of incoming first-year respondents said they expected to be academically challenged, and 87 percent said they expected to find their classes interesting. Students also expected AU to be a good academic fit (79 percent). When asked about what was important to their decision to choose AU, 88 percent said the location in DC, and 80 percent said the strength of their academic programs. When asked about the importance to them personally of certain values, 73 percent said influencing social values, 57 percent said influencing the political structure, and 60 percent said becoming a community leader. These responses are consistent with AU's mission and affirm that AU is admitting students who align with its values.

Addressing Challenges to Access: Two Examples

An important feature of thriving is access to education. Even with its success, OE has had to address several challenges when it comes to providing access to important constituencies: international students and transfer students.

As a global institution, AU has been successful in attracting students from around the world. Ten percent of AU students are international, coming from more than 100 countries.[73] Staff within OE annually travel to key markets in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America to recruit international and US students living abroad. AU also partners with Shorelight Education[74] to enroll international students through a nondegree English language pathway program before matriculating as degree-seeking. While AU has been successful in attracting global students, the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic, US government policies, and increased competition for international students caused a decline in enrollment. As the world transitions away from the global health emergency, and with more welcoming international student policies, AU has begun to rebound in the number of global students expressing interest in the university. However, the number of enrolling global

undergraduate students continues to trail behind pre-pandemic levels. COVID-19 disrupted the ability to complete programs. While the six-year graduation rate of international students for the 2016 cohort was 77.4 percent, just below the university average, the graduation rate dropped for the 2017 cohort to 69 percent (compared to 78.5 percent overall). This result, while far from positive, is expected considering the many difficulties international students experienced during the pandemic. However, retention rates show some promise as the two-year retention rate for international students entering fall 2021 was 81.8 percent compared to 72.5 percent for the entering fall 2020 cohort.

The transfer enrollment process presents another challenge. Much has been done to improve the enrollment process for this group. Specifically, the university has been working to improve the credit articulation process, address financial aid funding to meet demonstrated need of transfer students, and clarify ways for students to determine a path toward degree completion.

Understanding the importance of transfer students as a population, and with the intention of more fully supporting transfer student thriving, the Transfer Task Force was formed in 2020 to review and develop strategies to address the student experience of this population. The Transfer Task Force included staff from academic advising, admissions, new student programs, university registrar, and academic advising to address concerns with the transfer credit articulation process, communication with academic advisors, and new students onboarding. To improve the transfer credit articulation process,[75] TES Software[76] was purchased to improve how faculty review courses for articulation. While this software has sped up the process in which transfer students learn how the courses from their previous institution will transfer to AU, the software is not sufficient to offer the level of transparency in the path to degree completion that AU desires. The Transfer Task Force worked with the Admissions Office and the academic advising units so that newly admitted transfer students received consistent messaging about next steps for enrollment from admissions and advising. Also, improvements have been made to transfer orientation so that transfer students participate in modules that recognize their previous experience in a higher education setting. While the Transfer Task Force was able to improve

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71 English Pathway Program, an example of procedures for placement for incoming students into preparation programs or courses (please see Curriculum of Pathways Programs.docx in supporting documentation). [SIV.C1b]

72 Summer transition survey, an example of periodic assessment of effectiveness of student support services for all student populations with appropriate metrices and evaluation [SIV.C6]

73 An example of international student enrollment data. (Enrollment by Student level, Race and Gender_ADRB Table 1-10.pdf) [SIV]

74 Shorelight Education, an example of evidence of program designed to enhance student achievement (please see Curriculum of Pathways Programs.docx in supporting documentation). [SIV.1d]

75 AU's transfer credit policies (https://www.american.edu/admissions/transfer/upload/Undergraduate-Transfer-Credit-Policy.pdf). [SIV.C2]

76 TES Software, an example of procedures for making decisions about transfer of credits earned at other institutions (Transfer Articulations Websites.docx). [SIV.C2]

portions of the experience for onboarding new transfer students, work remains to improve course registration for this population and to help transfer student students estimate time needed to complete their degrees.

Addressing Affordability

OE is also committed to making an education at AU affordable. Ensuring affordability is an important practice that can facilitate the success and thriving of students, including their likelihood of being retained, and also supports AU's inclusive excellence goals. While applicants are initially evaluated and recommended for admission based on their academic and personal qualifications, OE is need aware while shaping the class for first-year applicants. This practice has allowed the team to create socioeconomic diversity, while still meeting the need of qualified first-year students and remaining within the allocation of funds available to the office. The cost of undergraduate attendance, before financial aid, is $76,176 (AY23–24), and the average net price is $40,189 (for full-time first-year students awarded grant/scholarship aid in AY22–23 based on preliminary data to be reported to IPEDS in February 2024.) OE is strategic in its use of funds to enroll academically talented first-year students. Merit scholarships range in value from $8,000 to the full cost of attendance scholarships that are awarded to 10 AU District Scholars. In addition, the university is committed to supporting low- and moderate-income students with need-based aid. The percentage of funds allocated to students has varied over the years based on specific enrollment objectives with an average need-to-merit ratio of 70 to 30. The Financial Aid Office also has leveraged funds to provide support for students beyond the cost of attendance. For instance, in collaboration with the University Library's Academic Technology Unit, the office has purchased computers and software, as well as provided stipends for internet access, to address the technology needs of low-income students, thereby removing additional barriers to thriving at AU. The university has provided 328 technology stipends and 429 laptops to students during the fiscal years 2020 to 2023. Students can gain access to information about cost of attendance, financial aid, and opportunities for merit scholarships from AU's financial aid website.[77] Prospective undergraduates can access a net price calculator that estimates costs after grant aid and scholarships are applied.

All students on both the undergraduate and graduate levels are assigned a financial aid counselor who may address specific questions about need-based aid received, as well as pointing students to other resources for financing their AU education, financial literacy, or financial health. Throughout students' matriculation at AU, the Financial Aid Office arms them with the tools and knowledge to learn money management. The Financial Aid Office infuses foundational financing skills into the AU student experience through curricular and cocurricular offerings and activities. These skills are integrated into the American University Experience course, the university's seminar for new undergraduates, and personal finance courses that are offered in various modalities to encourage student enrollment and engagement. Practical tools are also offered by the Financial Aid Office through short videos on topics ranging from budgeting and banking to credit and employment benefits.[78] The student refund policy is available on the student accounts website.[79]

Like many private universities, AU uses portions of the net tuition revenue to support institutional aid offered to undergraduate students. AU's sticker price is below that of its peers. However, AU's tuition discount rate falls below the national average for private universities, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). A 2021 NACUBO survey of 329 private universities found that the average tuition discount rate was 49 percent for all undergraduates, versus a 32 percent tuition discount rate at AU.[80] As a result, while AU makes every effort to meet the full demonstrated need of first-year students, the university is not able to meet the demonstrated need of transfer students. In addition, the university does not increase merit nor need-based institutional aid proportionally to match increases in the cost of attendance. As a result, undergraduates will take out federal loans to help fund their educations. The percentage of graduating students who take out federal loans was 51 percent in 2022, down from 60 percent in 2021. The average debt of those who graduate was $19,343, down from $22,040 in 2021. Additionally in 2022 the percentage of graduating students with any loan (federal or private) was 53 percent, compared to 61percent in 2021. The average debt in 2022 was $31,794, compared to $33,766 in 2021. Although progress on debt has been made, the university would like to see these figures continue to decline. Given our relatively modest endowments compared to our peer institutions, AU

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77 AU's financial aid website, an example of URL where students and the public can find financial aid information. (https://www.american.edu/financialaid/). (SIV.C1a)

78 Short educational videos, an example of services designed to educate students [SIV.C1a]

79 Student refund policy and process, (https://www.american.edu/finance/studentaccounts/student-refund-policy.cfm). [SIV.C1a]

80 AU tuition discount rate (Tuition Discounting Rate (NACUBO).xlsx). [SIV.C1a]

has actively embarked on a multiyear comprehensive campaign to grow financial aid funds with an aim to provide greater financial support to students and families who experience changes in their financial circumstances.

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS

At the graduate level, more than 131 programs, including doctoral programs (PhD, JD, SJD, and EdD) and masters' programs, are delivered in residential, hybrid, and online modalities. Graduate admissions are decentralized so each academic unit has a team responsible for the admission funnel.

The individual units are supported by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) to provide oversight and best practices to the units. More specifically, while school admissions teams nurture the applicant funnel for their specific programs, and school marketing teams conduct program-specific marketing efforts. OGPS complements the school role by contracting for the marketing agency of record and manages the graduate brand awareness campaign. OGPS also provides scholarship offers through graduate merit aid funding and the use of a propensity-to-enroll model. The office provides dashboards on the enrollment funnel and other data analytics.

As with the undergraduate populations, diversity is an important value of AU and one that is ingrained in the academic experience. Table 4.2 provides details on general enrollments:

Graduate admissions is seeing evidence of success. While the admissions teams across campus work diligently to recruit students who will find success at American University, retention and graduation reports are tracked regularly. In addition, OGPS runs a pulse survey every month with a random sample of graduate students to better understand how graduate students are connecting with the community, accessing resources, and demonstrating awareness of support options. Survey results, support requests, and anecdotal information guide intervention measures and programming for the graduate student population.

While there is evidence of success, graduate admissions also faces challenges, especially as it relates to international student enrollment. The international graduate population at American University has changed over the years. While a large portion of the graduate applicants used to come from China and the Middle East, the market for graduate students has shifted to more applicants coming from countries in west and central Africa. While AU recently shifted its scholarship strategy to provide more scholarship dollars to international students, several admitted AU students have been denied

Table 4.2. Graduate admissions and enrollment

Term	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Number of Applications	5,403	5,513	5,849	50,81	5,092
Number Admitted	4,510	4,678	5,075	4,219	4,112
Percentage Admitted	83%	85%	87%	83%	81%
Number Enrolled	1,571	1,802	1,828	1,413	1,246
Percentage Enrolled	35%	39%	36%	33%	30%

Term	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Percentage Underrepresented Minority Enrolled Students	28%	32%	27%	33%	34%

*AU URM includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (US Department of Education racial/ethnic categories). *Data excludes international students and students not reporting.*

Source: AU Academic Data Reference Books and AU MicroStrategy reports

visas from these countries for a variety of reasons including the cost of attendance. The last-minute visa denials have had a significant impact on AU's ability to enroll international graduate students, and OGPS continues to work with the US State Department and other organizations to try to reduce this problem. In addition, the graduate units are working together to provide greater counsel to international students applying for visas (e.g., the lead time needed for appointments, navigating the process, etc.), with a particular focus on students from countries where denials are high.

At the graduate level, affordability is a big concern as well. The cost of living in Washington, DC, is high. Therefore, AU increased its overall graduate admissions discount from 14 percent prior to 2019 to about 30 percent in 2023. This is in addition to federal aid that individual schools have secured as well as emergency funds to help students with unexpected needs throughout their programs. Wages for master's students have increased. The doctoral student stipend has also steadily increased each year. However, current doctoral students are guaranteed funding for only four years (three years in the School of Communication) even though many students take a fifth year (fourth year in SOC) to complete their degrees. As of fall 2023, AU is working on a proposal to allow PhD students the opportunity to teach in both their fourth and fifth years to gain funding.

Overall Lessons Learned Regarding Enrollment

The challenges listed above have prepared the university to adjust for enrollment challenges ahead. Enrollment data for fall 2023 reveals that for the first time in many years, OE did not meet its enrollment targets for new undergraduates. However, AU remains committed to the recruitment of a diverse student body through multipronged outreach and conversion efforts; a holistic application review process and policies of removing barriers; and making AU affordable. The university will continue to identify new ways to enhance AU's undergraduate enrollment policies and practices to better meet the needs of DC residents, transfer students, international students, and other emerging enrollment challenges. All this will be done while adhering to restrictions on the total number of undergraduates AU may have on campus, as outlined in the *2021 Campus Plan* that was approved by the District of Columbia.

At the graduate level, AU has experienced challenges in meeting enrollment targets. The graduate marketplace has changed due to the demand for more dynamic and flexible learning opportunities, and multimodal courses and programs. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the demand for these opportunities from graduate students who are trying to balance the demands of obtaining a graduate degree with other life priorities including their career,

families, etc. With this goal in mind, American University has been working diligently to offer more online and virtual learning capabilities (and programs). These changes enable AU to provide more course and program options to the graduate community. In addition, AU has made changes to graduate cross-enrollment policies and the graduate academic calendars to improve the student experience.

THRIVING AND HIGH-IMPACT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The American Association of Colleges and Universities has designated several teaching and learning practices as high impact, based on evidence of significant educational benefit for students who participate in them. These high-impact practices include many forms of experiential learning, such as internships, service and community-based learning, and undergraduate research. The learning chapter provides a detailed examination of AU's commitment to the academic and curricular aspects of the student experience. However, both curricular and cocurricular experiential learning are integral to AU students' educations, contributing to student thriving and leading to student engagement, personal and professional development, and post-graduation job opportunities. As such, coursework expands beyond the confines of the classroom to encompass holistic and integrative learning experiences, from internships to study abroad, from capstone and graduate practicum courses to grant-funded research assistance for and with faculty (discussed more fully in the research chapter). This aspect of the AU experience is so important that the university offers a wide variety of resources ranging from academic to technical to wellness support to facilitate student participation in these high-impact curricular and cocurricular experiences.

Figure 4.1 provides a summary of the many categories and types of experiential learning activities supported by AU:

Some are primarily academic, such as those that are in-classroom or research-oriented. Others are entirely cocurricular, such as volunteering and student leadership experiences. Yet others, such as internships and community-based work, can be either academic or cocurricular. All these opportunities to engage in learning by doing demonstrate that experiential learning is deeply embedded into the university's culture. For example, prior to the pandemic, approximately 90 percent of bachelor's graduates held at least one internship, either for credit or not, during their time as an undergraduate, even though only 10 to 15 percent of majors have an internship requirement, according to the Graduation Census.[81] And even the May 2022 graduating class reported that 83 percent of undergraduates and 41 percent of master's students held at least one internship, despite pandemic-related disruptions in AYs20–22.

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81 Graduation Census Survey Result, an example of process designed to enhance student achievement (https://www.american.edu/weknowsuccess/). [SIV.C1d, SIV.C6]

Figure 4.1. AU offers experiential education opportunities across multiple categories throughout the student lifecycle

AU Experiential Education Categories	Opportunities	
A. In-classroom, Curriculum-driven (Fr/Soph/Jr/Sr/Grad)	1. Projects 2. Simulations, workshops 3. Case competitions	4. Teaching assistantships 5. Advising and mentoring
B. Research (Fr/Soph/Jr/Sr/Grad)	1. Research 2. Clinics 3. Field work	4. Labs 5. Fellowships (research related)
C. Service Learning and Student Leadership (Fr/Soph/Jr/Sr/Grad)	1. Advocacy 2. Civic involvement 3. Community-based work	4. Service learning 5. Volunteering 6. Student leadership
D. Global Experience (Soph/Jr/Sr)	1. Study abroad 2. International service 3. Global work, research	4. Alternative breaks
E. Work (Soph/Jr/Sr/Grad)	1. Internships/mentorships 2. Apprenticeships 3. Fellowship (job related)	4. Practicums 5. Industry treks 6. Entrepreneurship incubators, ventures

Source: AU Experiential Learning

Study Abroad and Other International Opportunities

AU understands that student thriving involves exposure to global experiences that deepen and challenge their academic and personal knowledge and skills. To that end, AU offers a range of study abroad and international experiences for students across majors at the university, supported by both a centralized Office of Global and Immersive Studies, including AU Abroad (AU students going abroad) and Abroad AU (a program for international students to study at AU) as well as some school and unit-based offices that work in partnership.

With more than 120 programs in 47 countries, the 2023 data from Institute for International Education's (IIE) Open Doors[82] (AY21–22) maintains AU's position as a leader in international education:

- #15 for Participation Rate among Doctoral Universities
- #6 for Long-term Duration of Study Abroad

Study abroad opportunities encompass a wide range of destinations and experiences ranging from direct enrollment in an international university to participation in one of AU's centers in Brussels, Madrid, and Nairobi. AU also has a number of institutional partnerships and joint degrees with universities and research centers around the world, including the bachelor of arts in global international relations offered in coordination with Ritsumeikan University. Students engage in academic coursework and, in many instances, experiential learning such as rural community-based research and official participation in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's annual global Conference of the Parties. Approximately 60 percent of graduating students studied abroad during their undergraduate years prior to the pandemic. Since the pandemic, global student mobility has steadily increased as international destinations have become more accessible. In AY22–23, the number of AU students studying abroad (817) was almost equal to AY19–20 (842).[83] AU expects to meet and possibly exceed pre-pandemic numbers of students studying abroad in AY23–24.

Emphasizing the *study* in study abroad, AU Abroad works in close collaboration across campus with schools, academic departments, academic advising, and career professionals to ensure that students traveling abroad can progress toward graduation by taking appropriate courses at their international destinations. The university has taken specific measures to ensure that curricular and other structures do not prevent students from participation. Further facilitating the opportunities for study abroad, AU Abroad works closely with the Financial Aid Office, allowing students' financial aid to travel with them, which makes study abroad financially accessible to all students. The university also provides travel

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82 AU's IIE ranking, an example of international education data, (Study Abroad Locations and IIE Open Doors Rankings.docx). [SIV.C1]

83 Source: AU MicroStrategy student enrollment reports and "We Know Success" website.

grants to high-need students so that financial need is not a barrier to these opportunities. And, in destinations where living expenses are lower than or equal to DC, students' total cost of studying abroad is often lower. In fall semesters 66 percent of AU Abroad programs cost less than or equal to a semester at AU, while in spring semesters 64 percent are less than or equal to a semester at AU.

At the graduate level, several programs integrate international opportunities into the curriculum including the MBA Global Consulting Project, which is a required component of the residential program. Teams from the Kogod School of Business (Kogod) support an internationally focused company. The School of International Service (SIS) offers practical experiences designed to give second-year master's students real-world experiences in project management and consulting in preparation for post-graduate careers. Other schools offer exchange programs at the graduate level.

Internships and Career Development

Students' career development and thriving in internships and obtaining post-graduation jobs is supported by several career offices on campus, all of which collaborate with faculty and staff across the university to create a culture that strongly supports experiential learning. These offices provide a range of career advising and educational programs to undergraduate and graduate students, including individual and group advising, career educational programming, and employer relations teams that help students connect with professional settings of interest through job and internship fairs, networking events, and extensive job postings. The AU Career Center serves both undergraduate and graduate students at the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), School of Communication (SOC), School of Education (SOE), and School of Public Affairs (SPA).[84] Students at Kogod are served by a school-based career office, as is the SIS, which shares advising responsibilities for undergraduate students with the AU Career Center. The Washington College of Law's (WCL) Office of Career and Professional Development has undergone a complete overhaul since 2020, using a data-driven approach to target services to specific students. It also has a new model for supporting students in their post-graduation job searches, assigning a counselor and faculty member to provide individualized support to all job seekers.

As noted, career education and development at AU is also supported by faculty, staff, and other units across the university. Faculty often invite career development staff, alumni, and other professional contacts into the classroom to provide career-related content relevant to the course and to help students translate substantive learning into career-

relevant skills. In addition, the University Library integrated Portfolium into Canvas, allowing students to create a personal portfolio of work, which students can continue to access and edit after graduation. As of 2022, more than 11,000 students have used Portfolium. All career offices have the capability to offer services in multiple modalities, a positive side effect of the successful pivot to virtual learning during COVID-19.

Academic internships are supervised by faculty and follow internship-specific academic regulations (see Undergraduate Academic Regulations at 11.4 and Graduate Academic Regulations at 3.10[85]), which include guidance on internship hours per credit earned, percentage of internship that can be administrative work (no more than 15 percent), and maximum percentage of student's grade that can come from the internship supervisor's assessment (50 percent). While only 10 to15 percent of undergraduate majors have an internship requirement, a significant number of students will seek academic credit for internships. Prior to the pandemic, about 800 to 1,000 students participated in academic internships each academic year (summer, fall, and spring). In the first year of the pandemic, those numbers dropped to around 500, but they have recovered significantly since summer 2021 to close to pre-pandemic numbers.[86]

Similarly, experiential learning has always been a vital component of legal education at WCL; moreover, experiential learning, including specifically externships, clinics, and trial advocacy, are defined and required by the American Bar Association standards that govern law school accreditation. The WCL Externship Program allows students to receive academic credit for unpaid legal work performed in courts, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and most recently, with in-house counsel corporate positions. Externships are open to all students, beginning in the summer after their 1L (first) year. Requirements for law students in externships include enrolling in a contemporaneous graded seminar, engaging in substantive law-related work, and supervision by a licensed attorney. Letter grades are assigned by faculty supervising the externship seminar, while attorney supervisors of externships assign a pass/fail grade. In the 2019 calendar year, WCL supported 272 externs.

Students at other AU schools and colleges also can seek academic internships with the guidance of academic advisors, faculty, and career professionals, with appropriate reflection and learning activities during a student's internship under the supervision of faculty. First-year students can engage in a closely supervised internship or study abroad experience through the AU Cornerstone program, which had 250

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84 AU Career Center, an example of services designed to enhance student achievement (https://www.american.edu/careercenter/). [SIV.C1d]

85 Academic Internships, Academic Regulations, an example of policies and procedures for counseling programs and services (Academic Regulations.docx). [SIV.C1c]

86 An example of trend analysis of student post-completion placement data (https://www.american.edu/weknowsuccess/). [SIV.C1d]

students in AY22–23.[87] From sophomore year on, students wishing to conduct an internship for credit can do so in consultation with academic advisors and faculty supervisors of an internship of interest. Many students also engage in noncredit internships throughout DC and, increasingly, through virtual experiences anywhere in the world.

Career offices strive to provide equitable access to employment opportunities for students. The strong support for internships and experiential learning that exists across the AU community, as demonstrated by the high experiential learning participation rates (pre-pandemic, around 95 percent of undergraduates and 70 percent of master's degree students reported participating in one or more experiential learning activities, including internships[88]), is particularly helpful to students who may arrive at AU with few familial connections and high financial need. Faculty, staff, and alumni assist students in building their social capital. To allow financially eligible students to complete career-building unpaid internships with government agencies and not-for-profit organizations, the university provides about $375,000 in funding annually, which is awarded through a simple application process administered by the Career Center. Annual reviews of how diverse student groups engage with the services offered by the Career Center provide encouraging data: US domestic minority students, first-generation students, and transfer students engaged with Career Center offerings at a similar or higher level than their peers in AYs21–23. These positive results stem from targeted outreach to historically underrepresented groups while publicizing and offering services broadly to all students. The only group that has consistently underutilized career services is undergraduate international students. The Career Center has worked to address this gap by partnering on programming and outreach efforts with the International Students and Scholar Services office and hiring international students as peer advisors and student employees.

The AU Career Center includes the Office of Merit Awards (OMA), whose five full-time staff and three graduate assistants work closely with talented undergraduate and graduate students at all AU's schools and colleges to advise and mentor those seeking prestigious, nationally competitive awards, such as Fulbright, Truman, Boren, etc. Students regularly work on multiple drafts of their applications with the support of faculty and staff mentors, honing their materials and preparing for interviews in a process that many report as helping them develop their academic and career focus and skills. OMA has a strong record of success. In AY22–23, 92 students and recent graduates received national recognition in competitions, including 13 students who received Fulbright Student Scholar awards; 11 students who received Boren Fellowships, leading to AU being named #1 in the country for Boren Fellows; and two students who received National Science Foundation (NSF) Research Experience for Undergraduate awards, among many other prestigious competition results.[89] Forty-six percent of recipients of nationally competitive scholarships awards in AY22–23 were students of color, and 50 percent were Pell students, demonstrating AU's success in engaging and mentoring traditionally underrepresented students.

The career offices on campus collaborate closely with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment to compile the Graduation Census Report, which, among other things, highlights new graduate outcomes (working, graduate school, or both) at six months after May graduation. Despite the pandemic, May 2022 bachelor's graduates had 92 percent positive outcomes with a knowledge rate (the term used to include both the survey response rate and information gathered through research from reliable sources) of 74 percent, a change from 89 percent positive outcomes and 79 percent knowledge rate for May 2021 graduates. May 2022 master's graduates had 93 percent positive outcomes with a knowledge rate of 76 percent, from 90 percent positive outcomes with a 78 percent knowledge rate for May 2021 graduates.[90] The percentage of WCL graduates employed in full-time, long-term jobs for which bar passage or a JD is required increased from 73 percent for the class of 2018 to 80 percent for the class of 2022.

Community-Based Learning

As with internships, both academic and cocurricular community-based learning is encouraged and supported across the university. AU's Center for Community Engagement and Service (CCES)[91] is a longstanding campus-wide office that works with faculty, staff, and students to encourage and support academic and cocurricular programs with community organizations in Washington, DC, and beyond. Through a variety of programs, CCES enables students to work with and learn from community members and organizations, rather than imposing ideas and solutions on them. These programs

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87 AU Cornerstone program, an example of program designed to enhance student achievement (Undergraduate Education Learning Communities and Other Special Programs.docx). [SIV.C1d]

88 AU Graduation Census survey results.

89 Scholarship data (https://www.american.edu/careercenter/meritawards/oma-outcomes.cfm).

90 Outcome comparison, an example of trend analysis of student placement data (https://www.american.edu/weknowsuccess/). [SIV.C6]

91 Center for Community Engagement and Service. Website is https://www.american.edu/student-affairs/volunteer/ and a copy is in supporting documentation. [SIV.C1]

include a range of initiatives such as Alternative Breaks, described more fully below, Service Days, Eagle Endowment (which provides funds to students to fulfill their ideas for community service), DC Reads (literacy tutoring program in DC), community-based learning course designations, and community service learning projects (one-credit add-ons for extended service learning with community partners). Committed to equity and racial justice training, CCES provides robust opportunities for student engagement with community organizations as well as opportunities for reflection on such community work. Most recently, CCES has partnered with a national initiative to start an AU chapter of the President's Volunteer Service Award, which nationally recognizes every student who has completed 100 hours of service work.

The Alternative Breaks programs provide opportunities for student leadership development. The programs are student-led initiatives that organize international and domestic immersive learning opportunities with a social justice perspective during fall, winter, spring, and summer breaks. In a typical year, roughly 150 students will participate in 12 Alternative Break programs. The pandemic years were particularly challenging with few trips, some of which pivoted to a virtual modality. However, the AY22–23 has alternative breaks returning to more traditional levels of participation. The AY22–23 program offerings include the examination of xenophobia in South Africa, sexual and reproductive health rights in Texas, exploration of the link between universities and social movements in Ghana, and development of sustainable communities in Honduras. As is the case with other study abroad opportunities, travel grants are available for students with financial need.

Community-based learning (CBL) courses require faculty training and provide an academic, course-based pedagogy that extends and deepens classroom-based learning through meaningful involvement with a community agency, nonprofit organization, or school. After a decade of CBL courses, AU students have come to know this program and its widespread offerings, with an average of 35 CBL courses[92] offered annually since AY18–19. Alongside the novel and award-winning Community Based Research Scholars program (CBRS) in SPA, CBL courses distinguish AU as a school committed to community-based service learning. AU faculty and staff have received multiple awards from Transform Mid-Atlantic, an organization that helps member campuses and community partners build capacity to develop global citizens, for their CBL course projects in the Washington, DC, metro area, which includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and beyond.

While most of the courses are undergraduate-focused, a recent change to CBL-designated courses (so listed on transcripts) now allow for graduate-level courses. Several are cross listed for participation from undergraduate and graduate students

including in fall 2023: Marketing for Social Change (MKTG 551) as well as Introduction and Advanced Spanish Translation (SPAN 458/658 and 459/659).

Importantly, these CBL courses go beyond mere volunteering to prepare students to conduct research with and for frontline and community-based organizations, not just on them. They foster critical reflection on power-dynamics of town-gown relations and prepare students to learn from community partners during these service partnerships. The CBRS program goes even further to create a full cohort of students who take a series of courses related to community-based research and then dive deep into original research projects during their four-year journey through college. This builds a strong community of praxis for undergraduates that lasts beyond their college years.

Student Research

AU undergraduates have multiple avenues to conduct original research from methodological training in the classroom to community-based research participatory action-research initiatives. More recently, another huge realm of student research opportunities has opened at AU. In 2021, the university received a $15 million NSF grant for wasted food prevention, called Multiscale RECIPES (Resilient, Equitable, Circular Innovations with Partnerships and Education Synergies) for Sustainable Food Systems. The grant is housed at AU as the principal investigator institution, even though it extends to more than 15 institutions with more than 40 researchers and has scores of students hired as research assistants. In 2023, RECIPES faculty participants, with AU student research collaborators, developed open-access course curricula and launched a student-edited journal.

Graduate students at American University also have robust opportunities for experiential learning as well as community-based public scholarship, and opportunities for coauthoring publications with faculty for peer-reviewed academic journals. Specifically, AU units across campus offer master's students the chance to culminate their degrees with a capstone practicum. These practicums provide the opportunity to work directly with clients and community partners to conduct original research, gain professional skills, and generate connections and networks in their fields of choice. An additional benefit is that students and faculty anecdotally report that undergraduates and graduate students have been offered positions at the organizations or agencies with whom they conducted their internships, community-based learning, or practicum research.

Improving Communication about Experiential Learning

Overall, the rich culture of experiential education at AU has been decentralized across schools and student support offices. Through the university's strategic planning implementation team focusing on learning, the university is working to assess, enhance, and better communicate its varied opportunities for

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92 CBL courses list, (https://www.american.edu/student-affairs/volunteer/upload/CB-Courses-Fall-2023-9-14.pdf). [SIV.C1d]

students to engage in experiential education. A workgroup convened in fall 2022 developed a common definition of experiential learning at AU, summarized as "learn, do, reflect." The work group has identified that while AU has a large number and range of experiential learning opportunities, these need to be better communicated across our community in general and to students in particular. To that end the work group conducted an audit of experiential learning across the university and constructed a searchable website of such opportunities. In addition, it mapped experiential learning opportunities through the student lifecycle. The provost elevated experiential learning at AU by devoting a well-attended Provost's Forum to the topic in spring 2023. Challenges include continued coordination of experiential learning activities and goals in a decentralized but engaged experiential learning culture, and maintaining, updating, and publicizing the website so it remains a resource that will be useful to prospective and current students over time.

NSSE: AU and Engagement

Results from the 2023 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)[93] shows a significantly high level of AU student participation in an area called "High-Impact Practices." Although "service learning" participation is not as high as at other institutions, AU scores significantly higher than aspirational peers (institutions ranked just above AU in the 2023 *US News* rankings) and all private R2 institutions. Areas of strength include community learning (among first-year students) and study abroad, a culminating senior experience, and internships (among seniors). Seniors are significantly more likely than their peers to have participated in two or more of the high impact practices listed by NSSE.

That said, there is room for improvement in both service-learning participation and in research with faculty (discussed in the scholarly research chapter). Measuring participation in experiential learning and documenting the impact of participation will also be a focus moving forward.

ACADEMICS AND STUDENT SUPPORT

Expanding the University Advising Model with First-Year Advising[94]

Beginning in fall 2018, the university has made targeted, thoughtful changes to strengthen the first-year experience, including the creation of an innovative First-Year Advising Office to complement strong unit-based advising. Offering

this new advising structure to all new students came after a multiyear pilot initiative that documented significant improvements to students' sense of belonging and retention rates after receiving specialized advising. A motivating factor for the implementation of first-year advising was to ensure a rich and rewarding undergraduate experience for all students, especially historically underrepresented students whom the university sometimes had struggled to connect with meaningfully when they were embedded in first-year advising caseloads that could reach 350 students to one advisor. With the new First-Year Advising Office, each academic advisor averages 76 students.

The positive impacts of smaller caseloads and strong connections with a trusted staff member were evident in the first year. For example, in the Fall 2018 Transition Survey, student self-assessments of whether they felt AU was a place they belonged equalized across all racial categories for the first time ever. The biggest year-over-year improvement on this question that year came with Black student responses. Black students responding positively to that survey question increased by 21 percentage points from 44 percent in 2017 to 65 percent in 2018. Hispanic students reached a high of nearly 70 percent, and students categorized as multiracial reached an all-time high of 66 percent. Additionally, Black student retention rates have exceeded that of the overall campus average each year of first-year advising, averaging 90.2 percent compared to 86.9 percent.[95] Hispanic retention rates during this same period have been within 1 to 2 percentage points of the overall average.

First-generation college students were another student group that benefited from the expanded university advising model. From 2017 to 2018, first-generation students who responded positively to a transition survey question about belonging increased 9 percentage points and eliminated a gap of that size that existed previously between students categorized as first-generation and other students. Since 2018 the percentage point gap between first-generation students and their counterparts has not exceeded 2 points in either direction.[96] The university saw similar improvements for Pell-eligible students relative to their peers during this same period. In the initial year of first-year advising, positive self-assessments of sense of belonging from Pell students increased by 10 percentage points, and the gap between Pell students and peers has not exceeded 4 percentage points, after being as high as 12 percentage points in years past.

Beginning in fall 2023, the first-year advising team will align its advising operations by specific academic unit for the first time. This is a significant advancement from the previous

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93 See NSSE results in supporting documentation. [SIV.C6]

94 [SIV.C1c]

95 See retention data, available in the *Academic Data Reference Book*, . [SIV.C1]

96 See transition surveys in supporting documentation.

five years of the office, when staff members advised students across all academic units and majors. This realignment of staff members to a single school or college responds to feedback from students and departments to increase the cohesion of the educational experience early on and to better ensure successful academic progression during the first year. Additionally, a segment of the first-year advising team will have the exclusive responsibility of working with AU's incoming undeclared students to ensure these students have the best guidance possible to explore, select, and progress on their desired academic pathways.

Creating Connections with Living-Learning Communities

AU understands that students feeling connected and engaged academically and socially is critical for their early and sustained success. To that end, the university has created educational experiences to help students build those connections to help them thrive. An example of this investment is our extensive portfolio of living-learning communities (LLCs) offered in collaboration with the Office of Undergraduate Education and Academic Student Services, Division of Student Affairs, and schools and colleges. Students in LLCs describe the relationships they develop with faculty, program staff, and peers as positively influencing their sense of connection to the university. Students who are a part of living-learning communities report increased faculty interaction, sense of belonging, and connection to their peers.

In fall 2023 44 percent of new students participated in an LLC and had a one-year retention rate of 87 percent compared to 86 percent for those not in an LLC.[97] During AY20–21 when the university operated remotely, there was no difference in one-year retention, underlining the critical on-campus living component of the living-learning community model. During AY19–20 disrupted in spring by COVID-19, there was a 5-percentage point difference in one-year retention (88 percent to 83 percent). The year after remote modality due to COVID-19 when all students returned to campus, the positive difference in one-year retention returned to 6 percentage points (90 percent to 84 percent).

With such positive results, the university has worked to ensure access and participation in LLCs is as equitable as possible. For example, the largest LLC, University College (UC), is open to any interested first-year student, and students learn of UC and express their interest during routine and required university application, deposit, and enrollment processes so that all students and families are made aware of the opportunity when making the decision to attend the university. Furthermore, the UC team proactively recruits students who in years past were underrepresented in the LLC. As a result of these systematic efforts, student

participation in UC from students identifying as Black, Hispanic, first-generation, or Pell-eligible has equaled the incoming cohort average of 30 percent from 2018 to 2022.

Institutional values of equity and inclusion drive recruitment and support for one of our smaller and more selective LLCs, AU Honors. A critical self-study of enrollment trends and patterns prompted the AU Honors team to revamp its marketing, recruitment, and selection processes to ensure all students were given many opportunities and information to learn of the program and apply. In recent years, Black, Hispanic, first-generation, or Pell-eligible students have made up 35 percent of the entering AU Honors cohort, compared to 30 percent of new students overall.

Both the AU Honors and CBRS programs exemplify a commitment to increasing access and equity by creating clear and inviting pathways for students who missed the opportunity to join at the time of admission to do so after their first years. This strategic effort to recruit and enroll rising sophomore students into these exceptional AU programs began in spring 2021 and will welcome the third cohort of rising sophomores into AU Honors and CBRS in fall 2023.

Students Investing in the Educational Experiences of Peers

Another way that AU commits to student thriving, especially in academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal ways, is by creating rewarding opportunities for students to support their peers. Faculty and staff have invested time and resources to coach students to have healthy relationships with peers and learn to effectively manage their time and commitments in providing this support and encouragement.

One of the longest-running opportunities AU has for peer-to-peer investment in the success and well-being of students is with academic support programs including the Writing Center, peer-assisted student support (one-to-one tutoring services), supplemental instruction, and Math and Stats Lab. These programs are led by professional staff who recruit, train, and mentor student staff who invest substantial time and energy to tutor and consult with their undergraduate and graduate peers in every school and college. In a typical semester, academic support employs 120 tutors, generating up to 1,000 interactions with students in a typical week. Each intersection of a peer educator and a student needing support is a data point of a peer contributing to student thriving. Over the years, the academic support programs have created a virtuous and positive feedback loop, in which students who benefit from peer support become peer educators themselves and invest in creating an environment where as many students as possible can thrive academically.

The AU Core Curriculum also provides opportunities for peers to contribute meaningfully to an environment that

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97 See Fall 2022 LLC Enrollment Comparison and Fall 2022 LLC One Year Retention Comparison in Supporting Documentation. [SIV.C6]

helps all students thrive. For example, every section of the American University Experience (AUx) course is supported by a peer facilitator who plans lessons and cofacilitates the class along with the faculty instructor. Every semester 50 to 60 student peer facilitators serve nearly 2,000 undergraduate students.[98] Peer facilitators also serve as mentors to students in their sections and keep their students informed of campus events, directs them to support services on campus, and helps them understand the course materials. Many of the students who go on to apply to be peer facilitators after their first year cite the care of their AUx peer facilitator as their reason for doing so.

Involvement in clubs and organizations has long been understood in the higher education literature and on the AU campus as being one of the most impactful contributors to student thriving. The university understands that the unique opportunity for students to lead their peers in these endeavors can have an outsized effect on their sense of belonging and commitment to the institution. In AY22–23, 262 student organizations served undergraduate and graduate students, with approximately 6,900 involved student members. Many students report that they develop a sense of community and build valuable skills through clubs and organizations.[99] For example, members of the AU Model UN team, which ranked #1 in North America in 2022, described overcoming imposter syndrome and developing strong public speaking, interpersonal, and leadership skills as well as their professional areas of interest and real-world skills.[100]

Critically, over the years, AU has learned that the best outcomes for student leaders are possible only if they are thoughtfully and consistently supported by the institution. To this end, the Center for Student Involvement has created a comprehensive onboarding, training, and continuous support program for student leaders. These efforts have proven valuable, and in just a few years what was once thought of as a retention risk (overinvested and burned-out student leaders) has become a retention benefit for the students and university. All of this leads to better retention, as a Division of Student Affairs assessment shows that students who serve in leadership roles retain at significantly higher rates, and their peers participating in clubs and organizations retain at higher rates, too.

One ongoing challenge, however, is the availability of space for students to interact, work on projects together, or just hang out. Recognizing the need to address these and other challenges noted above, AU is embarking on an ambitious project from 2023 to 2026 to develop a Student Thriving Complex to provide increased physical and mental well-being and space for students to engage with each other and with faculty and staff. The plan has three major components

that will create a true student union by redeveloping the existing Mary Graydon Center to provide dedicated space for student activities and gatherings, and create a new student engagement commons, and for housing teams such as the centers for Community Engagement and Service, Diversity and Inclusion, Student Involvement, and New Student and Family Programs.

STUDENT SERVICES TO SUPPORT THRIVING

There are many facilitators to the goal of student thriving. American University offers students a wide array of support services not unlike offerings available at other institutions. These include need-based financial assistance, support for high-impact academic and cocurricular opportunities, clubs and organizations, and attention to mental and physical health needs.

American University values taking a collaborative and relationship-forward approach to student support. AU's culture encourages cooperative partnerships and collegial relationships, which is a key element to AU's success in developing service-related strategies. This shared mission and collegiality are critical to how AU handles student support both in the micro approaches it employs to help students navigate issues across multiple functional areas and in the macro approaches it uses in the overall design and implementation of student support services.

Examples of support services are:

- Office of New Student and Family Programs—In the months prior to matriculation, the New Student and Family Programs team supports undergraduate students and their families as they transition to American University. The team collaborates with campus partners and student leaders to provide a range of intentional onboarding and transition experiences, such as in-person and virtual orientations and focused content and community engagement opportunities and support. A special focus is placed on the first six weeks of a student's first semester, when students are at higher risk of transferring or dropping out. The team works with parents, families, supporters, and caregivers to engage these critical stakeholders as partners in support of students until they cross the stage at commencement. American University parents and families are actively involved. More than 12,800 receive the office's family newsletters and university announcements, more than

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98 AUx is an example of course designed to enhance student achievement. It is part of the Core Program. See AUx Curriculum.pdf in supporting documentation. [SIV.C1d]

99 Center for Student Involvement, Engage CRM, May 2023.

100 AU Model UN Team ranking (https://www.american.edu/sis/news/20230203-top-ranked-au-model-un-team-strives-to-repeat-success.cfm).

4,000 register for Family Weekend in the fall, and more than 12,500 registrants attend the new student and family webinar series.

- Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI)—CDI focuses on enhancing the experiences of multicultural, first-generation and LGBTQIA+ students. Programs it hosts include STEP (Summer Transition Enrichment Program) and District Scholars cohort programs for first-year students, who are largely first-generation. These programs provide support to more than 150 students annually and lead to a 98 percent retention of first-year students who participate. The focus of the program is to assist students with their transitions to college and support their postsecondary success. The seven-week curriculum assists students with academic skills and social resources needed to succeed in a college environment and is an example of collaboration across faculty and staff in numerous offices. In addition to these cohort programs, CDI provides numerous educational programs, trainings, and opportunities for intergroup and intragroup dialogue, providing spaces for cultural competency development across campus community members, with students as the focus of their work.

- Center for Well-Being Programs and Psychological Services—The center provides a range of mental health care services to the entire student community (graduate, undergraduate, and law). Treatment outcomes at the center are among the best in the nation according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health Data. The center uses a time-limited treatment model for ongoing psychotherapy so that most students can gain access to the center within five business days. The center has a diverse group of mental health counselors, and students can request a counselor who shares their affinity, if available. In addition, the center offers affinity-focused group counseling sessions.

- Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC)—ASAC supports the academic development and educational goals of all AU students. ASAC provides multilayered services such as academic coaching with professional master's level staff as well as tutoring and supplemental instruction from peer students. These services are open to all students at the undergraduate, graduate, and law level. In addition, the Writing Center provides peer-based writing support, and ASAC also provides student-athletes with academic enrichment and support.

- Disability Support within ASAC provides a full-range of disability-related accommodations for all disabled AU students. Students receive academic, residential, and programmatic accommodations through registration with the ASAC to ensure full access to their education. Upon registration, students work individually with a staff member to ensure appropriate accommodation approval and implementation. Students remain registered with the center upon first request and have open access to work with the ASAC to meet their education goals. All accommodations are reviewed for compliance with federal, state, and local laws.

- The Disability Support Team recently has added a position dedicated to the Washington College of Law. This has allowed law students to have a more tailored experience that addresses the specific needs that disabled law students face. In addition, to support all AU students more fully, the Center for Well-Being Programs and Psychological Services started writing clinical documentation for students that can be used in the accommodation process; this has removed a barrier for students who were previously unable to go outside of the university for clinical support.

- University Library[101]—AU's Bender and Pence Law libraries provide a robust and contemporary array of resources in their collections. The university is part of the Washington Research Library Consortium with a combined collection of more than 22 million items as of fall 2023. The library supports student thriving in several ways. The library has programs and resources designed to reduce textbook and other material costs as well as facilitate access to course materials. The library's reserves department utilized more than $80,000 in AY22–23 to purchase materials to support 1,431 courses, including purchase of any required course textbook more than $100, as well as electronic materials whenever possible to facilitate access to remote and online students.

The library also supports lower course costs through the integration of Open Education Resources (OER), or no-cost educational materials, into curricula across campus. In 2023, two OER adoption grants were awarded to AU faculty to revise course syllabi with the library's assistance. The CAS Physics Department has adopted OER materials for all introductory-level courses, and other departments are considering similar adoption strategies, with support from the library to identify appropriate materials. The library provides ongoing support for several OER textbooks created by AU faculty members which are regularly used at AU and beyond.

The library supports student thriving through its physical space. In summer 2023, the library relocated 65,000 volumes to prioritize additional student space for individual and group use. To better access materials, the library offers a variety of instructional programming that includes curriculum-integrated sessions, tutorials, and other online learning modules that support the development of students' information literacy and research skills.

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101 For more on the library and items related to Middle State's required evidence, see http://www.american.edu/library/instruction. [SIII.C4]

The Pence Law Library has partnered with the first-year legal rhetoric program and provided legal research instruction to the entire 1L class, with 35 presentations to them in just in the fall semester. Librarians have prepared 81 research guides that provide asynchronous learning opportunities to students. Some of these guides have been downloaded more than 10,000 times.

- Kay Spiritual Life Center (Kay)—American University has made a committed effort to support students' religious and cultural identities by making available Kosher, Halal, and vegan meal options; this allows a student to be fully a part of the AU community while honoring their other identities. Kay also established a consecrated Dharmic space so that students of non-Western religious and cultural traditions can meaningfully engage the devotional practices of their families and center themselves in their identities. Kay further opens early during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan with food available so that the AU Muslim community is able to gather for mealtimes and prayer before starting and after concluding the fasting period.

- Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS)—At the graduate level, some academic support services are provided centrally by the OGPS. In 2022 the director of graduate student success and development position was created. This position focuses on the student experience, connecting graduate students to campus resources, and providing a centralized point of contact for graduate student engagement.

Challenges to Serving Student Needs

Even with the array of support services that are available to students, obstacles remain that inhibit student thriving. For example, as with many other universities and as mentioned in the mission chapter, AU has experienced attrition of new and seasoned staff members, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge. Members of the AU community most often leave to join other universities or other industries, based on exit data and departmental reviews. While there are ample resources to support students in a variety of areas, the university community is challenged to ensure that students, faculty, and staff have enough resource literacy regarding these services.

As noted, there are many examples of close collaboration across departments, offices, and faculty for the benefit of students. Nevertheless, some siloing of information and resources continues, especially when reporting lines may be different (e.g., student-serving offices that report to Academic Affairs versus those that report to Student Affairs).

Additionally, there is at times a disconnect between the efficacy and quality of services as compared to the community's perceptions of the quality of services. The AU student community is composed of students from disparate backgrounds who arrive at AU with significantly different expectations around services such as mental health care. Students who have previously had access to a full range of long-term mental health treatment may have a similar expectation at college and may view the university as lacking for not providing this level of care, while many students from marginalized backgrounds may need to be educated on the availability of resources and support in this area. A related challenge is the wide range in AU students' ability to pay for personal care and support outside of what is offered at the university. As a result, student support services are challenged to meet these disparate needs of the community in a manner that prioritizes the needs of students who do not have the capability to do so independently.

Other challenges to student thriving include the previous disaggregation of services to support faculty, staff, and students facing discrimination and harassment related to all protected categories. As will be discussed more in the community chapter, at the recommendation of a 2019 campuswide working group, AU in 2020 established a centralized Office of Equity and Title IX to expand our capacity to prevent and respond to discrimination. The office is led by an assistant vice president and includes a team of five full-time staff. Previously, AU community members reported to different offices for various forms of discrimination, and the process was not always clear. While it is too soon to fully evaluate impact, anecdotal evidence suggests that the AU community now better understands how and where to report and receive support, though work remains to clarify processes and set clear expectations.

While there have been improvements in AU's infrastructure to support Title IX investigations, students still express concerns about AU's responsiveness. This view was amplified after a few well-publicized incidents on campus. The Spring 2023 Campus Climate Survey[102] results reflect this concern, with only 31 percent of undergraduates agreeing that the university is committed to "taking troubling situations on campus seriously." In 2023, President Burwell formed a Community Working Group on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment and Violence. The group was charged with finding best practices for educating the AU community on sexual harassment and violence. It reviewed policies, trainings, support services, and other areas of AU's current response to sexual harassment and violence. Already, the work in this area has led to improvements in communication, including a new FAQ page on the Title IX website. A memo to the university community on November 9, 2023, outlines other examples of enhancements to date. For example, the Division of Student Affairs and the Inclusive Excellence Team are collaborating with student government and community members on next steps for the Survivors' Bill of Rights, with the intent of sharing the document with the community in spring 2024.[103]

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102 Campus Climate Survey results. See supporting documentation. [SIV.C6]

103 See November 9, 2023, memo: https://www.american.edu/finance/memos/leonard-hall-investigation-and-campus-actions-to-address-sexual-assault-and-harassment.cfm. [SII.C2]

National Survey of Student Engagement

Evidence from the NSSE, conducted in spring 2023, provides important insights into the student experience. While students participate in high-impact practices, NSSE results are less positive about experiences such as the quality of interactions with others and the questions related to AU offering a supportive campus environment. Taking first-year students as an example, 57 percent of students responded "quite a bit" or "very much" to how much the institution emphasized providing support to help students succeed academically. Only 59 percent say that AU emphasizes opportunities to be socially involved. The results are not significantly different than in past years. In fall 2023, the university is working collaboratively to discuss the results and to identify specific action steps that will improve student's sense of support.

AU DEPARTMENT OF ATHLETICS AND RECREATION

An important component of thriving is the role that athletics plays in providing students with high quality athletic experiences. American University is an NCAA Division I school, competing at the highest level in 16 varsity sports including seven for men and nine for women. The department also offers a multitude of club, intramural, and recreational opportunities for students.

AU is one of 10 member schools in the Patriot League, while the wrestling team competes in the Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association, the oldest athletic conference in the United States. Since joining the Patriot League in 2001, American has won 48 postseason team championships and has garnered 131 individual and relay conference titles in cross country, track, and swimming. Despite having participated in the league for only 14 years at the time, American placed an impressive 40 student-athletes on the Patriot League's 25-Year Anniversary Teams.

American University student-athletes have earned Patriot League Scholar-Athlete of the Year honors a total of 68 times across all 15 league sports since 2001. In the classroom, the Patriot League's full-member institutions consistently rank among the top Division I programs in the NCAA Graduation Rates Report. Since 1998, the Patriot League has ranked first among all Division I conferences offering scholarships in student-athlete graduation rates, according to this report.

MOVING FORWARD: IMPROVING RETENTION AND GRADUATION

This chapter details many of the actions that the institution is taking to advance and support student thriving. We hope and anticipate that successful thriving will lead to students staying at AU and graduating with their degrees.

When students thrive, the university earns their continued enrollments. American University's retention and graduation rates are critical indicators of how the collective efforts of the AU community integrate with external factors to influence student belief they can reach their personal, educational, and professional goals at the institution. Unfortunately, AU's performance on these two metrics has trended negatively since 2018. For example, from the 2018 entering class to the 2022 entering class, the retention rate for AU's first-year cohort averaged 86.9 percent annually compared to the previous five-year average of 88.8 percent. This 1.9 percentage point drop in average retention during the past five years concerns the university as it is contrary to institutional commitments to ensure all students have an experience they value, desire, and are proud to pursue and complete. Furthermore, the current outcomes have moved the institution farther from retention targets of 90 percent for first-year students and weakened the likelihood of achieving six-year graduation rates of 80 percent for these cohorts of students. The two years of the pandemic affected AU most, as the university recorded a multiyear low in retention in AY19–20 (84.8 percent), followed by a multiyear high in AY20–21 (90.6 percent). A comparison of institutions just ahead of AU in *U.S. News and World Report* national rankings finds AU having the lowest retention results compared to peer and aspirational institutions such as Northeastern, Villanova, Boston, Lehigh, George Washington, Syracuse, and Fordham universities.

Beyond AU's mission to foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership among its students, thriving is a valuable concept because AU is invested strategically, financially, and morally in maximizing all students' retention and graduation rates.

Our community understands that higher retention and graduation rates are outcomes earned when the university coordinates efforts to ensure all students thrive.

Table 4.3. First-year entering cohort retention and graduation rates[104]

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
One-year Rate	86.7%	84.8%	90.6%	86.3%	86.1%
	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
Four-year Graduation Rate	73.2%	74.3%	72.5%	67.5%	66.5%
	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017
Six-year Graduation Rate	78.9%	79.1%	78.8%	79.5%	78.5%

Source: Academic Data Reference Book

Assessing Retention and Graduation

In July 2022, the university engaged executive leadership from two institutions known for their retention and student effectiveness (Boston and Northeastern universities) to review American University's efforts to improve its student retention and graduation rates and to propose new paths forward. The team reviewed data and met with a wide range of stakeholders on campus. "The university must create a greater sense of One AU and convey to all administrators, faculty, and staff the important, urgent, and existential nature of improving retention and graduation rates. Attention must be paid to creating a more vibrant campus experience with investments made to expand student-related space for social and academic engagement. AU can improve student retention and success if it elevates the student experience as a university strategic priority and works collaboratively across all areas of campus to make improvements," the final report states.

One recommendation adopted almost immediately was to establish a Student Thriving and Retention Team (STAR) to ensure coordination, communication, and action across the many parts of AU that have a role to play in enhancing student thriving, retention, and graduation. The cross-divisional team's charge is to:

- improve undergraduate student success using data on student thriving, retention, and graduation to inform decisions, priorities, and goals;
- serve as body with shared knowledge, action, and responsibility for student thriving and retention;
- implement a dynamic retention plan and regularly monitor progress, keeping key stakeholders abreast of work activities; and
- serve as a coordinating body to maximize resources, promote communication, and avoid duplication where duplication does not add value.

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104 Retention and Graduation Rate, ADRB section 3. https://www.american.edu/provost/oira/academic-data-reference-book.cfm. Also in supporting documentation. [SIV.C1]

Building on AU's Strengths to Focus on Results

In February 2023, the university hired a new position, assistant vice president for retention, thriving, and student success, which reports to both the provost and the vice president for undergraduate enrollment. The assistant vice president leads the STAR and works with associate deans, advisors, undergraduate studies, enrollment, student affairs and others to coordinate retention and student success efforts. By April 2023, the assistant vice president had created a retention and graduation plan. The report notes that the top factors that contribute to attrition include:

- value proposition (academic pathways, experiential learning, and impactful social experiences);
- relationship of financial aid to retention and graduation;
- student sense of belonging; and
- mental health and wellness.

The plan builds upon the many strengths detailed in this chapter and addresses the challenges outlined in the chapter as well.[105] It includes more than 35 action steps related to improving academic and experiential pathways, improving financial aid funding, improving student sense of belonging, advancing student well-being, and taking a holistic approach to student support.

Successful actions already completed as of fall 2023 include improving access to a retention/analytics database, enhancing retention dashboards, eliminating GPA thresholds for internal transfer across the schools and colleges, and reviewing financial aid policies.

CONCLUSION

AU remains committed to admitting students who have demonstrated the ability to be successful on the undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. Staff within the admitting offices strive to recruit students who will engage with the variety of academic, experiential, and social opportunities available at the institution. AU's mission to foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership is enabled by providing an environment for its students to thrive, both academically and in their growth and development, as active and engaged members of their community.

Student thriving is a concept that is deeply embedded in AU's culture as reflected in the strategic plan imperative to "provide a first-rate student experience that promotes access, thriving, retention and graduation, with improvement in indicators of student inclusion, belonging, satisfaction, rigor, and engagement." The university enhances the learning experience by supporting student participation in curricular and cocurricular high-impact learning practices such as internships, community-based learning, study abroad and student research, among others. Student engagement in these experiences is strong, as reflected in the high internship participation rates by undergraduate, graduate, and law students, and similarly positive post-graduation career outcomes. While experiential education is deeply rooted across the university, an area of focus is to better assess, enhance, and communicate the many opportunities that exist for experiential learning.

Given AU's clear commitment to engaging with the issues experienced by the residents of the city of Washington, DC, supporting the nonprofit sector and schools, and staying connected to national and global communities, a logical next step is to apply for and obtain the Carnegie Community Engagement classification. Fundamental to our work is creating partnerships that are mutually beneficial and reciprocal in their value. The classification's aims and measurements align well with mission and values of AU, among them to strengthen civic responsibilities and democratic values. The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification supports institutional learning and transformation, the outcome of which is an institution where high-quality community engagement pervades the campus. It is designed to gather information that will enable and facilitate community-engaged work across the university, assessing the quality and outcomes from this work. Across the country, 357 institutions have the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, among them peer universities such as Syracuse and Northeastern, as well as several in the DC area, such as Georgetown and George Washington universities. The next cycle begins in January 2024, and AU hopes to put together a broad cross-campus committee to gather the needed data and pursue it.[106]

Student life and thriving is also supported by a wide array of services not unlike those offered at many other institutions. Beginning before matriculation and continuing through a student's time at AU, students are supported in positive

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105 For more information on sense of belonging, see the community chapter.

106 See https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/elective-classifications/community-engagement/.

ways to engage with each other by student serving offices such as the Office of New Student and Family Programs, Center for Student Involvement, and Center for Diversity and Inclusion, to name just a few. Students also have support from offices such as the Center for Well-Being Programs and Psychological Services and Academic Support and Access Center, which help students develop positive ways to engage and to address challenges as they arise.

American University's retention and graduation rates are critical indicators of how the collective efforts of the AU community integrate with external factors to influence students' beliefs that they can reach their personal, educational, and professional goals at the institution. AU is addressing the challenges it has faced in retention rates in recent years in various ways, including creating a new office of student success and retention to coordinate retention efforts across Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, as well as continuing efforts in living-learning communities and adjusting the first-year advising program.

As with many other institutions, AU continues to adapt and respond to continuing changes in student needs and expectations in a world that has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Most services are now available in multiple modalities, which allows for increased accessibility. The university is endeavoring to keep the lessons learned from that difficult time while assessing and responding to a changing world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to improve the transfer articulation process to ease transition for transfer students.

Explore increasing the discount rate to support new undergraduate enrollment and address retention concerns related to financial aid.

Establish processes and resources to make experiential learning opportunities and pathways more transparent and current for students. Designate staff with authority and resources to keep this experiential learning website current and to communicate its existence and value to the AU community.

Explore opportunities for improved student-to-student engagement such as peer mentoring, as well as interactions and engagement between students and faculty and staff.

Seek Community Engagement Carnegie Classification.

Enhance the culture of assessment of services across campus.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Examples of key documents used to inform this chapter:

Academic Data Reference Book, Admissions Section

Financial Aid Support Website

Division of Student Affairs Website

Academic Resources Website

Experiential Learning Website

Academic Data Reference Book, Retention Section

IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

IPEDS Financial Aid Survey

We Know Success Website

NSSE Student Engagement Report

5 LEARNING: Creating an Enriching Learning and Scholarly Environment for Students

Learning is at the core of American University's mission as an institution of higher education. The university is committed to providing the highest quality of teaching both at the undergraduate and graduate/professional studies levels, while continuing to explore the multiple intersections between learning and scholarship. To achieve this fundamental goal, American University counts on an outstanding body of both full-time and part-time faculty devoted to teaching and advancing scholarship.

Learning inside and outside the classroom is the central pillar that prepares AU students to become excellent professionals and committed citizens who contribute to the world around them. To that end, the university fosters an inclusive pedagogy and holistic approach to teaching and learning. An essential part of this approach is a commitment to experiential learning, which is not only reflected in the internships and study abroad experiences that most students participate in, but also in the different ways that experiential learning is embedded in many courses across disciplines from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research labs to vibrant live theater productions and concerts.

In tune with American University's student-centered pedagogy, the average class size across the university is 20. Most courses are discussion-based, fostering inclusive pedagogy and critical thinking. The university has invested in efforts to develop an antiracist curriculum across disciplines based on the belief that equity and social justice must be embedded into the learning experience of all students to prepare them for an increasingly global and complex world. Faculty, administrators, and staff are deeply committed to achieving this overarching goal.

Inclusive Teaching and Learning

American University has made improving inclusive curriculum, teaching, and learning a significant priority as part of its larger plan for inclusive excellence. The following sections of this chapter describe the curricular, pedagogical, and faculty development efforts American University is making to enact these steps to improve inclusivity, ensure excellence, and create a holistic and integrative learning experience for all students.

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Undergraduate education is a central pillar of the American University learning community. With nearly 8,000 undergraduate students across seven schools offering a total of 78 majors, 71 minors, and more than 20 certificates, AU provides an education that spans a wide range of disciplines, including arts, business administration, education, government, humanities, international studies, media and communication, public administration, sciences, and social sciences.[107] Across these traditional disciplinary umbrellas, cutting-edge subjects and interdisciplinary approaches have been added to the curriculum. Initiatives showcasing AU's innovative spirit include the School of Education's (SOE) antiracist administration supervision and leadership certificate; School of Public Affair's (SPA) bachelor of science in data science for justice, law, and criminology; and the College of Arts and Sciences' (CAS) Department of Critical Race, Gender, and Cultural Studies.

As a residential university, AU undergraduate instruction primarily occurs in person. The university also offers exceptional online courses in fall and spring and a broader offering of remote learning in summer and during winter break. During COVID-19, however, like most higher education institutions worldwide, AU moved instruction online. The move to online was succeeded because of the efforts of faculty, staff, and administrators. In fall 2021, the university went fully back to campus, and, as before the pandemic, almost all undergraduate courses are again taught in person. Thus, while AU has not significantly increased the number of online undergraduate courses, the pandemic-driven online experience has provided flexibility when necessary.

As described in the following pages, students have a variety of options to enhance their undergraduate learning experiences at AU. In their first and second year, they can join living and learning communities (LLCs) and participate in excellent academic cohorts such as the AU Honors Program, Lincoln Scholars in SPA, and Global Scholars in the School of International Service (SIS). Students also can engage in experiential learning in a variety of ways. They can

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107 University catalog. [SIII.C3]

take community-based learning courses across the curriculum, conduct research in STEM labs, participate in credited and uncredited internships, take part in the School of Communication's (SOC) Communication Collaborative for Change that offers the opportunity to create deliverables for real clients, or be part of the Kogod School of Business' hands-on approach, to mention some common examples among the multiple options offered.

Outside the classroom, cocurricular opportunities abound for students to learn about diversity and inclusion. Campus events and guest speakers are regularly sponsored by centers such as the Antiracist Research and Policy Center and the Center for Latin American and Latino Studies. Campus Life also offers several inclusive learning opportunities, such as the Intergroup Dialogue experiences run through the Center for Diversity Inclusion. Students can participate in diversity, equity, and inclusion-related leadership opportunities through student organizations, such as Students Against Food Insecurity, University PRIDE, Black Girls Vote AU, and the *Blackprint*.

Curricular Efforts to Meet the Needs and Aspirations of a Diverse Student Body

Serving an increasingly diverse student body with holistic and integrative learning is at the heart of American University's curricular efforts. AU's general education program, known as the AU Core Curriculum (AU Core), exemplifies and lays the foundation for the university's commitment to comprehensive instruction. AU Core and undergraduate studies more broadly support AU's mission, as seen in chapter 2.

In 2015, the provost convened a task force to "reimagine general education."[108] Over an 18-month period, more than 650 full-time faculty, staff, students, and administrators engaged in ongoing dialogue to develop an intellectual core that received a unanimous vote of approval by the Faculty Senate. This core balanced three central values at the center of liberal education reform: a curriculum that focuses on what students should know and be able to do upon graduation; a curriculum that creates an effective citizen, someone who understands connections among ideas and can engage in a global society; and a model of curiosity that helps students understand how different disciplines ask and answer questions, creating a set of intellectual habits and skills. The core curriculum that highlights metacognition—that is, making students aware that learning is a recursive process that happens over time—equips them to participate more deliberately in that process.

AU Core Curriculum

The new program challenges students to put their curiosity to use inside and outside the classroom and fosters agile thinking that prepares them to engage in a complex, constantly changing world. While all requirements serve to advance the mission, the curriculum offers attention to equity, diversity, and inclusion at each stage.

AU Core is a scaffolded curriculum that starts with a common first-year experience course, called American University Experience (AUx) with two parts: AUx1, which helps students to adjust to the expectations of college life, and AUx2, which focuses on race and structural racism as a starting point for the exploration of students' own identities and cultural experiences. The course aims to equip students to engage in dialogue with recognition of impact on individuals, communities, and structures.

After AUx, the core integrates these foundational skills with students' majors through a selection of courses that satisfy a diversity and equity requirement. These courses address field- or discipline-specific issues of power, privilege, and inequality that are embedded in social, cultural, or economic hierarchies, including (but not limited to) those around race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, and sexuality. These courses include Economic Inequality, Multicultural Health, and Insiders and Outsiders in World Music. Here, students learn to evaluate and reflect on values, policies, or practices needed to develop a more equitable society.

An integral part of the AU first-year experience, the Complex Problems curriculum focuses on engaging real-world problems and questions with methods of inquiry that are described by the program's learning outcomes: diverse perspectives, critical reading, communication, reflection, and integrative learning. Complex Problems seminars transcend single disciplines and use their content as a vehicle to practice learning outcomes. Content is secondary to method, as the seminar's main goal is to prepare first-year students for college-level academic work in any subject or field. The diversity of the AU faculty experience feeds the diversity of Complex Problems seminars. More than 150 topics have been approved. Seminars include Cities: Destroyed and Reinvented, DNA in the Digital Age, Global Hip-Hop and Resistance, Presidential Scandals, and Maxing Out Planet Earth.

Written communication, information literacy, and quantitative literacy are given significant attention in the core given their importance for student success. This coursework is required in the first-year foundational components of the curriculum (Written Communication and Information Literacy I and

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108 The process of creating the new AU Core program is documented in the following sources: Reimagining AU's Gen Ed Experience 2015 (https://www.american.edu/ucm/news/20151201-gen-ed-reimagined.cfm), Reimagining General Education: Toward a New AU Core Curriculum Proposal, January 25, 2017, (https://www.american.edu/provost/gened/upload/reimagining-general-education-1-25-17.pdf), and Minutes Faculty Senate Meeting February 1, 2017 (https://www.american.edu/facultysenate/upload/faculty-senate-minutes-2-1-2017.pdf) description and date of last revision of general education program. [SIII.C5a-b] [SIII.C8]

Quantitative Literacy I) and again in the integrative portion of the curriculum (Written Communication and Information Literacy II and Quantitative Literacy II), which challenges students to apply these skills to their learning in the major. Incoming students may apply approved scores on placement exams toward the required Writing I sequence. That is, with an AP/IB high score, students can take WRT-106 (College Writing Intensive), in lieu of the two sequenced courses WRT-100 (College Writing)/WTR-101 (College Writing Seminar). External transfer courses deemed equivalent to AU Core courses are also reviewed and integrated into the student's plan of study.

Habits of Mind courses sharpen students' ability to engage in flexible and rigorous intellectual inquiry from a variety of perspectives: creative-aesthetic, cultural, ethical, natural-scientific, and sociohistorical. Finally, a culminating capstone course and project allow students to take the skills, concepts, and inquiry-based values acquired in core AUx and Habits of Mind courses and apply them within their majors.

In keeping with the university's mission, undergraduate programs enable students to pursue studies in the arts and humanities, social and natural sciences, business, communication, education, public affairs, and international service. As of fall 2023, the most popular majors and their student population figures are as follows:[109]

- International Service.......................................1,941
- Political Science..955
- Business Administration.....................................609
- CLEG (Communication, Legal Institutions, Economics and Government)............................401
- Justice and Law...387
- Psychology...339

It is notable that AU's most popular majors and those on the rise are concentrated in fields—and the intersections between them—where AU demonstrates thought leadership

Undergraduate Programs

Table 5.1. AU Core Curriculum at-a-glance

Core Area		Course Components
Foundation Courses	Taken typically during first year Builds foundation for academic success	1. AU Experience I (1.5 credits) 2. AU Experience II (1.5 credits) 3. Written Communication and Information Literacy I (3 credits) 4. Quantitative Literacy I (3 credits) 5. Complex Problems (3 credits)
Habits of Mind	Taken at any time in the degree program Focuses on asking and answering questions through a range of intellectual approaches	Students take one three-credit course in each of the five areas: 1. Creative-Aesthetic Inquiry 2. Cultural Inquiry 3. Ethical Reasoning 4. Natural-Scientific Inquiry 5. Sociohistorical Inquiry
Integrative Courses	Taken typically in the major to combine inquiry-based values of AU Core with major-related work Complete a capstone project that showcases student's academic accomplishments	Students take a three-credit course for each one of these requirements: 1. Written Communication and Information Literacy II 2. Quantitative Literacy II 3. Diversity and Equity 4. Capstone

Source: AU CORE documentation

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109 *Academic Data Reference Book 2023* Table 1-5A provides a complete list of all educational programs with enrollments, undergraduate. [SIII.C3]

and excels in knowledge creation, as captured in the research chapter. This alignment, characteristic of AU's embrace of the scholar-teacher ideal, creates a rich learning experience for students and prepares them to be changemakers in their own communities, across the nation, and around the world.

AU prioritizes timely graduation for its first-time first-year and transfer students, without requiring excess credits. The redesign of the core curriculum mapped every major with the core to ensure timely graduation across all majors. However, because of the increased degree flexibility, students sometimes find it difficult to identify the most beneficial and efficient degree path. Thus, it is paramount to ensure that academic planning and support services facilitate clear graduation paths that account for students' prior learning and allow for student exploration and changed trajectories, while heeding the transdisciplinary learning that AU regards as important to students' world readiness.

Transdisciplinary study, as well as the development of students' knowledge and appreciation of different epistemologies and methodologies, has been a signal priority in the creation of new majors and minors over the past five years. This integration of perspectives is necessary for world readiness and is consistent with employers' needs and expectations in an era of rapid change. For this reason, the university is developing programs such as bachelor's degrees in public health; data sciences for political science; and data sciences for justice, law, and criminology; as well as a minor in race, politics, and justice.

Special Academic Initiatives and High Impact Practices

AU's transformative initiative RiSE (Reinventing the Student Experience) was implemented in 2016. Funded by a grant from the Carnegie Mellon Foundation, the project included an 18-month review of all aspects of the student experience.[110] From admissions, student support services, and technology through the rethinking of AU general education, RiSE has had a deep impact on AU undergraduate education. It thoroughly changed the first-year student experience, foremost through advising and common curriculum. Students are assigned a first-year advisor who reports to the Office of Undergraduate Education and Academic Services and has an estimated case load of 80 students. In their second years, students are assigned their school advisor for the rest of their time at AU. Since fall 2023, first-year advisors have been assigned a caseload of students from a single academic unit, a change from the previous method where advisors worked with

first-year students across AU's six academic units. As a result, schools now have clearer pathways to build early relationships with first-year students, and the students have an advising experience that prioritizes their academic interests throughout.

First-year advisors are also instructors of the foundational AUx1 and AUx2 classes discussed above. A key element of these courses is students' self-reflection and mindfulness. AU undergraduate education leadership has closely monitored the impact of these two courses and adjusted their content to fit the needs of the evolving student body. The success of first-year undergraduate experience has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report*, which ranked AU's first-year experience #12 nationally for 2023.[111]

One of the most successful programs at AU is the living learning communities, with several cohorts for first-year students: AU Honors, Community-Based Research Scholars (CBRS), University College, and AU Cornerstone to name a few. Also important are the three-year intensive scholar programs such as Public Health Scholars. They all provide a community of learning, supported by faculty mentors, staff, and peer students, where students can develop their academic skills and expand their intellectual horizons while being part of a stimulating living community of companionship and care. The majority of LLCs' one-year retention rates surpass that of AU's overall first-year retention rate, and the six-year graduation rates for LLCs range from 85.5 percent to 94.4 percent (see supporting documents). In fall 2023, 44 percent of first-year students enrolled in an AU LLC.[112] In addition, the BIPOC Affinity Group for students brings together Black, Indigenous, and People of Color from AU Honors, CBRS, and Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars to create a supportive environment while navigating the college experience.

American University provides many opportunities for students to develop professional work experience and leadership skills. As seen in the thriving chapter, one of American University signatures is undergraduate internships. AU's location in Washington, DC, is intrinsically linked to the substantial number of students taking one or more internships. Of May 2022 graduates, 83 percent reported having an internship while at AU, and of those who had an internship, 35 percent had four or more.[113] Internships are held across government agencies, nonprofits, and corporations in a diversity of areas, such as public affairs, STEM, communication, business, arts, humanities, and education. Many of the internships offer credit, and some provide monetary compensation. In some majors, students can use their internships to fulfill their senior year capstones. In addition, two of AU's schools, SPA

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110 See Summary of RiSE initiative in supporting documentation. [SIV.C6]

111 *U.S. News & World Report* 2022–2023 First-Year Experience.

112 *Academic Data Reference Book 2022–2023*. Table 2-6B Summary of New Enrolled First-Year Students by University Cohort. Example of educational offerings and trend analysis of data on participation, disaggregated by relevant populations. [SIII.C3]

113 Graduation Census May 2022 Report. Graduation Census May 2023 select tables are available in supporting documentation. [SIV.C6]

and CAS, provide opportunities for students to apply to competitive leadership certificate programs aligned to their undergraduate areas of study.

As also mentioned in the learning chapter, common features among AU students are their social awareness, commitment to social justice, and eagerness to serve. Likewise, for many research becomes an intrinsic part of their academic lives. Multiple community-based learning courses, 23 courses in fall 2023, provide a productive and meaningful engagement between course subject matter and hands-on experience. In

STEM disciplines, for instance, students join faculty labs, and they not only actively participate in their findings, but they also often publish with their faculty. American University encourages its undergraduate population to engage in scholarship through summer awards at both the university and school levels.

Figure 5.1 summarizes a few key integrative and experiential learning experiences available to undergraduate students.[114] In addition, as mentioned in chapter 4, the university maintains a searchable experiential learning website with an array of opportunities for students to explore.

Figure 5.1. Integrative and experiential learning experiences

Initiative	Description
AU Honors and Honors in the Major (Revised in 2019)	• Sequences curriculum that highlights the fundamentals of research and critical thinking. • Includes honors sections of AU Core classes; research experiences across academic fields and disciplines; a challenge course in which teams complete a collaborative project; interdisciplinary colloquia; and a senior capstone, which may be completed in the major. • Brings together a diverse community of students and faculty via a shared academic journey. • Emphasizes experiential and inquiry-driven learning, curiosity, and willingness to take risks. • Challenges and supports students to contribute to knowledge, creative expression, and meaningful change.
AU Cornerstone	• Unique opportunity for first-year students to intern or study abroad. • Enriching way for students to jump-start their professional careers or international education. • Dedicated faculty and advisors and special programming to build community.
Sophomore Living-Learning Community: AU Compass	• Engage with and explore their academic pathways at AU through a living-learning community designed especially for sophomores. • Timed to coincide with point in academic trajectory when sophomore students make important choices (e.g., major(s)/minor(s), study abroad experiences, and social connections). • Provides sophomore students more time for focused exploration alongside a supportive network of peers, faculty, and staff. • Take a noncredit or one-credit course, AU Compass Lab Experience, to meet the outcomes of this community.

Source: AU program documentation

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114 See http://www.american.edu/learning-communities for more details.

Bachelor's/Master's Combined Programs

Bachelor's/master's combined programs provide students with a fast-track path to obtain a master's degree while retaining high-quality standards of instruction. The bachelor's/master's programs enable accomplished undergraduates to complete both a bachelor's and master's at AU within a shorter amount of time than it would take to complete both degrees separately. Depending on the program's credit requirements, six to 12 credits (two to four courses) are shared across both degrees.

Typically, students can apply to bachelor's/master's programs when they have completed 75 credits, though many programs recommend students apply when they have obtained 90 credits. In addition, students who apply and are accepted into a bachelor's/master's program are then eligible to take graduate-level courses that have a corresponding undergraduate course number. A GPA of 3.0 is required. All schools but Washington College of Law (WCL) and SOE offer combined bachelor's/master's programs.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

As of fall 2022, AU's graduate portfolio included 90 master's degrees and 12 doctoral programs administered across seven academic units. WCL offers four standalone degree programs, a JD, two master's programs (LLM and MLS), and a doctoral program (SJD). In addition, WCL also offers five dual programs, partnering with SIS, Kogod School of Business, and SPA. For 2024 *U.S. News & World Report* ranks WCL #1 in clinical training in addition to having signature programs in international law, intellectual property, health care law, and trial advocacy.[115]

Many of the graduate programs are professional degree programs designed to prepare graduates for a particular employment sector. For example, AU offers professional degrees in business administration, law, public administration, strategic communication, arts management, international development, and education policy and leadership. AU also offers 63 graduate certificates as of AY22–23, with three more set to start AY23–24.

Changes to the program portfolio since 2014 largely reflect American University's history of developing innovative programs in emerging fields of research and practice. For example, SIS added a new skills-focused international affairs on-campus degree and a STEM-designated degree in international economic relations. Likewise, WCL launched a new hybrid master's of legal studies designed to equip professionals with the legal framework they need to effectively solve legal questions and challenges in their roles (see new programs summary in supporting documentation).

Degree programs are designed and delivered by individual academic units rather than by a school of graduate studies. That approach ensures optimal faculty engagement with graduate students and synergies with faculty research and research centers across campus. Many graduate programs also benefit from the university's Washington, DC, location with its proximity to the federal government, world's largest concentration of think-tanks, non-governmental organizations, and consulting firms.

Yet challenges remain. The rapidly changing graduate landscape has led to a decrease in graduate enrollments across both residential and online programs. Additionally, the cost of external market data and its variable usefulness at times hinders decision-making at the university and unit levels. As a result, a variety of targeted and short-term tactical adjustments have been made, along with more strategic, long-term planning. To meet the immediate enrollment challenge, the university has increased scholarship awards, held deferred scholarship offers consistent, implemented a continuing enrollment scholarship strategy that aligns with the university's bachelor's/master's strategy, and launched targeted efforts to retain students on leave.

Long-term efforts include implementing regular program reviews as well as rightsizing and, in some cases, closing programs with low enrollments. Units are also investigating opportunities to expand bachelor's/master's opportunities to increase students' time at AU while reducing the cost of receiving first-rate graduate training, especially given the high cost of living in the Washington, DC, metro area. The university plans to increase graduate student housing support and continues to enhance infrastructure and resources to offer the right mix of residential and online programs and courses. In addition, the university is continuing efforts to improve the availability of external market data to enhance decision-making at the university and unit level.

At the same time, many efforts are taking place to increase support and student services for the university's rapidly evolving and diverse graduate populations. The university has enhanced administrative capacity at the university level, altered how it allocates graduate financial assistance, increased its online presence, and supported pedagogical improvements in areas such as online teaching, inclusive classrooms, and experiential learning.[116]

For example, steps have been taken to provide more student academic services tailored to graduate students, such as writing support and statistics tutoring. Historically, these services have tended to target undergraduate students, and graduate students voiced concerns that these services were inaccessible and not always appropriate for graduate courses. The university is also trying to reduce cross-registration barriers related

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115 Enrollment details for graduate programs are available in the Academic Data Reference Book at http://www.american.edu/provost/oira/. Source of rankings: *U.S. News & World Report* 2022–2023 Best Clinical Training Law Programs.

116 Office of Graduate and Professional Studies summary or 2019–2025 Strategic Plan Progress Report: Year 4. [SIII.C6]

to alignment of online and residential program academic calendars to provide students with more opportunities to take courses in multiple modalities.

WCL's Office of Academic Excellence (OAE) has grown in the past six years from an office of one to a team of five. OAE overhauled the law school's processes for providing academic advising to students and promoting readiness for the bar exam. It now supports two new bar readiness classes, group and individual counseling, a resource center, and extensive programming. These resources continue for students after graduation with programming, advising, practice testing, and a bar coaching program. Since the inception of OAE, WCL's graduating classes have seen a 20 percent increase in bar passage by those taking it for the first time (in 2016 first-time taker bar passage was 63 percent; in 2021 first-time taker bar passage was 84 percent). The percentage of WCL graduates employed in full-time, long-term jobs for which a JD or bar passage is required increased from 73 percent for the Class of 2018 to 80 percent for the Class of 2022.

WCL's Office of Career and Professional Development has undergone an overhaul since 2020. Leadership developed and implemented a new staff training program that emphasizes a student-centered approach, with a focus on fostering a sense of professional identity and purpose, along with the details of job search. The team has developed all new professional development training materials, including new asynchronous materials that are available to all students online. The office has launched new data collection methods and is now using a data-driven approach to target services to specific students. The office has moved to a new model for supporting students in the post-graduation job search, assigning a counselor and faculty member to provide individualized support to all job seekers. The office has expanded service hours for students, offering appointments from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., to better accommodate part-time and working students.

American University recognizes that the needs of the graduate student population are constantly evolving in response to shifting demographic and environmental factors. Ongoing monitoring of these factors is essential to the university's ability to adjust pedagogical practices and graduate offerings.

Enhancing Support for Graduate Research and Experiential Learning

Graduate programs typically promote the synthesis of learning through some combination of coursework, internships, and other professional experience requirements, along with independent and team research projects.

Research remains an integral part of graduate student learning—whether it is doctoral and master's students conducting scholarly research or applied research in more professional degree programs. Students hone their research and scholarship skills through coursework, assistantships, and individual and team research projects, often through their dissertation or capstone research projects. Many programs across the university provide funding and other incentives to encourage students to present their research at conferences and symposia, publish it in peer-reviewed and professional journals, or disseminate their findings through traditional media and social media.[117]

Targeted funding remains an important incentive to encourage student research, particularly at the doctoral level. Doctoral students in most units can apply for research funding, and, in many schools, they can receive funding for coauthoring with faculty, participating in faculty research talks, conducting field research, or attending specialized training. The university has also encouraged cross-campus doctoral research collaboration through writing retreats, joint workshops, and presentations. A week-long, all-expenses-paid dissertation writer's retreat was piloted in spring 2023 to support seven multidisciplinary doctoral candidates in the final stages of their degree programs.[118]

ONLINE EDUCATION

To make graduate degrees more accessible, AU offers a range of online degrees.[119] In some cases, a hybrid residential and online program is offered, such as SPA's MS in data science and SOC's strategic communication MA. In others, a degree program is offered exclusively online, such as SIS's master's of international relations or SOE's education policy and leadership EdD. In addition, the university continues to develop online programs in its areas of strategic focus, such as

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117 https://www.american.edu/research/students.cfm [SIII.C6]

118 Inaugural Airlie Research Projects Reflect Property's History, Spirit 2023 at https://www.american.edu/news/airlie-research-proposals-2023.cfm [SIII.C6]

119 See AU Curriculum Development Review and Approval policies and workflow description in supporting documentation. Distance Education—Policies and Procedures related to ensuring quality in online programs and ensuring comparability of distance education programs to programs in other modalities. [SIII.C4]

master's in marketing analytics, sustainability management, and health promotion management. All programs, whether residential, online, or hybrid, go through the same approval and assessment processes.

American University uses three online program management (OPM) partners to support online graduate degree programs: 2U, Wiley, and Noodle. OPMs provide support for marketing and recruitment, offer select student support services (such as orientation to technology), and provide the technical aspects of course development and delivery. AU faculty design all courses, and curricular changes follow the university assessment and approval process. AU staff and faculty oversee services. In these partnerships, AU is responsible for reviewing applications, curriculum development, delivery of course material, and supporting students as they persist toward graduation. Faculty members in each program are responsible for reviewing applicants, and program directors and faculty make all admissions decisions. AU faculty hired by program directors and faculty in each program teach all courses.

In recent years, AU has increased its institutional capacity and expertise to design, market, and deliver online programs without an OPM partner. Under the leadership of the dean of graduate and professional studies, the team includes learning design and media production to support AU faculty in designing online and hybrid classes, as well as designing and delivering online and hybrid programs in house. AU program directors and advisors meet regularly with the OPM marketing teams, admissions counselors, and support staff to oversee and assure quality recruitment and student support with course registration and technical help for teaching and learning technologies. As with all degree programs across campus, online programs are required to submit annual assessment reports to the Faculty Senate Committee on Learning Assessment, and every course is assessed on faculty, course content, and the learning experience via the Student Evaluation of Teaching survey (see assessment section). The OPMs also administer surveys to assess aspects of the student learning experience (e.g., learning management system). In addition, there is a university committee, Online Learning Leadership Council, which shares information regarding the university's online strategy and new degrees, discusses opportunities and challenges related to online programs across campus, and develops best practices and procedures in response.[120]

As the *Self-Study* is being written in 2023, change is occurring in AU's online landscape. When AU first began working in the online environment, it had little experience with online learning and needed the expertise of online partners. Since then, AU has developed expertise and has an infrastructure that facilitates the development of online programs and digital content. The university also has invested in HyFlex classrooms, 13 as of fall 2023, and another 150 of AU's classrooms are equipped with cameras and projectors. AU also has built a centralized team of instructional designers and experts in online program delivery. The changes that occurred to student services during the pandemic have benefited all students taking courses online. In addition, in 2023 the instructional designers were integrated with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGPS) to better align and integrate course modalities into the curriculum.

During the 2023 academic year, some partnerships, such as 2U's work with Kogod, have been disbanded to enhance AU's ability to offer dynamic, flexible, and multimodal course offerings to students. Toward this goal, Kogod is teaching its online programs in house, providing students a great opportunity to select course modalities that work best for them. Other partnerships are being reconsidered or reimagined. As AU reviews its online strategy, it will continue to ensure that it offers courses and programs of the highest quality.

LIFELONG LEARNING

With the goal of adding to American University's value proposition with nondegree course offerings (skilling, credentials, badges, etc.), the Lifelong Learning team was established in 2021 under OGPS. As of 2023, the Lifelong Learning team has focused on building a platform/marketplace for nondegree offerings for all AU stakeholders—current students, alumni, and even outside learners—to advance their knowledge with these important educational opportunities. As part of this effort, AU adopted Canvas Catalog as the standalone marketplace for these offerings, allowing the university to be nimble in its ability to post courses, change prices, offer discounts, and track revenue. This adoption was an important step in moving this learning stream forward while increasing accessibility to the expertise and knowledge that AU's faculty and staff possess. Overall, the goal of AU's Lifelong Learning entity is to enhance the learning and value proposition behind the university's degrees, offering additional credentials to current and past students. As the university continues to move this goal forward as part of the university's strategic plan, it is focusing on increasing its portfolio of offerings.

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120 Evidence of the regular review of academic programs: Annual reports and other approaches and analysis of results and follow-up on any findings. [SIII.C4] Distance Education—evidence of the assessment of effectiveness of instructional design and information technology support. [SIII.C2] [SIII.C7]

STRUCTURES TO ENSURE QUALITY, RELEVANCE AND EXCELLENCE

Academic Services

The Office of Undergraduate Education and Academic Student Services (UEAS), under the leadership of the dean of undergraduate education and vice provost for academic student services, plays a critical role in providing student academic services.[121] It oversees the core curriculum and special programs such as AU Honors, AU Cornerstone, Community-Based Research Scholars, University College, and Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholars. The dean for UEAS is also in charge of the Academic Support and Access Center, which includes academic coaching, tutoring, writing center, quantitative support, supplemental instruction, student athlete support, and students with disabilities support.[122] Student services except for advising are centralized.

OGPS, established in 2021 under the direction of a new dean of graduate and professional studies, provides leadership for all graduate operations and ensures consistent and equitable compliance with the Graduate Academic Regulations across campus. The new office was the result of an administrative reorganization so that the vice provost and dean of research and graduate education were separated. This reorganization aligned with the university strategic plan that viewed graduate and professional degree programs as a central pillar of lifelong learning alongside academic offerings for other types of executive and mid-career learners seeking nondegree training to expand their expertise and skills to advance in their careers or pivot into new fields.

OGPS also has increased overall university capacity to support graduate programs and graduate students. It has launched new marketing initiatives, updated the Graduate Academic Regulations and operating procedures, and developed new policies such as an academic dismissal appeal.[123] The office has strengthened student academic services including offering doctoral dissertation writing support to enhance assistance available to students for writing and statistics. The office also has sought to support unit-level innovation in graduate and lifelong learning by providing market research and building out the administrative architecture (e.g., registration, payment, learning platform) to launch new nondegree/noncredit training and short courses.

Processes and Structures

The Faculty Senate reviews and approves all student policies and any changes they undergo. The Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) reviews and approves all the new undergraduate programs and any significant changes. The Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC) is charged with the same task for new graduate programs and significant changes. The structure to propose, review, and approve the curriculum begins at the school level with their Educational Policy Committees (EPCs). New programs, majors and minors, and significant changes are reviewed and approved by the associate deans of each school, UCC, dean of UEAS (for undergraduate curriculum), and dean of graduate and professional studies (for graduate curriculum). For new programs and majors, the provost also reviews before they go to the Board of Trustees for final approval. Regardless of modality, all undergraduate and graduate programs and courses go through a rigorous curriculum review and approval process, as do significant changes to existing programs.

American University uses the DIGARC Curriculog curriculum management system to administer the curriculum change and creation process.[124] This multistep oversight process can be burdensome, but it ensures that all curriculum developments are reviewed consistently with a shared governance approach. Every Curriculog proposal—whether changes to permanent course offerings or a program's curriculum—must follow the established AU curriculum development review and approval steps. All new course proposals at the university must contain course learning outcomes to be considered for review.

The Faculty Senate Core Committee is charged with the review, recommendation, and evaluation of all courses within the AU Core Curriculum. This work is accomplished through nine core subcommittees corresponding to the various components of the curriculum. Faculty who serve on subcommittees review course proposals to ensure the integrity of the curriculum, plan and participate in assessment, and make recommendations for improvement based on those assessments (See AU Core curricular change policy document).[125]

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121 Office of Undergraduate Education and Academic Student Services (https://www.american.edu/provost/undergrad/draft-index.cfm). [SIII.C1, SIV.C1b-c]

122 Academic Support and Access Center also serves graduate students.

123 Academic Regulations; Process for Petitions to Appeal Graduate Academic Dismissals at https://www.american.edu/policies/academics/upload/Graduate-Students-Academic-Rules-Regulations-Appeal-Process-for-Academic-Dismissals-2021.pdf. [SIII.C4]

124 Curriculog Curriculum Management System, course or program review procedures, and sample approval documentation (including but not limited to syllabi or course content), as they relate to the credit hour. [SIII.C1] [SIII.C2]

125 AU Core Curricular Change Documentation: AU Core Curricular Change Policy (Final), course or program review procedures, and sample approval documentation (including but not limited to syllabi or course content), as they relate to the credit hour. [SIII. C1]

Policies and Academic Regulations

Undergraduate rules and regulations were fully revised in AY17–18, and regulations are revised as needed through university governance structures. The Graduate Academic Regulations and Undergraduate Academic Regulations are governed by a university-wide body of policies with procedures in place to accommodate updates as needed. Schools have discretion in certain practices related to their own disciplinary fields, but they are accountable to the general and centralized body of academic policies.

American University's Academic Integrity Code (AIC) establishes a policy and procedure to ensure the integrity of students' academic work. While the AIC applies to the entire university, it has historically been administered by the units. As of August 1, 2023, the university centralized its academic integrity operations to deepen commitments to fairness, equity, and inclusion. The Office of Academic Integrity (centralized in May 2023) connects the university's expectations for student integrity to curriculum, learning outcomes, and requisite support structures for faculty, staff, and students.

FACULTY

To deliver inclusive and effective pedagogy while ensuring student thriving, American University has invested in efforts to build a world-class and diverse body of faculty. Key initiatives have focused on faculty recruitment and retention, expectations for inclusive excellence, holistic evaluation of faculty achievement, and equity-minded faculty development. The advances described below have proceeded in collaboration with the institutions of shared governance and are informed by regular engagement with faculty in all categories and ranks to build an inclusive culture and a climate in which faculty, students, and staff can thrive.

Faculty Mix

As of fall 2023, AU had 962 full-time faculty (see more details on faculty and student composition in supporting document). Full-time faculty at AU include tenure-line colleagues and full-time non-tenure-line colleagues with single-year contracts, multiyear contracts, and continuing appointments. In fall 2023, 50.4 percent of full-time faculty were tenured and tenure-track, 48.4 percent were term faculty, and the remaining were considered "other." The overall ratio of full-time term faculty to full-time tenure-track and tenured faculty has remained steady since 2017.

Faculty hiring and retention strategies aim to achieve a favorable balance of faculty expertise across course sections.

In AY22–23, tenure-track and tenured faculty taught 23 percent of all course sections; term faculty taught 34 percent of sections; and adjuncts taught 42 percent. The strength of adjunct faculty and the flexibility of adjunct assignment contributed significantly to American University's ability to minimize learning disruptions during the pandemic, resulting in a temporary increase in ratio of part-time to full-time faculty. More specifically, between AY19–20 and AY21–22, the share of all course sections taught by adjuncts increased from 42 to 46 percent.

As reported in the 2024 edition of *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, 77.7 percent of AU's faculty are full-time compared to an average of 79.7 percent at other national universities. This lower percentage might be expected, given the university's location in Washington, DC. AU's adjunct faculty includes experts in the field who work in high-profile positions. Adjunct faculty include former ambassadors, award-winning journalists, documentary filmmakers, a former state senator, the former deputy secretary general of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, business executives, lawyers, and judges, among others.[126]

This mix of faculty offers advantages from the standpoint of student learning. The ability to hire adjuncts and term faculty dedicated to teaching often provides the opportunity to tailor hires to specific curriculum needs. The challenge, however, is that such a mix makes it more difficult to meet the university's scholarship goals.

Faculty Diversity and Inclusive Hiring

Developing a curriculum attuned to inclusive excellence requires a diverse faculty (in lived experiences and identities) who cull from diverse understandings and scholarly networks. In addition to helping rebalance the ratio of full-time to adjunct faculty, the impact of new hiring on faculty diversity deserves special recognition: In fall 2023 50 percent AU's new full-time faculty hires were faculty of color, and 55 percent identify as women. Of AU's new tenure-line hires in fall 2023, 56 percent were faculty of color.

Increased diversity among tenure-line hires is due in part to the Provost Office's energetic emphasis on inclusive practices in hiring since 2017. All tenure-line search committees now include an affirmative action representative and receive a briefing led by the dean of faculty on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism. The briefing includes practical tips for inclusive and equitable recruitment, application reviews, candidate interviews, and campus visits.

Building on the success of these briefings, the Office of the Provost, Office of Human Resources, and President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion collaborated to develop a training module and a written guide, *Equitable and Inclusive Hiring of Faculty: A Guide for Fulltime Faculty Searches,* for all tenure-line

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126 See University Catalog for a complete list of AU full-time faculty and adjuncts. [SIII.C2]

and term full-time faculty search committees.[127] An important goal of these resources is to help term search committees address obstacles to inclusive recruiting caused by tighter hiring timeframes. An example of a unit-driven initiative to improve faculty diversity and retention is the University Library's participation in the Association of College and University Research Library Diversity Alliance, its development of an Antiracist Praxis Guide, and its facilitation of a related teach-in.[128] Since summer 2023, all faculty search committees, including all members of term line search committees, take an inclusive practices briefing for search committees, and an inclusive hiring toolkit for faculty has been rolled out and is in use and provided to all search committees and associate deans.

Transparency and accountability are vital ingredients for diverse and equity-minded hiring. All full-time search committees are required to submit demographic data on applicants and candidates at four stages in the process: applicant pool, short list, interview list, and finalists selection. Provost Office staff streamlined reporting documentation in AY 2022–23, and implementation of AU's new enterprise resource planning system will enable more sophisticated collection and analysis of data for inclusive faculty search and hiring beginning in 2024.[129] Term faculty are part of search committee briefings.

Sustained success in these initiatives will enable the university to accelerate its progress toward the goal of a faculty body that matches the demographic composition of the student body.

Centering Equity in the Faculty Experience

Faculty diversity depends on inclusive strategies for faculty retention as well as hiring. In keeping with the campus-wide scope of AU's inclusive excellence plan, multiple initiatives have been launched by various entities across campus, including AU's Center for Research, Teaching and Learning (CTRL), cross-disciplinary learning communities, academic units, and special research and development projects to build an inclusive culture and a climate in which all faculty, students, and staff can thrive.

CTRL is central to advancing quality teaching. The center runs faculty orientation. It offers many training sessions and facilitates discussions that have a direct impact on faculty and students in terms of curriculum development, instructional best practices, and inclusive pedagogy.[130] Since 2018, CTRL has offered more than 570 workshops; 194 have focused on inclusive pedagogy. Examples include Equity and Rigor: Using Transparency and Flexibility to Promote Student Achievement, Confronting Hate on Campus: Strategies and Challenges for Classroom Faculty, and Open Practice Is Equitable Practice: Integrating Open Practices into Your Teaching and Research. Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) facilitated by CTRL have been a tool to support AU faculty and their DEI and antiracist efforts for more than six years. Examples include:

- Antiracist Pedagogy FLC brought together faculty from multiple disciplines to support each other in building skills for antiracist methodologies in the classroom (AY19–20).

- Department Chairs and Program Directors FLC brought together faculty in academic leadership positions across campus for a community of practice focused on recognizing implicit and explicit bias and ways to enact equity and antiracist practices in their leadership roles.

- CTRL sponsors inclusive pedagogy fellows, who support building capacity across campus.

- CTRL promotes a culture of assessment. Launched in 2022, the Course Design Institute is an intensive professional development opportunity to support faculty in developing learning outcomes, aligned assessments, and learning experiences, with a focus on equity and inclusion. In 2023, the Student Partners program was established to work with undergraduate students to bring the student voice and perspective to teaching and learning professional development.

Beyond CTRL and university-wide efforts, individual units have developed initiatives to improve inclusive pedagogy. Each unit has identified at least one designated faculty or staff member to participate in the President's Council on Diversity and Inclusion.[131] Additionally, units have developed their own strategies for improving inclusive pedagogies, including coaching, faculty learning communities, and syllabus analysis.

For example, CAS's Initiative for STEM Education, Equity, and Ethics facilitated the Driving Change FLC for computer science, physics, biology, chemistry, environmental science, and pre-med faculty.[132] In the first semester, they engaged with relevant readings, guest speakers, and self-reflective activities and created a STEM equity-minded community of practice to build a more inclusive environment among science faculty.

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127 *Equitable and Inclusive Hiring of Faculty: A Guide for Fulltime Faculty Searches,* available on the dean of academic affairs website: http://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/policies.cfm [SII.C5]

128 Antiracist Praxis Subject Guide on the web at https://subjectguides.library.american.edu/antiracistpraxis

129 AU inclusive hiring of faculty toolkit as an example of policies and procedures related to faculty qualifications. [SIII.C2]

130 CTRL faculty training and professional development. [SIII.C2]

131 President's Council on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion website. (https://www.american.edu/cas/driving-change/index.cfm) [SIV.C6]

132 Initiative for STEM Education, Equity, and Ethics website. [SIII.C8]

Pilot projects during the FLC's second semester focused on developing a core set of equity-minded and antiracist competencies to inform inclusive pedagogical practices to enhance learning for all students, encourage students of color to pursue science, and address issues that influence AU's ability to retain students of color.

Special research and development initiatives have also been launched in critical areas. From 2020 to 2022, AU's NSF-funded ADVANCE Catalyst project documented systemic barriers for women and faculty from historically underrepresented groups in STEM fields, which include physical sciences, life sciences, and social sciences.[133] Among other important findings, the Catalyst project identified a higher rate of departures for women STEM faculty from underrepresented groups compared to other demographic groups.

AU's ADVANCE team designed a follow-up project to address the Catalyst insights. The resulting three-year, $1 million ADVANCE Adaptation Award will enable the launch and evaluation of programs to enhance the experience of new and current women faculty and faculty of color at AU. Specifically, the hope with these initiatives is to observe significant and sustainable change in the demographics of STEM faculty at AU as well as the professional and personal satisfaction of all faculty and, ultimately, all students. Additionally, the grant provides for a centralized office to develop, communicate, and implement these programs for the AU community. Proposed programs include a range of initiatives, including mini-grants to support research programs, a mentoring program for tenure-line and term faculty, and an annual symposium on gender and race in STEM. The associate dean of faculty and inclusive excellence supports ADVANCE AU. This position was inaugurated in fall 2016 and has always been filled by a term faculty member. The hope with these initiatives is to observe significant and sustainable change in the demographics of STEM faculty at AU as well as the professional and personal satisfaction of all faculty and, ultimately, all students.

A CTRL senior research fellow conducted a research study of AU Faculty and FLCs in 2022 to examine the ways FLC members enacted DEI and antiracist practices and the impact of FLC participation on development of faculty as equity-minded leaders. Fifteen faculty from a range of disciplines and departments participated in semi-structured interviews (60 to 75 minutes in length) to discuss their perspectives on how faculty advance equity and antiracism at AU. Key findings from the research were shared with the broader AU community at the August 2022 faculty workshops and are being prepared for a scholarly manuscript. Several themes from the study point to directions for further initiatives, including employing culturally responsive curriculum, increasing racial literacy, building positive relationships, collaborating with colleagues, and creating counterspaces.[134]

Institutional Support

The university is drawing lessons from the pandemic about how to support faculty in their teaching, scholarship, and service roles. With respect to teaching, significant investments are being made to upgrade audiovisual capacities in classrooms, including 13 HyFlex classrooms that deliver hybrid learning and another 150 classrooms with some HyFlex capabilities. CTRL continues to expand its offerings of events, workshops, and presentations in which faculty share teaching ideas and resources and learn about innovations in instructional design and pedagogy. These include targeted support for online instruction based on best practices, including lessons learned from COVID-19.

In January 2024, CTRL hosted the 35th annual Ann Ferren Conference on Teaching, Research, and Learning, a staple of AU's long-standing commitment to the scholar-teacher ideal. The conference typically includes more than 500 registrants looking to improve pedagogy at AU and beyond. Other areas of this *Self-Study* describe significant progress in building financial support and administrative infrastructure for faculty research and creative work. In this section of the report, it is important to note how these developments contribute to student learning: instructors who are active in research or creative work and engaged with their disciplines transmit to students not only up-to-date knowledge but also enthusiasm, curiosity, and deep understanding of how knowledge advances. Likewise, with the right opportunities for experiential learning in place, students can grow into collaborators with faculty in laboratories, studios, and other spaces of discovery and creation.

Pedagogy evolved significantly across the university during the pandemic. Faculty learned not just to deliver content via Zoom but also to effectively conduct group discussions and conduct active and experiential learning exercises. To assist faculty, multiple units developed faculty programs, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning, University Library, and Office of Digital Learning and Strategy, which held multiple workshops and offered a curated resource library. Additionally, the university hired curriculum design specialists to support faculty, especially during the migration to the Canvas learning management system in AY20–21.

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133 ADVANCE AU at https://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/advance/. [SIII.C2]

134 CTRL Faculty Workshop Session 801: Working Towards Antiracism and Equity in 2022: Perspectives from AU Faculty, August 2022, and 34th Annual Ann Ferren Conference—January 2023. [SIII.C2a, SIII.C2d]

Expectations for Faculty and Assessment of Teaching

Reward structures matter in improving inclusive pedagogy. As AU's Dr. Corbin Campbell argues in her book, *Great College Teaching: Where It Happens and How to Foster It Everywhere,* there are two important aspects of rewards structures: 1) the evaluation system itself must be unbiased and equitable, and 2) the evaluation system should reward the improvement of inclusive pedagogy.[135] Unfortunately, traditional faculty evaluation and reward structures at research universities have often come short in both of these aims.

Faculty teaching evaluations have often relied on student evaluations of teaching (SETs), which are infamously biased instruments by race and gender.[136] Additionally, reward structures typically focus on publication venues, which themselves are inequitable outlets, and therefore build expertise that is not equitable for the classroom. AU has sought to correct both barriers to inclusive pedagogy.

Tenure, promotion, and reappointment processes represent an important way to achieve multiple goals. These include clarifying the university's expectations of faculty; supporting inclusive faculty career development; improving the faculty experience; and increasing retention of excellent faculty. Both the provost and deputy provost/dean of faculty work closely with the Senate Committee on Faculty Actions and deans of the academic units to undertake major revisions of each academic unit's faculty guideline documents with a focus on recognizing and rewarding 1) diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism-related achievements in teaching, scholarship, and service, many of which have been historically marginalized and undervalued; and 2) cross-disciplinary scholarship outputs and impacts, many of which are missed by standard research metrics.[137] As of spring 2023, units are undertaking revisions of both their tenure-line and term faculty guidelines to reflect these priorities to ensure consistent application across all full-time faculty.

By highlighting a broader and deeper array of excellence pathways and indicators for assessing academic achievement, the criteria in these revised documents signal AU's priorities and expectations not only to faculty, staff, and students, but also to potential future faculty and external reviewers who assess faculty applications for tenure and promotion.

All units will have completed the revision process by spring 2024, thereby satisfying action step 1, goal 3 of *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence,* phase 2, which calls on the campus to "complete revisions to units' tenure and promotion guidelines, while working to analyze and correct any misalignment of these guidelines with both the norms of antiracist work and the recommendations of the Beyond SETs Task Force."[138]

The Beyond SETs report released by the Faculty Senate in 2019 instigated changes to the teaching evaluation system.[139] Beyond SETs was adopted by the Faculty Senate and moves away from the use of SETs as the primary form of evaluation in favor of more holistic teaching performance assessments. Beyond SETs de-emphasizes numeric scores on SETs surveys in favor of a teaching portfolio approach. Faculty who wish to apply for tenure, continuing appointment, promotion, or an initial multiyear term contract are now required to submit a teaching portfolio with five separate methods of assessment represented, including two forms of self-assessment (one of which is a comprehensive narrative), one form of peer assessment, one form of student assessment other than SETs numeric scores, and the numeric scores. Those charged with evaluating portfolios must give at least 50 percent weight to the non-numeric information in the overall assessment.

The Beyond SETs teaching evaluation system is an important step toward a more holistic and fairer way to assess faculty performance. Nevertheless, its implementation has been more cumbersome than expected because of the multiple elements at play. It will take time to get the process to run more smoothly. CTRL has developed several resources and recommendations for faculty developing a teaching portfolio, including a focus on inclusive pedagogy. CTRL also offers several options for faculty to develop evidence of their teaching and their students' learning outside of the SETs, including a midsemester feedback survey and focus groups of students. In addition, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment designed a new template for reporting SET numeric scores that mitigates bias through aggregation of results across semesters and courses and mitigates problems of false precision by reporting medians rather than means.

Yet another important tool for clarifying the university's expectations for faculty is the annual performance review—a largely decentralized process in which unit-level committees assess each full-time faculty member's teaching, service, and scholarship and/or currency in the field for purposes of calculating merit raises. Starting in 2023, the university

135 Campbell, Corbin M. *Great College Teaching : Where It Happens and How to Foster It Everywhere,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2023. Print.

136 Boring, A., K. Ottoboni, and P. Stark. 2016. "Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness." *Science Open Research.* Doi: https://doi.org/10.14293/s2199-1006.1.sor-edu.aetbzc.v1.

137 American University Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment Guidelines Updates: Resource 5 Scholarship at https://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/upload/tpr-update_5_scholarship.pdf. Promotion and tenure guidelines. [SIII.C2]

138 AU Inclusive Excellence Plan Policies and procedures for evaluating the teaching of students and Teaching Portfolios: Guidance from the 2019 Beyond SETs Task Force Final Report at https://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/upload/Beyond-SETs-Guidance.pdf. [SIII.C2]

139 Beyond SETs at https://www.american.edu/provost/academicaffairs/upload/Beyond-SETs-Guidance.pdf.

employed a new online platform known as Elements, where faculty can report their activities comprehensively.

Term Faculty and Continuing Appointments

Recommendation 3 from the 2014 Middle States evaluation report called on AU to carefully monitor faculty perceptions and degree of satisfaction with the previous university administration's decision to increase the ratio of term faculty to tenure-line faculty. Surveys of faculty over time revealed that term faculty felt less valued than tenured faculty and desired a less administratively burdensome and more efficient process of handling term faculty employment arrangements. Based on these insights, a task force was formed, which resulted in a major revision of the Faculty Manual to create a new category of full-time, non-tenure-track faculty known as continuing appointment faculty.[140]

When non-tenure-track faculty join AU, they will typically begin on a series of one-year contracts with renewals dependent on their performance, budget considerations, and teaching needs. Following a performance review in year three, they will be eligible for a three-year contract. In year six, assuming continued strong performance, they will apply for a continuing appointment. Faculty granted continuing appointment will no longer be required to apply for reappointment. Their employment will be assumed to continue unless performance, budgetary, or enrollment problems arise. These Faculty Manual changes were approved by the Faculty Senate and the Board of Trustees in May 2023. Term faculty will begin applying for continuing appointments beginning in AY23–24.[141]

BUILDING A CULTURE OF ASSESSMENT[142]

AU has a long history of assessing student learning to improve its programs. As early as the 2004 *Self-Study*, the university documented that all programs had learning outcomes, and it had developed processes for completing annual assessment reports. Over the last two decades AU has made key strides:

- strengthening its organizational structures for assessment;
- increasing faculty skills and involvement in the assessment process;
- streamlining assessment plans to make them simple, meaningful, and doable;
- improving assessment methods with a focus on more direct assessment; and
- increasing the percentage of units using assessment results to improve student learning.

Since the 2014 *Self-Study*, the university has continued this work while engaging in additional large-scale assessment initiatives.

In addition to its long-standing focus on assessment processes, AU has made significant improvements in its assessment of new and emerging learning experiences. The new AU Core Curriculum is an outcomes-focused program that in AY17–18 required new faculty governance structures and assessment policies, plans, and practices. The development of online graduate degree programs provided opportunities to integrate such programs into current assessment processes. While assessments were difficult during the pandemic, AU took the opportunity to reflect on the assessment plans of long-standing programs, with units shifting focus from assessment implementation to updating and improving assessment planning by reviewing learning outcomes, assessment plans, and curriculum maps.

This section of the report highlights the many ways that AU works on multiple fronts to enact its assessment philosophy, incorporates best practices in assessment as outlined by the Middle States standards, and continues to build and strengthen a culture of assessment.

Organizational Structures

Assessment of student learning is faculty-driven with administrative and professional development support provided by structural entities across the institution. The main offices or committees that support assessment are:

- Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) provides administrative support and training.
- Committee on Learning Assessment (COLA) sets expectations for assessment through the development of policies and procedures. This Faculty Senate committee reviews the annual reports of programs, liaisons with the deans, and communicates expectations.
- AU Core Membership Committee works with nine subcommittees assigned to different areas of the core

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140 Faculty Manual; Starr, P., Jackson, M.C., and Puskar, A. (August 31, 2022) *Toward a New Term Faculty Reappointment Process* [Memorandum, [SII.C9] and Office of the Provost. https://www.american.edu/provost/communications/august-31-2022.cfm Faculty Handbook; Policies and procedures related to faculty qualifications. [SIII.C2]

141 Starr, P., and Wilkins, V.M. (2023, June 29) *Update on Continuing Appointment Implementation* [Memorandum]. Office of the Provost. https://www.american.edu/provost/communications/june-29-2023.cfm. [SIII.C2]

142 Details about assessment are available on the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment website at http://www/american.edu/provost/assessment.

Curriculum. The subcommittees of this Faculty Senate committee ensure courses are in alignment with the core's learning outcomes and conduct ongoing, periodic course assessments.

- School assessment committees provides structural support for assessment with amount and type of support varying across schools.
- CTRL supports teaching, research, and learning development, including helping faculty to articulate course learning outcomes and develop effective course assessments.

The assessment structures enable the university to put faculty at the center of assessment decisions. COLA members drive decisions about the expectations for assessment, and faculty determine learning outcomes and assessment methods. Faculty conduct the assessments, evaluate the meaning of results, and develop action plans. At the same time, all programs have the flexibility to adopt practices that work best for their departments and disciplines. Schools and teaching units determine their own structures and processes to meet COLA's annual reporting requirements.

A particularly successful example of an assessment structure is the Kogod Curriculum Assessment Committee, which brings together faculty from all the different departments and the senior associate dean for academic affairs and associate dean for academic programs. This committee develops and executes assessment activities; communicates results to relevant audiences; and proposes curricular, programmatic, and pedagogical improvements based on assessment findings. The committee centers assessment in a structure that transcends the separate units and allows for high-level engagement around student learning in the school overall.

COLA Vision and Annual Program-Level Assessment

COLA was created in 2003 to oversee the assessment process in separate academic units and is composed of members from each college/school as well as AU Core. In spring 2022, COLA reviewed its mission and wrote the following vision statement[143] for assessment of student learning:

American University is committed to setting and addressing rigorous, relevant, and measurable learning outcomes for all programs. AU actively supports program faculty in creating and maintaining a process for assessment data analysis in order for programs to recognize their respective areas of curricular strength and need and for faculty to make related program improvements to better serve their students.

All programs, graduate and undergraduate, online and residential, as well as separately accredited programs follow the same procedures and have the same expectations for assessing student learning.

Programs are required to implement assessment plans and submit annual assessment reports through the university's Nuventive system to COLA. COLA members review annual reports and provide peer feedback to help programs clarify their goals and learning objectives; select appropriate assessment methods, standards, or targets for success; assess progress toward goals; and use information for continuous improvement to achieve excellence in student learning.

Each year, OIRA, CTRL, and COLA offer training workshops and other faculty development programs around assessment to promote a culture of faculty and staff engagement and demonstrate best practices.[144] OIRA also maintains a website and other online resources to provide information on all aspects of assessment. In recent years, COLA has launched a series of events to highlight units or programs doing excellent work and added a place for faculty to report and receive credit for their assessment work in AU's faculty assessment and reporting system, Elements.

In 2020, COLA launched an initiative to have programs 1) reaffirm their learning outcomes, 2) review and update their assessment plans, and 3) complete course mapping. As of spring 2023, 78 percent of degree programs across campus had revisited their program learning outcomes for currency, and 34 percent updated their assessment plans. Almost 57 percent updated or resubmitted curriculum maps.[145]

The university has made significant progress with assessment of student learning over the last 20 years. Table 5.2 on page 78 summarizes key metrics on the status of assessment during the 2021 and 2022 academic year reporting periods. An analysis of fall 2022 data from COLA reports finds that although all programs have learning outcomes and assessment plans, success is not across the board for data collection and results reporting. While there is an overall culture of assessment and widespread examples of the use of assessment to improve programs, there are still a few programs where this is not the case. The work is time-consuming, and the university would benefit from considering ways to reward great work in this area.

WCL is not included in the COLA results above because it follows a separate process. The law school adopted institutional learning outcomes pursuant to American Bar Association standards for law school accreditation, and course-specific learning outcomes are listed in each syllabus

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143 Demonstrates periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes. [SV.C5]

144 Examples of workshops are in supporting documentation. [SIII.C2] Evidence of faculty training in course and programmatic assessment.

145 Source: Nuventive: AU's Learning Outcomes Assessment System. [SIII.C5] Examples of curriculum maps in supporting documentation. [SV.C1]

Table 5.2. 2021 and 2022 assessment by the numbers

139	Total programs (as defined for assessment purposes)
139	Programs with assessment plans
635	Current learning outcomes associated with programs
370	Learning outcomes assessed
758	Assessment results reported
450	Results where unit met or exceeded the expected target
177	Results where unit is progressing as planned
186	Reports of use of results

Source: Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

and assessed by faculty. Also, the Pence Law Library adopted learning outcomes specific to the library.[146]

Celebrating the Use of Assessment

AU's assessment processes focus on enhancing learning rather than accountability. Findings that identify opportunities for improvement are seen as a success. Since the 2014 *Self-Study*, more than 1,250 uses of results are recorded in AU's assessment reporting system. During AY22–23, programs documented 114 uses of assessment to improve pedagogy, 54 examples of improving student assessments, and 48 instances of revising course curriculum.[147] Below are a few examples of the types of changes implemented by faculty in response to assessment results:

- Government Department: Introduced academic writing assignments and instruction in lower level required courses after finding students struggled to write effective literature reviews.

- Anthropology Department: Added a new unit to required coursework and a speaker series to address weak assessment results for a learning outcome.

- School of Education's MEd in Education Policy and Leadership: Instituted a common assignment on a national policy issue each semester after discovering that while students met its learning objective to "frame problems and critically analyze education policies and leadership strategies," the assignments reviewed did not exemplify the program's equity priority.

AU's assessment of student learning reporting system was upgraded in fall 2023, providing additional ways to summarize results and share analysis.

Student Learning and Assessment at the Course Level

All courses are evaluated using a SETs survey that now asks students if learning outcomes of the course were clear and if activities, readings, and assignments reflected the learning objectives for the course. Overall, evaluations indicate that communication of course outcomes has been successful. More than 86 percent of students indicate that "the learning outcomes for the course were clear," and 88 percent indicate that "the activities, readings, and assignments reflected the learning objectives for the course."[148]

As of fall 2023, 67 percent of students give their courses a score of five out of five on how much they learned ("I have a greater understanding of the subject matter for this course."), and 56 percent gave a five out of five on course rigor ("This course challenged me to do my best work."), indicating that they are very satisfied with what they learned in the course.

Assessing the AU Core Curriculum

The AU Core Membership Committee takes a federated approach to assessment, recognizing that assessment methods must be flexible to accommodate different needs and contexts. Subcommittees assigned to different areas of the AU Core maintain the program's fidelity by ensuring that

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146 Washington College of Law learning outcomes are published on its website: https://www.wcl.american.edu/academics/academicservices/oaa/learning-outcomes/. The Pence Law Library learning outcomes are published in its strategic plan (available in supporting documentation, standard I.)

147 Reported as of December 2023. [SV.C3]

148 Student Evaluation of Teaching results. [SIII.C2e]

learning outcomes are taught consistently and effectively, regardless of instructor or content differences. They also help ensure that assignments align with learning expectations. Responsibility for assessing the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved by individual students is the responsibility of individual instructors.

All AU Core subcommittees receive three weeks of learning material to read and discuss the purpose of assessment, issues of equity and assessment, and practicing assessment. Participants completed readings and engaged in discussions about effective learning assessment, value of shared learning outcomes, learning outcome mapping, and using assessment data for course improvement.

The Written Communication and Information Literacy I requirement boasts thoughtful, continuous assessment. One recent effort was a two-year study of growth in student metacognition and self-efficacy using a mixed-methods approach. Using a student survey as part of the quantitative study, it found statistically significant gains for the mean of each survey question, suggesting that the college writing sequence results in increased metacognitive awareness and self-efficacy with regard to writing.

The AUx program routinely assesses itself. For example, between fall 2016 and fall 2019, AUx1 and AUx2 were assessed via student focus groups and online surveys (including SETs), and interviews with instructors and peer facilitators. Findings of these projects informed substantive revision of both courses' learning outcomes, organization, and assignments to better align with the aims of these courses, improving their alignment with the AU Core overall and meeting changing student needs.

The Complex Problems program, by contrast, numbers more than 130 faculty annually from every department/program. This has proven to be a complex problem for administration of assessment given the absence of a departmental structure and the variety of offerings. Nevertheless, it has been assessed using pretests/posttests, student surveys, focus groups, and standardized instruments designed to gauge its critical reading learning outcome.

The program formed the Collaboration Initiative in 2021 as a student-faculty partnership for assessment.[149] The first Collaboration Initiative surveyed 660 students in approximately 30 seminars and found that students credited the course with having increased their awareness and understanding of real-world issues.

Core subcommittees have developed three to six research questions that address each learning outcome at least once. The first phase of assessment has concentrated on how well the learning outcomes are being taught (i.e., the fidelity of the curriculum) and proceeds to direct assessment or quality improvement as appropriate.

The subcommittees for Habits of Mind developed research questions tightly aligned to a learning outcome in each of the five areas. Each question was designed to see not just if but how effectively a learning outcome was being taught. The subcommittees reviewed course materials for 129 course sections across 59 courses and 94 instructors and provided feedback to relevant teaching units in the interest of quality improvement. It conducts faculty focus groups to gain an in-depth understanding of how learning outcomes are implemented in the classroom.

Evidence of Success: The Campus Climate Survey

The spring 2023 results from the American University Campus Climate Survey[150] affirm the strong academic experiences for both undergraduates and graduates, showing significant progress on many key metrics. The results show statistically significant improvements on "I am learning how to view issues from different perspectives" (65 percent) and "my courses are intellectually challenging" (76 percent). One of the largest improvements was in "faculty manage classrooms to ensure respectful treatment of all perspectives" (84 percent up from 75 percent in 2017). Other examples are available in the supporting documentation.

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149 The Collaboration Initiative Student-Faculty Partnership at https://www.american.edu/provost/undergrad/core/complex-problems/initiatives.cfm [SV.C1, SV.C2]

150 Campus Climate Survey Report 2023. [SV.C5,SI.C1,SVI.C1]

Evidence of Success: We Know Success Data[151]

American University's We Know Success website provides easy access to employment outcomes. Based on May 2022 graduation census data,[152] AU undergraduates find employment in a variety of fields, across the government (13 percent), nonprofit (24 percent), and for-profit sectors (61 percent). Sixty-three percent of those working report that their positions directly relate to their degrees, and another 29 percent say that it indirectly relates. Seventy percent were working within six months of graduation, 16 percent were attending graduate or professional school, and 6 percent were doing both.

For master's graduates, 87 percent are working within six months after graduation, with another 6 percent pursuing further education or pursuing further education and working. Sixty-five percent of those working are doing so in positions that directly relate to their degrees, and 30 percent in positions that indirectly relate.

Program Reviews and Program Accreditation

An academic program review is conducted for every academic and/or teaching unit once every eight years according to a schedule posted on the dean of faculty's website. This review is a mission-centered, evidence-based learning process to identify opportunities for units to improve their programs. The process involves an eight-to-nine-month self-study by the unit, followed by an external review and site visit. The external review team includes a minimum of two scholars or professionals of significant stature in the field. The process culminates in a set of strategic recommendations to move unit programs to higher levels of distinction and effectiveness.

In 2022, the program review process was modified to make even more explicit the focus on academic achievement, including focusing on learning outcomes and assessment. While use of this format is relatively new, external reviewers have already given positive feedback on assessment in Mathematics and Statistics, Biology, and Justice, Law and Criminology departments.

In AY22–23, three programs were reviewed by their national accreditation organizations. The results provide external validation that AU's programs are among the best in the country.[153] The reports from the visiting teams found the following:

- **Kogod School of Business**—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business reaccredited the business school in February 2023. The report is appreciative of the process made in strategic positioning, securing required faculty, staff, and financial resources, thought leadership, and learner success. The school passed on all standards.

- **School of Communication**—The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications review was completed in February 2022 and reaccredited SOC's undergraduate and graduate public relations/strategic communication and journalism programs. The programs met all standards, and the report highlighted the programs' engaged faculty, academic rigor, and experiential learning opportunities for students.

- **School of Education**—The Council for the Accreditation of Education Programs review, completed in April 2023, recommended no areas of improvement for SOE programs. The school passed on all standards and received excellent feedback on its programs' curricula, data systems, core values, and partnerships.

CONCLUSION

At the center of American University´s mission, learning is conceived as a holistic and integrative endeavor involving students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Committed to high-quality teaching both at the undergraduate and graduate/professional studies levels and to a continuing exploration into the multiple intersections between learning and scholarship, American University firmly believes that academic excellence can be achieved only through a fully grounded inclusive pedagogy.

Learning at AU exists inside and outside the classroom. An essential part of this approach is a commitment to experiential learning embedded in many courses across disciplines. Small, discussion-based classes foster a critical thinking approach, which is paramount to educating successful professionals and well-rounded human beings. AU Core Curriculum for undergraduates speaks to an integrative and holistic approach that privileges inquiry and problem solving, along with an increasing antiracist curriculum across disciplines. AU strives to ensure that equity and social justice are embedded into the student learning experience as part of the university's mission to prepare students for an increasingly global and complex world.

The AU graduate experience exposes students to an extensive program portfolio that includes a wide range of doctoral and master's degrees and graduate certificates. The design and delivery of these programs by individual academic units ensures optimal faculty engagement and synergies with research in the schools and research centers. Foremost a residential university,

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151 We Know Success website at https://www.american.edu/weknowsuccess/. [SI.3]

152 Graduation Census Report May 2022. [SV.C3]

153 Evidence of the regular review of academic programs: specialized accreditation reports. Sample external review provided in supporting documentation. [SIII.C2]

AU has incorporated some online courses and programs, particularly at the graduate level and through lifelong learning.

A diverse and committed body of faculty and a shared governance structure foster an inclusive and effective pedagogy to ensure student thriving. Full-time faculty at AU include tenure-line colleagues and full-time non-tenure-line colleagues with single-year contracts, multiyear contracts, and continuing appointments. The total number of faculty at AU is 965; 76.1 percent are full-time. In fall 2022, 51.2 percent of full-time faculty were tenured and tenure-track, and 48.1 percent were term faculty. AU also benefits from a robust body of part-time faculty. The university's location in Washington, DC, facilitates recruitment of adjunct faculty who are experts in their fields working in high-profile positions. Faculty hiring and retention is taken seriously at AU as an essential element to guarantee a diverse body of faculty that mirrors the student body, develops a curriculum attuned to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and culls from diverse understandings and scholarly networks.

Assessment crosses all levels of learning. AU has a long history of assessing student learning to improve its programs. Over the last two decades, AU strengthened its organizational structures for assessment; increased faculty skills and involvement in the assessment process; streamlined assessment plans to make them simple, meaningful, and doable; improved its assessment methods with a focus on more direct assessment; and increased the percent of units using assessment results to improve student learning. Since the 2014 *Self-Study,* the university has continued this work while engaging in additional large-scale assessment initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Build focused hiring and retention initiatives to enhance recruitment and conditions for thriving for faculty of color and historically marginalized faculty.

Build AU infrastructure and expertise to bring online graduate programs in house to reduce overreliance on external partners with consideration for budget allocations, revenue sharing agreements, legal agreements, and university policies.

Increase support for high-impact experiential learning and research opportunities with a focus on collaborative efforts to overcome the historic siloing of these activities in multiple units.

Enhance support of student learning assessment from academic leadership in the units/schools and ensure that all schools have structures and processes in place to facilitate effective assessment of student learning.

Continue efforts to strengthen data-driven decision-making for graduate admissions and graduate program development, including investigating the availability of external market data.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Examples of key documents used to inform this chapter:

AU Catalog

Academic Regulations

Curriculog Templates and Procedures

Reports from AU's Assessment System, Nuventive

AU Inclusive Hiring Faculty Toolkit

Academic Program Review

6 COMMUNITY: Embodying Our Values Through Inclusive Excellence and Effective Partnerships

Community is a pivotal guiding principle for American University (AU). In addition to scholarship and learning, it is one of the three central themes of AU's *Changemakers for a Changing World* strategic plan.[154] As that document states, AU regards itself as "an institution deeply rooted in community—locally, nationally, and globally— and as our community grows stronger, so do we." It further says, the "commitment to community is based on a shared set of values that affect our work—internal and external," which includes "inquiry, human dignity, and inclusive excellence." Externally, AU continues to serve as a valued and trusted community anchor. Its partnerships span research collaborations, community-based and experiential learning, career opportunities, advanced/professional education for employees, and business development opportunities.

As an institution of passionate changemakers situated in Washington, DC, AU students, faculty, and staff are committed to building connections and having impact the university's campus but also with its neighbors, the nation's policymakers, and the global world. As a result, AU's community is multifaceted and dynamic, anchored both on and off campus. AU's community members lead with the university's values and are constantly engaged in work to create stronger, more inclusive environments where everyone has agency and voice.

Over the past several years, AU has witnessed its community's strength and resilience and seen some clear challenges also arise. For example, AU pulled together to successfully confront the acute trials of the pandemic and emerged with a clear sense of common purpose. But in adapting to hybrid work and the changing landscape of higher education, AU has faced difficulties in creating a connected community with a strong sense of belonging. While AU's efforts to focus on supporting its people have been significant, AU's first staff union strike, student protests, hate-based incidents and climate survey results have highlighted the deep importance of enhancing institutional trust and creating meaningful opportunities for broad engagement and shared decision-making. While the challenges are significant and are present across the landscape of higher education in the United States, AU remains fundamentally committed to building and rebuilding the community and is deeply aware of the need for continual and intentional action. This chapter will center on four main areas

of work, which are key pillars of a thriving community and match the core standards outlined by Middle States: belonging (inclusive excellence); trust (governance); integrity (ethics); and openness (partnerships).

In doing so, this chapter will also highlight how AU is fulfilling the standards of accreditation, with a particular focus on two: standard II (ethics and integrity) and standard VII (leadership, governance, and administration).

BELONGING (INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE)

Both *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence* (IE) and the university's overarching seven-year strategic plan focus on the importance of all AU community members feeling a sense of belonging on campus. When community members have a sense of belonging, they feel that others on campus value, support, and respect them. Importantly, a sense of belonging is tightly linked to strong positive outcomes for both individuals and the campus as a whole, including academic and job performance, engagement and retention, effective collaboration, and enhanced problem-solving.[155]

Developing a sense of belonging on campus does not necessarily happen automatically nor evenly for all faculty, staff, and students. Especially post-pandemic, AU students, faculty, and staff are craving connection more than ever but are finding it more challenging to achieve, especially in our new hybrid work environment.[156] Even as AU is actively working to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion, social inequities continue to shape everyday interactions on our campus, resulting in a lower reported sense of belonging for faculty, staff, and students.[157] LGBTQ+ student community members also report feeling a lower sense of psychological safety on campus as compared to their peers and communicate concerns about not always feeling fully supported on campus in their ongoing discussions with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion.

In response, AU is engaged in a range of cross-campus efforts aimed to build a more equitable sense of belonging for the entire community, with specific attention to creating

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154 For details on the community theme please see AU's strategic plan provided in supporting documentation.

155 Strayhorn, T.L. (2019.) *College Students' Sense of Belonging a Key to Educational Success for All Students,* Routledge.

156 For details of staff and student perspectives on connections, please see the staff hybrid work survey results and the student transition survey results in supporting documentation. [SVI.C13]

157 For details on students' sense of belonging, please see AU's Campus Climate Survey results in supporting documentation. Campus Climate Assessments. [SII.C2]

affirming affinity spaces that are open to all but that center on communities of color and other historically marginalized identities. In addition, the university is focusing on helping leaders and managers build skills to create authentic connections and engagement in the post-pandemic hybrid work context. Guided by the goals and actions in the strategic and IE plans, campus partners from a range of offices including student affairs, human resources, and academic affairs, are a part of the broader effort.

Communicating Welcome and Respect

To set the conditions for a campus climate in which all community members feel welcome and respected, AU recognizes the importance of establishing and communicating policies and practices that advance belonging for all. This work must begin even before community members officially join the community—such as when potential faculty and staff explore job postings and benefits, and prospective students meet with admissions representatives—and must continue through orientation, onboarding, and beyond. While AU has long engaged in such efforts, the current strategic plan has prompted university offices to be more intentional and aligned with each other.

For example, AU aims to communicate the many ways that prospective students from a variety of backgrounds and with a range of interests can find a home on campus. In collaboration with University Communications and Marketing, the AU Admissions Office works to ensure that print and online materials reflect the range of ways students from a variety of backgrounds find academic success and social connections on campus. In addition, the team has added bilingual admissions officers and a Spanish-language website. AU also continually updates the admissions team on campus efforts to engage and support all students, including programming in the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, Academic Support and Access Center, and Kay Spiritual Life Center.

AU works, too, to ensure that all prospective faculty and staff experience a sense of welcome, even in the early stages of the job search. While AU has many forms of support for faculty and staff from a variety of backgrounds, it has not always effectively and clearly communicated that support to prospective employees. To achieve this goal, the university redesigned the diversity and inclusion homepage to coordinate and display key inclusive resources and opportunities for faculty, staff, and students. These include a revised website highlighting features of AU's inclusive benefits, including expanded leave policies for caregivers and emergency childcare backup; enhanced mental health care, including diverse providers, for employees and their families;

and emergency loans for employees experiencing temporary financial hardship.[158]

AU has taken several steps to ensure these intentional communication efforts and messages of inclusion and welcome continue beyond the recruitment process. At the advent of the inclusive excellence plan implementation in 2018, AU established a monthly *Mosaic* e-newsletter sent to the full community, highlighting examples of faculty, staff, students, and alumni from a variety of backgrounds making an impact on inclusive excellence issues on campus and beyond, and elevating relevant events and opportunities across campus. *Mosaic* consistently boasts among the highest open and engagement rates among AU's internal communication efforts. In addition, the university communication teams have been intentional about weaving content aligned with our commitment to inclusive excellence throughout internal and external platforms, such as the weekly campus e-newsletter, campus messages from the leadership, and social media content.

Our policies should also communicate this commitment to belonging and welcome. In one key effort to solidify this commitment, AU passed a name and gender identity policy in 2021 to affirm that students, faculty, staff, and alumni may use a chosen name to identify themselves.[159] A related technical improvement process invites new students to indicate a chosen name and pronouns for those who choose to do so. This name will then be used across all AU systems where a legal name is not required, including course rosters. To date, students have entered more than 8,000 updates to the system. Faculty and staff also can avail themselves of these systems, though there is more work to do on the staff and faculty front to ensure these technology systems are integrated with each other. In addition, in 2021 AU rolled out new software to allow community members to record their name pronunciations for their fellow students and colleagues, with more than 4,000 community participants.

Proactive Outreach for IE

For AU community members to feel welcome on campus, they should see themselves reflected among their classmates, faculty and staff colleagues, leadership, and the alumni community. Even as the university remains a predominantly white, wealthy campus community,[160] AU strives to be a place where all identities and lived experiences are recognized as sources of strength that will be honored on campus. This acknowledgment requires proactive engagement and intentional communication in recruiting community members to campus.

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158 To view AU's employment benefits and expanded leave policies, please see website: https://www.american.edu/hr/benefits/. [SI.C1, SII.C2, SVI.C3].

159 AU Name and Gender Identity Policy in supporting documentation. [SIV.C4]

160 In fall 2022, 13 percent of AU's full-time degree-seeking undergraduates were Pell-grant recipients.

As noted in the thriving chapter, the undergraduate and graduate admissions teams provide intentional outreach to welcome prospective students from schools and communities that have not historically had equal access to higher education, and they have built many partnerships to develop even stronger pipelines to enhance access for underserved communities.[161] These include, for example, new undergraduate partnerships with College Track, which serves first-generation students and those from low-income families in the Washington, DC, region, as well as with Service to School, which supports college access for student veterans. At the graduate level, initiatives like the School of International Service's partnership with the Charles Rangel Fellowship and the School of Public Affairs' Summer Diversity Academy have helped cultivate networks of excellent students and alumni from diverse backgrounds who have enhanced our community and their fields. While these partnerships have ranged in the number of students they have successfully yielded over the years, the community's continued effort and sustained focus hold promise as awareness and momentum build.

It is also essential that AU communicates clearly that all qualified prospective faculty and staff are welcome and will be supported on campus. To be more proactive and inclusive in our outreach, AU has done substantial work on inclusive hiring practices to enhance access and raise awareness of job opportunities. The Office of Human Resources (HR) has developed a detailed toolkit and checklist to shepherd managers through an inclusive hiring process. Created in partnership with HR and the Talent Strategies Team, the inclusive hiring toolkit includes six brief modules which focus on the core steps of the hiring process. From creating an inclusive job description, equitable applicant review, interviewing, and inclusive onboarding, the modules provide checklists and templates for measuring progress along the search. Any hiring manager on campus can request the training and has access to the toolkit. These efforts include increasing the number of automatic job ad placements from eight to more than 40 sites, including several especially visible with diverse communities. This intentional outreach also includes connections with the local DC-area disability community.

AU has taken noticeable steps forward in its push for developing more inclusive hiring practices, but certain gaps remain. The university has invested resources and implemented significant training on inclusive practices when it comes to hiring for senior leadership positions and for all tenure-line positions. There is much more work to be done to ensure that this same level of attention and focus is paid to term faculty searches. To help address this challenge, AU has developed and is beginning to roll out an inclusive hiring toolkit that also focuses on term faculty searches. Next steps involve adapting

an inclusive hiring training for term faculty search committees that responds to the unique contexts and often compressed timelines of term faculty searches.

Importantly, composition of AU's leadership must also reflect a broad range of lived experiences and perspectives. President Burwell is AU's first woman president, and under her leadership, the university has continued to diversify our senior leadership team with the help of the newly developed inclusive hiring training and toolkit. As a result of this focus, the composition of our President's Council (made up of the president's cabinet, academic leadership, and select senior administrators) and of our Dean's Council have both sharply increased in racial diversity. While in 2017 only 17 percent of the President's Council identified as Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, and/or Asian American Pacific Islanders, in 2021 this rose to more than 40 percent. Moreover, the President's Council has continued to maintain high levels of woman-identified leaders, with 63 percent in 2017 and 64 percent in 2021. The Dean's Council also has increased in diversity over the past few years, with a 125 percent increase in deans who identify as people of color and a 22 percent increase in those who identify as women. Given ongoing leadership transitions, AU must stay focused to ensure that these gains are sustained over time.

AU has also bucked national trends by increasing faculty racial diversity among new hires with an average of 47 percent of new tenure-line hires identifying as faculty of color since 2018, compared to 27 percent of new hires nationwide, per the Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System data. However, the university recognizes that it continues to have work to do, especially among Hispanic and Latinx faculty who remain underrepresented at AU.[162] In addition to hiring efforts, AU has also focused effort on building rewards systems that support faculty success and thriving. Much of that work has been concentrated among tenure-line faculty hires, however, while term faculty demographics have remained more stubbornly fixed (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2 on page 86). Given the challenges of the pandemic and beyond, there is work to do to ensure retention of these strong tenure-line hires as well as additional efforts needed to diversify the term faculty ranks.

## Building Relationships and Culture

For AU community members to experience a sense of belonging, they need to engage in meaningful relationships with others on campus. While some of these relationships will happen organically, it is also essential that the university creates authentic contexts within which community members can connect with each other.

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161 AU Neighborhood Partnership. See website at american.edu/communityrelations/neighborhood-partnership/. [SIII.C7]

162 See Human Resource Data: Faculty Headcount in supporting documentation. [SII.C2]

**Table 6.1. Student select race/ethnicity, fall 2018 and fall 2023**
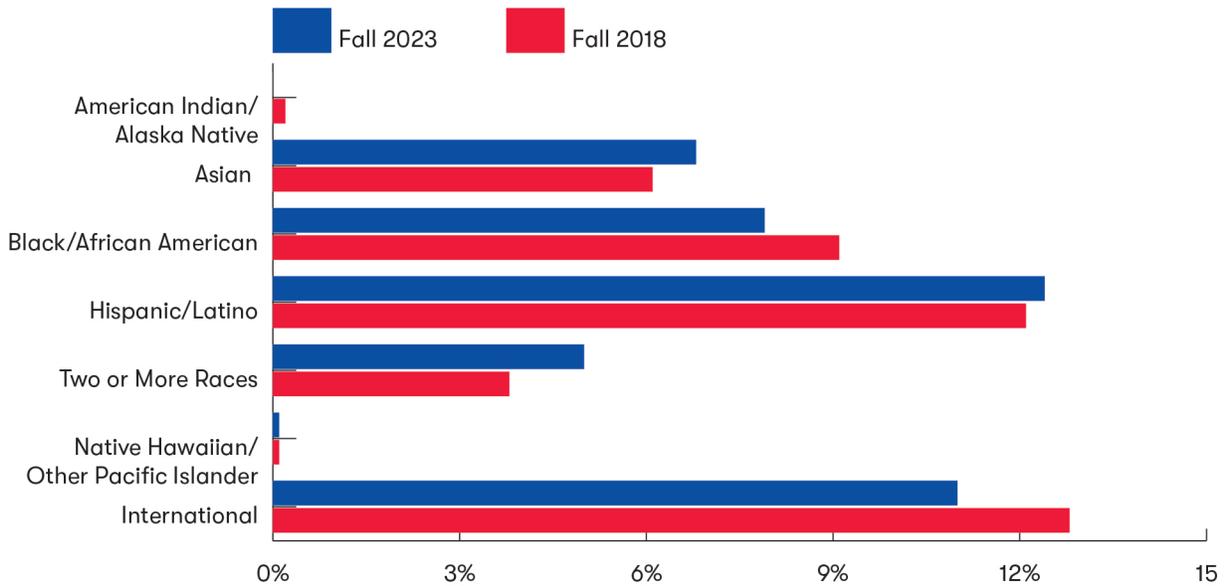
Source: American University Student Enrollment Fall 2018 and Fall 2022, AU data reporting system

**Table 6.2. Faculty* select race/ethnicity, fall 2018 and fall 2023**
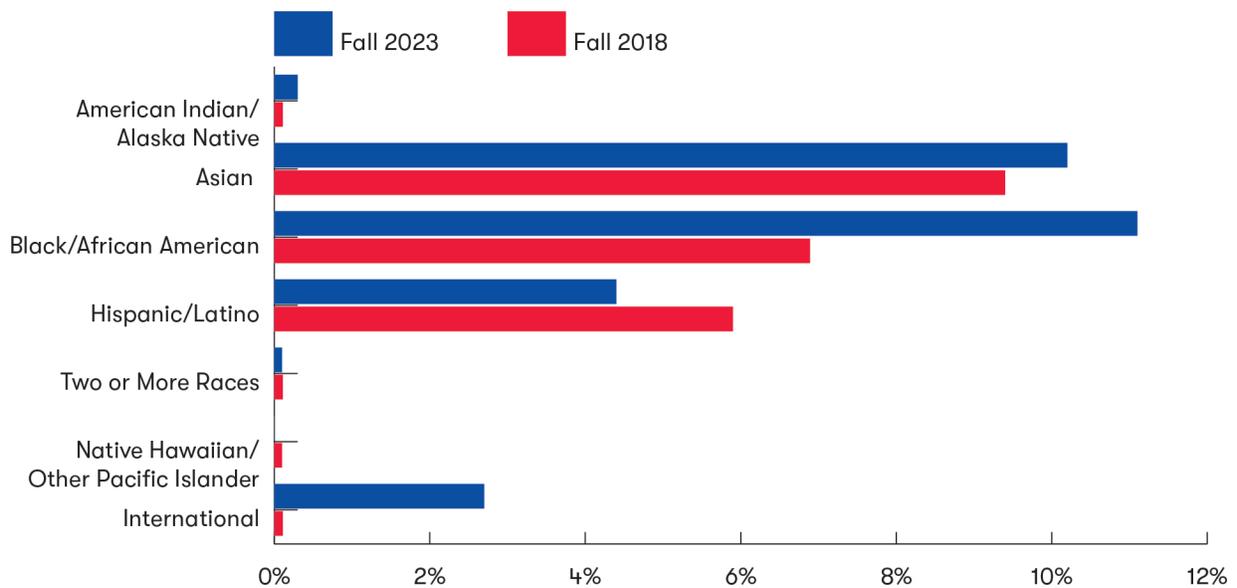
Source: American University IPEDs Human Resources Survey data file

Table 6.3. Staff* select race/ethnicity, fall 2018 and fall 2023
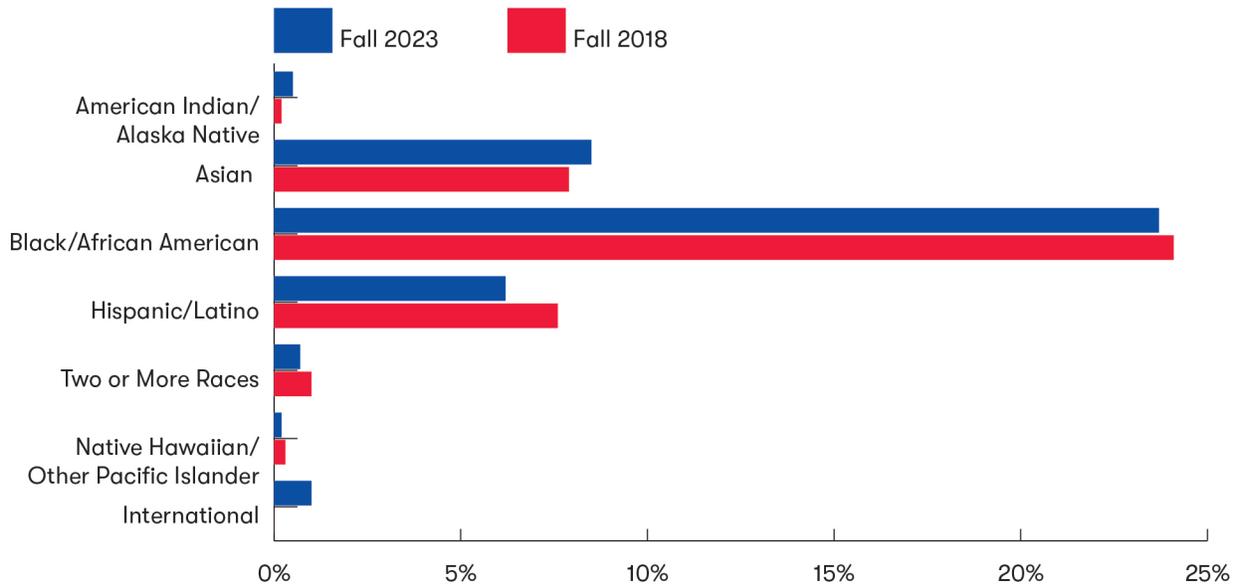
Source: American University One-Year Retention Rates, AU data reporting system

Table 6.4. One-year retention rate
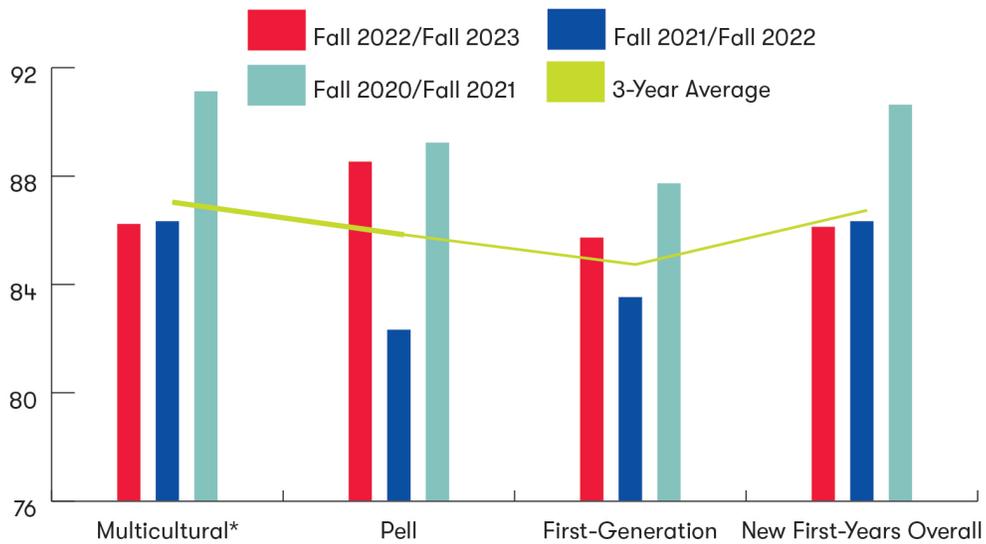
Source: American University IPEDs Human Resources Survey data file

For students, there are many ways in which the university works to cultivate a sense of connectedness. As discussed in the thriving chapter, AU employs numerous strategies to help students build relationships with others who share their social interests, including through student-run clubs and organizations that engage more than 6,800 students in 262 organizations campuswide. In addition, AU's numerous academic honors programs, living-learning communities, and experiential education courses cultivate a sense of belonging to academic and future professional communities. AU also hosts a wide range of athletic programs, both NCAA and recreational, and a series of arts opportunities for academic majors and nonmajors alike.[163] Some recent changes have sought to enhance student life and sense of belonging, especially for multicultural and historically marginalized students. The university opened its first Black and African American Affinity housing for 35-plus students to promote affirming relationships.[164] AU was recognized as a First-gen Forward institution for a series of efforts that included a digital yearbook to connect students, faculty, and staff who are first in their families to attend college.[165] AU's Washington College of Law (WCL) supports immigration-impacted communities through the AU Dream free legal clinic that serves both AU and DC-area undocumented students and their families. Though there is still work to do to ensure that the collective impact of these efforts meaningfully enhances students' collective sense of belonging, our relatively high retention rates among our multicultural, Pell-eligible, and first-generation students speak to the importance of these initiatives.

Physical space, including AU's lush residential campus, is also a key dimension that shapes students' sense of belonging. AU has created several student-centric spaces to encourage casual gatherings. The two most highly visited coffee shops on campus—the Bridge and Davenport Coffee Lounge—are favorite spots for students to gather to study, connect, and just relax. In response to increasing demand for student space, including gathering spots, the University Library led updates to improve academic space for individual and collective study, including flexible study carrels, comfortable spaces for casual reading, and a lounge dedicated to graduate students.

Specific affinity groups, especially those otherwise underrepresented on AU's campus, also have dedicated spaces on campus to build community. For example, AU boasts a veterans' lounge for military-affiliated students, faculty, and staff, which includes computers and supportive literature and resource guides, as well as a meeting and gathering place. The Center for Diversity and Inclusion is a popular programming and casual gathering space designed to support multicultural and LGBTQ+ students staffed with several full-time dedicated professionals, but students also have called for separate

spaces for various identities. AU is excited about plans for the forthcoming Student Thriving Complex, which will offer spaces for wellness and belonging for all students, as well as nurture connections among affinity communities.

Although students are the heart of campus, it is equally important to ensure that faculty and staff are connected with each other and experience a sense of belonging to AU. As part of the efforts to further AU's commitment to inclusive excellence, HR launched the Faculty-Staff Affinity Group program in 2017. Affinity groups, also known as employee resource groups, are a collection of people linked by a common purpose or interest. These common interests can include job functions, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, education, geography, military status, and so on. Currently, AU has seven formally established groups, including Latino and Hispanic, LGBTQ+, Black, Disability+, International, People of Color, and the recently developed Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander faculty-staff affinity groups. The creation of a Military-Connected group is in process.

The groups range in membership from a few dozen to more than 100 members, and each group typically hosts a few events or programs annually. During the pandemic, all activities were virtual and included coffee chats, book clubs, events to address racial trauma, and networking events. As we have emerged from the pandemic, the groups are working to reincorporate more in-person events, though they have faced some challenges given AU's hybrid work context. The groups are, however, finding some success by partnering together on key community-building initiatives including the now-annual MOSAIC Welcome Back community-wide celebration.

Importantly, some faculty-staff affinity groups also have been working more closely with students with shared affinities and identities. One particularly exciting program is the Latino and Hispanic Faculty and Staff Affinity Group's student mentorship program, which launched in 2019 and has engaged more than 100 students over the past four years. While these groups tend to engage more staff than faculty and can sometimes wane in vibrancy according to the current leadership, they hold much promise to continue to support the development of a sense of place and provide a space for both advocacy and support for many AU colleagues.

Another way AU works to help build belonging for staff members is through HR's AhealthyU offerings that support overall wellness and connections. These popular programs, including group fitness classes, mindfulness programs, and nutrition support, not only aim to enhance individual well-being, but also strive to create new opportunities for connections among staff across departments, roles, and affinities.

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163 See athletic program and artistic opportunities in supporting document. [SIV.C4]

164 AU Student Housing. [SIV.C4]

165 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Center for First-generation Student Success. [SIV.C4]

For faculty, AU's Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning also hosts programs that help build academic community, including the ever-popular annual Ann Ferren Conference on Teaching and Learning. As discussed in the research chapter, AU's academic centers and faculty networks, both across and within schools, also help to build a sense of belonging among faculty by cultivating intellectual communities and supporting faculty in developing cosponsored research and publications. For example, the Antiracist Research and Policy Center has more than 48 faculty affiliates from across AU's schools and colleges.

Based on surveys and community discussions across campus, AU still has work to do to increase both staff and faculty belongingness, especially among younger and lower-paid staff, faculty of color, and term faculty. To help begin to address these needs, HR revived the pre-pandemic Mentoring Matters program to help foster deeper connections and build meaningful relationships across the AU community and create access to opportunities for all staff that enrich their professional experiences and the workplace culture. Further, all AU supervisors are in the process of being trained in a new HR-led Supervisor Academy, designed to equip managers with the knowledge and skills to lead inclusively, enhance belonging, and support staff engagement, especially in a hybrid work context.

To improve faculty sense of belonging, AU received a second ADVANCE AU grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant focuses on increasing connections and thriving among STEM faculty, who comprise roughly 58 percent to 61 percent of AU's full-time faculty under NSF ADVANCE's definition, with an emphasis on supporting women-identifying faculty and faculty of color. Over the next three years, this grant will help AU implement career development grants, mentoring programs, and continued tenure and promotion guideline updates to advance faculty belonging and thriving. A position created in 2023, associate dean of faculty and inclusive excellence, helps support this initiative.

Reflecting Diverse Curricular Perspectives

The curriculum also plays a key role in shaping students' sense of belonging; it is critical that the voices and perspectives from scholars from a wide range of backgrounds are threaded throughout the curriculum. Over the past few years, there have been several interconnected efforts toward this end. First, AU designed a common undergraduate first-year course, called American University Experience (AUx) 2, focused on understanding structural racism and antiracism as a starting point for exploration of students' identities and cultural experiences. First piloted in AY16–17, the course was fully implemented in AY18–19 and now has reached all AU undergraduate students. The course garners a substantial amount of ongoing feedback from students, faculty, and the AU community, which has resulted in continual revisiting of the course content to ensure it is responsive to ongoing

changes and emerging needs. For example, in 2022, the curriculum was updated to include content focused on understanding the emergence of antisemitism and its contemporary impacts.

Second, AU's core undergraduate curriculum integrates the foundational knowledge built in the AUx courses into students' majors, through courses that satisfy the core diversity and equity (DIV) requirement by attending to field- or discipline-specific issues of power, privilege, and inequality. Faculty engagement in these DIV courses has continued to grow, with more than 60 diversity and equity courses offered across AU's majors. In Student Evaluation of Teaching surveys, students report higher levels of subject matter learning in these DIV courses relative to their other undergraduate courses. That said, there is still much work to do to better assess the outcomes of the full curricular program, including both the AUx and DIV courses.

AU also has incentivized faculty from across the institution to redesign current courses or propose new courses that address antiracist and decolonial principles and content. Both AU's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and its School of Education (SOE) have offered antiracist curricular development grants and resources since 2020. As a result, several departments have created new courses or have enhanced existing courses, including disciplines ranging from music to economics to environmental science. As visibility builds among the faculty across departments, the program is poised to expand even further, promising more impact ahead.

Finally, in 2020, AU centralized the Department of Critical Race, Gender, and Culture Studies to support the exploration of diverse voices, histories, and experiences. The department can hire tenure lines and incubate interdisciplinary collaboration, resulting in several exciting new courses of study, including the university's first Latina/o/x studies program and an undergraduate certificate in disability, health, and bodies.

While many of these initiatives are still nascent, the momentum is building, and AU looks forward to developing systematic metrics to assess the comprehensive impact of these curricular efforts on student learning and sense of belonging at AU.

Measuring Progress

The work to enhance belonging must be ongoing and requires continual assessment to ensure it is having the intended impact. Through a series of metrics including student, faculty, and staff campus climate surveys, AU works to assess progress and identify gaps in our efforts to ensure everyone feels included and valued on campus.

First, AU has a triannual campus climate survey to gauge community perspectives in a number of areas, including to what extent students, faculty, and staff feel included on

campus.[166] The survey also captures how those feelings of belonging may vary according to demographics, including campus role, social identity, and department/unit. Not only is the survey itself an opportunity for members of the community to raise their voices, but it also provides an important metric and guide for progress made and areas for continual improvement.

Additionally, the university publishes and widely communicates annual updates on progress toward goals in *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence,* including its goal to develop an inclusive campus climate and culture where all feel welcome and have a sense of belonging and community.[167] Further, the university is in the first phase of rollout for a leadership-level dashboard that includes interactive data displays that visualize the current level of demographic diversity and reported sense of belonging by various subgroups, especially those who feel most marginalized on campus. The goal of this dashboard is to inform leadership in decision-making and goal setting to advance belonging and inclusion.

While there remains much work to do, including determining ways to more frequently take the pulse of the community, these initial efforts have laid the foundation for continual learning and progress as we continue the work ahead.

GOVERNANCE

What Is Governance?

American University strives to create a community where all its members have a representative body that speaks to their concerns and issues. Beyond the Board of Trustees and the leadership of the university, formal governance structures exist to represent the faculty, staff, and students of the AU community, allowing for participation in the decisions that impact the life of the institution. The university is committed to promoting shared governance that is transparent and accountable at every level of operation. Effective governance requires broad participation. Such governance bodies include the Faculty Senate, Staff Council, Student Government, Graduate Leadership Council, and Student Bar Association. All of these bodies are integral to shared governance and are involved in reviewing university actions, policies, and procedures (see Faculty Manual).[168]

The Board of Trustees sustains and advances the university's mission, integrity, traditions, values, financial health, and reputation as an institution. The board members are dedicated to advancing initiatives that promote the university, which include student recruitment, relationships with alumni, relationships with donors and prospective donors, interactions with civic leaders, and their own personal philanthropy.

The board oversees key functions of the university, including review of the chief executive officer, review of annual financial statements, and review and approval of university policies. The board currently consists of 30 members (with at least 25 required) and meets quarterly (September, November, February, and May), with the September meeting organized as a topic-driven retreat. The work of the board is conducted by 11 committees that reflect primary university endeavors: executive; academic affairs; alumni affairs and development; athletics; audit; campus life; communication; finance and investment; diversity, equity, and inclusion; trusteeship; and WAMU; as well as two subcommittees: compensation and real estate. Each committee operates under an approved charter, included on the board's website, which outlines the committee's purpose, organization, roles and responsibilities, administrators, and campus representatives. Descriptions of the committees are available in the bylaws.[169]

Board members are especially well-qualified for their work to ensure AU fulfills its mission and goals.[170] Currently 18 are AU alumni who represent a diverse breadth of professional experiences, with executive leaders in fields such as public affairs and politics, real estate, space and aeronautics, media and communication consulting, law, insurance and wealth management, global shipping, government and regulatory affairs, nonprofit management, and the United Methodist Church. And while the board has in recent years lost some members with academic experience, it is intent on addressing that gap moving forward.

The board is committed to fostering and enhancing its outreach and interaction opportunities with campus constituencies, and trustees are regularly informed of issues, challenges, and campus opinion. To that end, the board gives careful attention to the views of faculty, students, alumni, and staff and believes it should take advantage of the expertise, interests, and concerns of these university representatives through shared information and participation in the governing process. Therefore, representatives appointed by and from the deans, Faculty Senate, Student Government, Graduate Leadership Council, Alumni Board,

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166 Campus Climate Assessments. [SII., C2]

167 Annual updates to *AU's Plan for Inclusive Excellence.* [Examples of Assessments of Campus Climate, S2, C2]

168 American University Faculty Manual. [SVII.C4]

169   American University Board of Trustees. Bylaws, charter, and policies are on the Trustee's website: http://www.american.edu/trustees. Documentation of Governing Body and Related Entities. [SIV,C2]

170 See biographies of board members, supporting documentation.

Staff Council, and Student Bar Association are invited to serve as resource persons to the following board committees: academic affairs; alumni affairs and development; athletics; campus life; communication; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and finance and investment.

The Faculty Senate vice chair, Staff Council chair, Graduate Leadership Council executive president, and the Student Government, Student Bar Association, and Alumni Association presidents are invited to the general sessions of board meetings as resource persons.

The board and committees, in their sole discretion and for any matter deemed advisable, may meet in executive session exclusive of resource persons. Executive sessions involve only board members to discuss sensitive or private information. (Faculty have expressed interest in having more access to such discussions.)

Faculty colleagues elect the Faculty Senate and consists of 29 voting senators, all full-time faculty, whether term or tenure/tenure track, eligible to serve and representing the colleges and schools of the university and the University Library. The mission of the Faculty Senate is to ensure excellence and equity in policies and practices that affect faculty across the university. Its responsibilities include formulating academic policies and regulations, making recommendations for the academic budget, and setting the general and minimum standards for instruction throughout the university. Its duty is also to represent the interests of faculty members and to be concerned with their individual and collective welfare, as well as the general welfare of the university. The Faculty Senate, and its representatives on the Board of Trustees and on its committees, may discuss and express their views about any matter affecting the university. These views may be shared with any individual, faculty, or group within the university.[171]

Important achievements of the Faculty Senate since 2017 include:

- establishing the AU Core Curriculum, AU's inquiry-based liberal education program;
- researching and writing *Beyond SETs*, the report that led to establishing new and less biased means of evaluating teaching;
- revising policies guiding the search process for and performance review of senior administrators;
- contributing to developing new intellectual property and freedom of expression policies; and
- creating a new faculty status, continuing appointment, for term faculty who have shown continued excellence over six years or more of service.

Staff Council is a body of elected full-time and regular part-time AU staff who are not part of a collective bargaining agreement, as well as appointed leaders from affinity groups. Staff Council represents nonunion staff across campus and brings staff concerns to the administration. Elections occur each June to build the governing body of 23 members. In addition to liaising with constituencies around campus, Staff Council members lead internal committees and represent staff on university-wide committees. Its mission is to serve the interests and needs of American University staff pertaining to their daily activities and work conditions. To support this mission, Staff Council promotes understanding and cooperation by facilitating communication among campus constituencies and serving as an advocate for staff issues that affect them. The Staff Council chair attends open sessions of the Board of Trustees meetings and provides both a verbal and written report at each meeting.

Student governance organizations advocate for student concerns. There are three major student government organizations designed to provide students with an opportunity to be involved in university decision-making: Student Government, Student Bar Association, and Graduate Leadership Council. Student Government, an undergraduate organization elected by the student body, serves students by acting as their advocate and organizing programming. The Student Bar Association regulates student organizations and programs, distributes funds to organizations, and addresses concerns of the law school student body.[172] The Graduate Leadership Council brings together the leaders of the five school-specific graduate student councils at AU to advocate for student concerns, provide networking and social events, and discuss issues that are relevant to the graduate population. The head of each student organization attends the open session of the Board of Trustees meetings and provides both a verbal and written report at each meeting.

While there are many opportunities for students to use governance channels to voice their opinions about issues, some students prefer to use other methods, such as protests, to influence policy. This is not surprising, since AU has one of the most politically active student bodies in the country, as noted in our 2014 Middle States accreditation report. The key is to continue to ensure that students have a voice in decision-making and encourage them to participate in shared governance. The 1982 policy on freedom of expression and expressive conduct was revised in 2022, providing further support for our students' ability to be free to voice their opinions about university policy.

Unions represent a segment of faculty, staff, and graduate students at American University.[173] SAG-AFTRA (WAMU content staff) and SEIU Local 500 (adjunct faculty, graduate

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171 See Faculty Manual.

172 See Student Bar Association website: http://wcl.american.edu/sba.

173 Unions representing segments of the university community. [SVII.4; SII.3]

students, non-managerial Provost and Enrollment Division staff represent the interests of these groups to university leadership.

As AU's awareness of the complexity and diversity of its community groups grows, so do the governance structures meant to represent them. With the efforts to make all community members feel represented, governance has in turn become more layered and complex, making it harder to understand who to turn to for representation and information. Managing and defining the relationships among unit-level faculty committees and university-level bodies and determining the respective division of labor among these bodies results in a more fragmented governance landscape. Creating more formal, systematic, and defined relations between governance bodies could help to ease some of this lingering complexity.

University policies are readily accessible online through the policy library, which aims to ensure that the American University community has ready access to well-developed and understandable university policies that are aligned with the university's mission, values, and goals while enhancing operational efficiency and governance. However, storing these policies online does not mean these are well disseminated among the community. It is not clear the extent to which community members are aware of this policy library, nor is it known whether they believe they have the agency to challenge or change policy. Including a presentation about key and relevant policies for stakeholders during their initial orientations— whether in the Faculty Manual, Staff Manual, or Student Conduct Code—could help mitigate this issue.

Enhancing Governance

AU has a plethora of formal governance structures for faculty, staff, and students. As a result of these extensive governance networks, virtually all members of the AU community have access to some form of representation in governance. It is a landscape that has changed, with new structures emerging since the 2014 Middle States review. While many of these developments are very positive and welcome, shared governance continues to have opportunities for improvement, especially on the faculty side.

Several of the new governance structures and changes to existing structures since the last accreditation arose from reactions to community needs. For example, as term faculty positions have become less contingent, term faculty sought more direct involvement in governance at all levels, resulting in the establishment of unit-level term faculty committees and a Faculty Senate Term Committee. Alternatively, in line with AU's growing commitment to inclusive excellence, the Faculty Senate also established a new Faculty Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. These decisions, whether from the Faculty Senate or from unit level governance, demonstrate respect for community-driven initiatives.

Moreover, the expansion of governance structures has democratized participation, creating more opportunities to participate and more diversity in participants. For example, faculty can run for a seat on a unit-level committee before running for a Faculty Senate seat or a senior administrator search committee. And because more people can learn about governance structures when they serve at a unit level, there is more turnover at the university level.

While the expansion is positive, AU must be mindful of not letting this become an incohesive network of governance structures. Governance organizations can do even more to understand one another's values and goals and be attuned to the university's mission and strategic plan. For example, there is room to improve the dissemination of information and decisions between the Faculty Senate and unit-level governance. More deliberate coordination between governance organizations might decrease replication, foster greater cohesion, and enable more proactive actions. Now that governance structures have expanded, the university might benefit from an audit of its governance and committee structures, to identify duplication and opportunities for streamlining.

To facilitate participation in governance, it is helpful to understand AU policies. Enhancements to the website have made policies and information more accessible. But through discussions and focus groups, we learned that members of the AU community may not be aware of relevant policies that affect them, including on personnel matters.

The extent and complexity of university governance structures also present a high learning curve for those who want to participate in governance, gain information, or have views represented or questions answered. If one has an issue to bring to a representative, it is not always clear how one might discover the appropriate representative. Governance structures are described and/or linked on AU's websites, but it can be difficult to find the right webpages. It will be important to also include that information about the appropriate points of contact in the orientation of new faculty, staff, and students.

Accessibility is also a matter of ensuring that as many community members as possible can avail themselves of governance opportunities. A well-informed community is a more engaged community; informed community members are more likely to weigh in on issues. A lack of information presents a barrier to participation. Additional barriers to participation might include a lack of awareness of how to participate, feelings of marginalization because of identity or faculty status, or burdens of workload. Current participants in governance could improve outreach to potential new participants, and administrators could work with faculty and staff to improve recognition and rewards (including merit) for being involved in governance. More concentrated attention might be given to encouraging participation by and representation from community members in traditionally marginalized groups, building on and extending efforts described in the belonging section.

Engagement

The university should be commended for facilitating many opportunities for formal engagement between senior administration and various constituencies on campus. For instance, the president visits the Faculty Senate twice a year for hour-long conversations, while the provost and the dean of faculty serve as ex officio members of the Faculty Senate and its Executive Committee. Similarly, the vice president for people and the assistant vice president for human resources visit Staff Council meetings once a month to share information and to hear feedback from staff representatives.

Unit-level governance, such as the School of International Service's monthly faculty meetings, Kogod School of Business's monthly faculty and staff meetings, or School of Public Affairs council, also offers a formal venue to interact with the dean and unit's leadership. And the Board of Trustees provides multiple opportunities for community participation and feedback, including two nonvoting faculty trustees, one nonvoting student trustee, and student, staff, and faculty campus representatives on most Board of Trustees committees as described above.

Beyond these regular and established conversations with formal representative bodies, AU leadership regularly reaches to the wider community through other informal engagements. These include the frequent hosting of town halls with students, staff, and faculty to discuss proposed policy changes or new regulations, or the regular open forums, coordinated by the Office of the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer, to shed light on the university's most recent budgetary process. These town halls and open forums have become important tools to build trust and promote transparency.

Engagement between constituencies and leadership also takes place through yearly personnel actions. These cover, for instance, the faculty files for action, whether reappointment, promotion tenure files, or merit review, and the staff performance management process. These all-important processes, while becoming more transparent and delineated in recent years, could be improved by having even more consistent practices and more standardization across units. AU is thankfully aware of some of these concerns, and the recent establishment of the continuing appointment status, for term faculty, is a positive example of providing more consistency in the process of reappointment across units.

Taken together, AU remains steadfastly committed to continuous engagement. Yet the challenge remains to ensure that the community feels that this engagement is meaningful, timely, and used to inform decisions and policies.

Building Trust

Building trust requires a solid foundation of accountability, participation, engagement, and accessibility, as well as a balance of confidentiality and transparency. While the efforts to create more transparency and engagement have been beneficial, AU is experiencing continuing tension when it comes to the division of power and responsibilities between the leadership of the university and its constituencies. Given the complex challenges of running an academic institution, decision-making, policies, and processes have become more concentrated among senior leadership, which has fostered a greater sense of disengagement among the community and particularly among faculty.

Some faculty, concerned about an erosion of the principle of shared governance, established the AU chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 2023. The AAUP chapter feels that consultation by AU's senior leadership with representative bodies seems more often performative than substantive. The appointment of the former provost in September 2021 created palpable tension, as many faculty felt the appointment did not follow established processes. Additional faculty concerns arise from the broad definition of administrative policies, from AU's 2018 Policy on Policies, including all "non-academic policies governing the operations of the university," which results in many policies falling under the administrative label and not then engaging faculty governance structures.

AU is taking seriously the need to listen to these concerns and to develop appropriate responses to help build these trust foundations and bolster shared governance. AU has established a working group on faculty engagement, jointly sponsored by the Faculty Senate and Office of the Provost, with the working group currently developing a set of measures to address faculty concerns. AU leadership has also drafted a new search policy for provosts, in consultation with the Faculty Senate,[174] and developed more comprehensive and inclusive governance structures. There have been improvements in policy and structure accessibility, which have strengthened the foundations for trust. More frequent and detailed communication from administration about such topics as the university budget has led to a greater sense of transparency.

Moving forward, AU could improve trust by developing mechanisms that avoid a hub and spoke model, where all forms of engagement are between the senior administration and separate constituencies. Promoting more horizontal exchanges between other groups—such as between faculty and staff, or staff and students, as well as between academic units— would help to strengthen the community. But these efforts must occur in full recognition of the significant service burden they place on all members of the community. Another way to build trust is to create stronger connections between policies and implementation. Further, encouraging AU leadership at all levels to prioritize forms of engagement and consultations that happen at an early enough stage (i.e., before decisions are essentially made) will allow constituencies to weigh in

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174 Announcement of Peter Starr as provost. [SVII.4]

effectively and constructively. And it will serve to build greater trust and understanding between stakeholders.

Building trust must be a community effort, involving administration, faculty, staff, and students. Outreach must be met with response; queries and complaints must be substantively addressed. Policies must be not only clear but also consistently implemented at all levels. AU searching for a new president in 2024 and a permanent provost in 2025 are key opportunities to strengthen the foundations of trust even further among the AU community. AU has demonstrated the necessary commitment to many elements of the foundations of trust, and continued growth in this area requires addressing the barriers (while building on the strengths) and following through on some of the positive responses that have been described in this section.

INTEGRITY (ETHICS)

Ethics and integrity are foundational to all aspects of AU's work. At AU, an ethical commitment requires more than compliance with guidelines or policies, it also includes a spirit of genuine obligation. If we understand ourselves as rooted in community—locally, nationally, and globally—we are talking about a commitment that is outward-facing. But the AU community has obligations among us—faculty to students, faculty to faculty, administration to faculty, and so on. The commitment to these obligations should reflect the institution's values. The section that follows speaks about the various policies that anchor AU's commitment to ensuring ethical practices in various domains.

AU's Ethics and Integrity Policy sets out principles so that all university community members can apply the highest ethical principles and standards in the fulfillment of their professional duties and obligations to the university. This policy includes a process for receiving, reviewing, resolving, and reporting on potential violations as do the AU Board Policy on Reporting Suspected Misconduct (Whistleblower), and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act Policy. This policy is not intended to supplant, but to complement existing university policies related to conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment, such as those found in the Staff Personnel Policy Manual and the Faculty Manual. The role of identifying requirements related to employee ethical conduct is the responsibility of the vice president, general counsel, and secretary to the Board of Trustees, in addition to the General Counsel and Finance and Treasurer offices.

AU also takes very seriously its commitment to preserving academic freedom as well as freedom of expression and dissent. In late August 2022, after extensive work by a staff/

faculty task force and with input from the community, the university released an updated Freedom of Expression and Expressive Conduct Policy. This new document seeks to bolster "protections for freedom of expression and dissent for all members of the university community, sets forth the limitations on those protections, and clarifies the extent to which community members are expected to consider the impact of their expressive conduct on others within and external to the university community."[175]

This new Freedom of Expression and Expressive Conduct Policy is consistent with a set of other policies to further advance AU as a community of ethics and integrity, including the Academic Integrity Code (updated in 2020); Ethics and Integrity Policy (2021); conduct that violates any university policy, including but not limited to the Student Conduct Code; and policies outlined in the Staff Personnel Policy Manual and Faculty Manual.

In 2020, AU established an office to expand its capacity to prevent and respond to discrimination. The office is led by a new assistant vice president and staffed by a team of five full-time staff.[176] Previously, AU community members reported to different offices for various forms of discrimination, and the process was not always clear. Established at the recommendations of a 2019 campus-wide working group, the new office is a one-stop shop serving faculty, staff, and students to respond to discrimination and harassment related to all protected categories. While it is too soon to fully evaluate impact, anecdotal evidence suggests that the AU community now better understands how and where to report and receive support, though work remains to clarify processes and set expectations.

For example, in late 2022, the community expressed concerns about AU's response to recent sexual assault incidents on campus. In response, President Burwell established the Community Working Group on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment and Violence to develop recommendations to improve our processes of prevention and response to sexual violence moving forward. Implementation of the recommendations from the working group is underway beginning summer 2023.

Just as the university establishes and enforces regulatory policies, it is also governed by grievance policies that seek to address complaints raised by students, faculty, and staff in fair, impartial, prompt, and equitable ways. Such policies are laid out in the Faculty Manual, Staff Personnel Policy, and academic regulations.

The Principal Investigator's Handbook and Faculty Manual define the rights and responsibilities with respect to ownership and administration of intellectual property. Currently, both

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175 AU updated Freedom of Expression and Expressive Conduct Policy. (Policies and Procedures on Academic and Intellectual Freedom and Freedom of Expression). [SII.C1]

176 American University Title IX Office. [VII.C2, SII.C3]

the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Public Health Service (PHS) require investigators to disclose significant financial interests. The guidance regarding the disclosure process for both the NSF and the PHS can be found on the research compliance website under the conflict-of-interest link. AU has contracted with the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative at the University of Miami to provide PHS conflict-of-interest training.

Article XVII of the bylaws governing the AU Board of Trustees also addresses conflict of interest and requires full disclosure from all members. If trustees are determined, in accordance with such policy, to have an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest with respect to a matter in front of the board, they cannot vote on any such matter or be counted in determining the quorum for the meeting.

AU's performance management program (PMP) for staff aims to complete the following universally important goals: clearly state performance expectations and set high standards of performance; ensure that individual goals are aligned with either the university's goals or staff member's job duties; reinforce the behaviors needed to support the university now and in the future; support positive relationships between staff and their managers; recognize the contributions and skills of staff; and ensure that staff has the skills necessary to contribute. American University's PMP extends through a full year.

Section 5 of the Staff Personnel Policy Manual, Compensation Program, describes factors used for promotion decisions. The staff compensation program aims to offer competitive salaries and ensure fairness in consistently applied ways. The policies also link with career levels to show opportunities for career growth. The university rewards higher levels of performance and contribution as measured in the performance management program. Inherent in these principles is a desire to encourage and reward staff for acquiring and applying their knowledge, skills, and abilities and contributing to the ongoing success of the organization. Ultimately, staff promotions are handled within the school or unit, so it is unclear if promotion policies are applied equitably across the university.

Faculty promotion policies are covered in the Faculty Manual. The Faculty Senate's Committee on Faculty Actions (CFA) is an elected body of university faculty. Its function is to represent the interests of faculty members, individually and collectively, in matters related to appointments, reappointments, tenure, and promotion. CFA promotes equitable treatment of faculty. Each CFA member is to consider solely the good of the university when undertaking the work of the committee. CFA is composed of nine senior faculty, preferably full professors, one from each of the major academic units at the university (Faculty Manual). CFA is responsible for making recommendations to the provost on all cases relating to full-time and part-time faculty appointments,

reappointments, tenure, and promotions, and to make recommendations to both the Faculty Senate and provost for policies guiding the actions listed before.

AU is committed to providing all staff with the opportunity to improve their performance to continue successful employment at the university. In the event a staff member fails to consistently demonstrate the core competencies established for all staff, fails to meet performance expectations, or demonstrate skills and functions required by their position, a manager may elect to place that individual on a performance improvement plan. Failure to meet the milestones established by the performance improvement plan and maintain acceptable performance will result in termination of employment.

As stated in the Faculty Manual, when a faculty member fails to fulfill his or her employment obligations or engages in misconduct, the university will take appropriate action. The university's response to allegations of faculty misconduct may vary according to the nature of the misconduct, its seriousness, its impact on the university's reputation or the well-being of other members of the AU community, and prior record of misconduct. AU has also devised procedures to deal with serious misconduct of its employees, in Section 7 of the Staff Personnel Policy Manual and Section 23 of the Faculty Manual.[177]

The university provides full disclosure of information on institutional assessments, graduation, and retention rates, as well as certification and licensure. AU leadership also regularly apprises campus communities of substantive changes affecting institutional mission, programs and goals, and other material issues which must be disclosed in a timely manner.

These related policies outlined below ensure compliance with the antibribery provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) of 1977, as amended. Each officer, manager, and employee of the university has the responsibility for compliance with the FCPA within their area of authority and for immediately reporting any violations to the CFO, vice president, and treasurer of the university.

Procurement and Contracts Policy—The Procurement and Contracts Department (PCD) is the central purchasing and contracts authority for AU. PCD is a department under the auspices of the Finance and Treasurer's Office and is colocated within that department's Controller's Office along with the Accounts Payable and Accounting offices. PCD is responsible for managing the procurement and contracts processes on a university-wide basis, including purchase orders, contracts, and any other legal agreements associated with the acquisition of goods and services that support AU's educational, research and business initiatives. According to the policy, each PCD member is assigned commodities based on their expertise. This enables PCD staff to maintain a proactive, accountable,

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177 AU Staff Personnel Policy Manual, Section 7.0, Disciplinary Policy and AU Faculty Manual, Section 23, Disciplinary Actions, Investigations, and Formal Faculty Hearings. [SVII, SII.C3]

and team-oriented relationship with faculty, staff, students, strategic suppliers, and the local community.

Whistleblower Policy—The university is committed to developing a culture of compliance that strengthens and promotes ethical practices, as well as a respectful treatment of all members of the university community and those who conduct business with the university. The institution expects its employees to perform their duties in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, university policy and procedures, and high ethical standards. AU rigorously pursues compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, seeking to promulgate and administer university policies and procedures that faithfully administer such laws and regulations. This policy is thus intended to encourage and enable employees and others who have good-faith serious concerns about misconduct, including violations of law, regulations, or university policies and procedures or other conduct (misconduct) to raise them with the university before seeking external resolution.

Formulation and Issuance of University Policies—This policy addresses the vital need for a periodic assessment of ethics and integrity. AU maintains policies and provides the community with explanations as to how it conducts its business and affairs. All individuals who are engaged in developing or maintaining these documents must adhere to the requirements outlined in this policy and its associated procedures for drafting, approving, revising, and disseminating such documents. Policies are presented in a common format and formally reviewed by the authorized body.

These policies are kept current within the framework of an organized system of change control. Any individual or unit may identify the need for a new or revised policy, but one responsible executive must agree to sponsor its development and be accountable for the content of its principles and procedures. The president and members of the cabinet will have opportunities to review and consult on each proposed policy, as appropriate, based on its nature, relative impact, and scope.

A firm commitment and adherence to building a community of ethics and integrity is a constant priority. AU must sustain the ongoing focus on these important issues and should consider developing ongoing ways to communicate with the community. A recommendation about how we might go about realizing this goal is provided.

OPENNESS (PARTNERSHIPS)

American University's strategic plan recognizes that partnerships, both internal and external, are of critical importance because "in the changing world of higher education, no single institution will be able to thrive on its own." This is true not only from a practical perspective of successfully achieving our goals as a university, but also from a more personal perspective of feeling connected to the institution and the city in which it resides. These partnerships,

which connect the people of AU to the world outside AU, are essential to building our community.

American University has long-standing, deep connections to the Washington, DC, community. Included here are a few examples of such connections. The Center for Community Engagement and Service (CCES), AU's hub for community outreach, volunteering, and service-learning opportunities in Washington, DC, and beyond, runs a variety of programs that collaborate with local schools and nonprofit organizations. Each semester, 100 to 130 students—volunteers or federal work-study students—tutor children and youth with our key partners. These partners include Higher Achievement Program, Reading Partners, LifePieces to MasterPieces, Latin American Youth Center (LAYC), and Jubilee Housing. They also work with Coolidge High School students through a college access program run out of LAYC.

The CCES office administers the Eagle Endowment for Public and Community Service grant program, which awards grants three times per year for students who want to support a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC. The students write proposals, ask for funding for up to $1,000, are interviewed, and if approved move forward with their projects. For a recent example, CAS leadership students accompanied 12 students from LAYC to campus to better understand college life, see dorms, eat in the cafeteria, and sit in on classes.

CCES also manages the Alternative Break Program, a student-led initiative with a social justice focus. The Alternative Break Program hosts trips three times per year, both domestic and international, as well as one-day service events, and Explore DC, which introduces first-year and transfer students to Washington, DC, showing them ways to get involved with service. For example, over the 2022 winter break, two students led a trip to Cape Town, South Africa, which focused on Combatting Xenophobia: The Impact of Resettlement. They partnered with a local organization to set an itinerary and schedule. And in the spring, student-led trips went to Ghana, Honduras, and Austin, Texas, all addressing diverse social justice themes.

To connect community service with learning, AU in 2014 added the option for undergraduate students to get course credit for engaging in community service. Students can take a community-based learning-designated course, in which each student in the class participates in at least 20 hours of community service connected to the course content, or does a project such as a video, curriculum, or website. If students are taking a non-community-based course, they can utilize the one-credit add-on, called the Community Service-Learning Program, to receive a pass/fail credit for 35 to 40 hours of community service connected to the course.

In 2014, AU also launched the Community-Based Research Scholars (CBRS) program, which is a selective living-learning community for incoming first-year students who want to engage in community service and learn how to conduct community-based research in partnership with local nonprofit partners. Each spring, students in the CBRS program conduct substantive community-based research projects that involve

primary data collection in partnership with a local school or organization. In 2015, AU launched the community-based research certificate for undergraduate students. For this certificate, worth 15 to 18 credits, students take three research methods courses and a community-based course, participate in community service, and conduct an independent community-based research capstone with a community partner.

Another way that AU faculty and students engage with the DC community is through the Humanities Truck. Currently in its fifth year of operation, the Humanities Truck Project is housed within CAS, and it is administered by the public history program. The Humanities Truck is a fully customized delivery truck that serves as an experimental mobile platform for collecting, exhibiting, preserving, and expanding dialogue around humanities. The truck has been used as a mobile exhibition gallery, recording studio, maker and workshop space, performance venue, and community forum. In using sidewalks, parks, and parking lots as venues, the truck project enables American University to creatively overcome boundaries that separate individuals and communities from one another and AU from its surrounding communities. Through its ability to engage the public in spaces where people already gather, the truck has established a capacity to work with vulnerable communities typically not served by cultural institutions, such as the unhoused, the undocumented, day laborers, street vendors, and people experiencing food insecurity.

Since 2019 the project, supported by the Mellon Foundation and Henry Luce Foundation, has distributed $190,000 to 19 different projects led by faculty and graduate students who are conducting collaborative work across the region. The funding promotes projects that are ethically informed and that directly benefit the communities they work within. In addition to supporting long-term projects, the truck is also responsive to community requests for projects and programming that aligns with its larger mission. Since its founding in 2018, the truck has hosted more than 200 events across the city, built a website that includes more than 40 digital exhibitions, and created a community archive that houses nearly 500 oral histories. More than 50,000 people across the city have engaged with the project's programming.

The Veloric Center for Entrepreneurship (formerly known as the American University Center for Innovation or AUCI), which was created to support and grow future generations of entrepreneurs with financial support from AU alum Gary Veloric and his family, develops and maintains a range of strategic partnerships with local, national, and foreign governments; public and private corporations; nonprofits; and think tanks. These connections help AU deliver on the mission to help students and alumni from across campus to gain understanding of the real world of business and markets by confronting, embracing, and creating opportunities, with the goal of achieving the highest levels of flourishing and self-actualization. Strategic partnerships can involve curriculum, incubators, and research programs (see AUCI website).

The Department of Health Studies (DHS) has long-standing partnerships with numerous organizations, and the

opportunities for AU students created from those partnerships is a major strength of the program. DHS offers three sections of a public health capstone course each year with about 12 to 15 community partners per year. The Public Health Scholars program also offers a course in the fall term for group projects with community-based organizations—an average of three to four partners per term, per student.

There are several school-specific community partnerships at AU as well. SOE has numerous community-based programs and projects underway. Such programs include a partnership with District of Columbia Public Schools, Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and Friendship Charter Schools to build a new teacher workforce in Washington, DC, which includes natives. Another program is the Advancing Early Education Consortium, a partnership with Trinity Washington University; Martha's Table, which provides a variety of services to the community, including food, clothing, and educational supports; Venture Philanthropy Partners; DC Lift; and the Urban Institute. The consortium was developed to increase the number of credentialed early educators in the District of Columbia. SOE also sponsors Panama Teach, a partnership with the Panama Education Center, to study teacher professional development in Panama, and Urban Teachers, a partnership with a national teacher residency program, to provide high quality teachers for urban school districts.

The law school has multiple programs and people who lead efforts to engage locally, domestically, and internationally. The WCL DC Engagement Committee was formed in 2021 to incubate opportunities for WCL faculty and students. One successful program in June 2022 focused on engaging with the Legal Counsel for the Elderly (LCE) and AARP to provide KN95 masks to 1,250 seniors in DC. This community-wide event included stuffing padded envelopes with masks, with help from WCL Dean Roger Fairfax and Rhonda Cunningham Holmes, executive director for LCE.

Law students also work directly with the community through their clinical and other experiential offerings. WCL serves more than 200 law students each year in 11 clinics. In January 2022, the law school was recognized by the White House for its service to the community. The White House and the US Department of Justice recognized Dean Fairfax and WCL students' efforts to halt evictions in the greater Washington, DC, area by providing legal assistance to local communities. Since then, more than 40 WCL students have dedicated nearly 3,000 hours to helping 50 clients facing potential eviction. Their work came as the expiration of the COVID-related national eviction moratorium expired, putting many vulnerable people in jeopardy of losing their housing. This is one example of how the WCL community champions what matters.

AU recognizes the importance of its partnership with the immediate neighborhood, as well as the city at large. There is a commitment to remain in harmony with our neighbors in the residential, northwest region of Washington, DC. The American University Neighborhood Partnership is a shared forum connecting AU and leaders in the surrounding

communities since 2018. The partnership's mission is to strengthen university and neighborhood relations through facilitated discussions, information sharing, and consensus-based collaboration on issues involving campus planning and university activities affecting adjacent neighborhoods.

Additionally, AU partners with the local community through our weekly farmers market, available to the AU community, which includes faculty, staff, students, and neighborhood residents. During the pandemic, the in-person farmers market was paused, and AU offered web access for produce, baked products, and prepared Ethiopian dishes. During fall 2022, Airlie Farms, part of a property given AU by the Airlie Foundation in 2016, participated in the main campus farmers market each Wednesday, offering pork, beef, honey, and produce.

In spring 2021, the Working with Washington subgroup of the university's strategic plan implementation committees conducted a survey on faculty engagement with the community. More than 200 faculty completed the survey and detailed the myriad ways they interact and collaborate with communities locally and globally. Types of community engagement included (but are not limited to) helping to create materials to advance a social justice priority, conducting community-based research, helping to design an educational or advocacy campaign, assisting in policy analysis, and assisting in grant writing for a community-based organization. Faculty also report serving in an unpaid capacity on boards, giving talks or presentations to community-based organizations, engaging in research projects with community partners, advising students on community-based research projects, and publishing or presenting with community partners.

In the spring 2021 faculty survey, faculty also reported the following barriers to quality community engagement: lack of time, lack of incentives, lack of funding, structural barriers (course scheduling, adequate classroom space, class size), lack of recognition, concerns about lack of reciprocity for the community partner, and transportation issues related to getting to the community. To address these challenges, the Working with Washington imperative gave $30,300 in funding to CCES to support work in these areas:

- a travel grant fund to help get students to Wards 7 and 8. Though they each have a UPass, the time it takes to get there by public transportation has been a deterrent, so this fund gets them to sites by Lyft.

- micro-grants for faculty to support their community-based learning work, such as food for events and materials.

- honoraria for community partners as faculty often ask them to speak on campus or give neighborhood tours, and compensation is a way to show respect for their time and efforts.

In addition, the funds cover a graduate assistant and a faculty fellow; the latter position is housed in CCES and was created to connect the excellent community work that is going on across all six schools involved with the center. In addition, two signature partnerships are central to Working with Washington. One is with Martha's Table, a multi-issue nonprofit located in Ward 8, the Anacostia neighborhood. The other is with the Latin American Youth Center Career Academy, a public charter school for immigrant students in Ward 1's Columbia Heights, DC.

AU conducted a community engagement survey of faculty to learn more about how faculty perceive support for community engagement in teaching and research. Only 44 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their department supports community engagement in teaching, and 48 percent agreed or strongly agreed that AU (overall) supports community engagement in teaching. Similarly, 39 percent agreed or strongly agreed that their department supports community engagement in research, and 44 percent agreed or strongly agreed that AU supports community engagement in research.

Other challenges include limited staffing to fully execute partnerships, lack of university systems to process large partnerships, and lack of a tracking system of existing partnerships, although the adoption of the Engage and GivePulse platforms are moving AU in that direction. These tools will enable the campus to track community engagement. Further, the university is also part of the President's Volunteer Service Award, a national program that recognizes students who have done 100 or more hours of service over the course of a year.

It was also noted by a faculty member that, before the pandemic, bringing partners to campus throughout the academic year, was a good networking opportunity for the organizations to meet each other and for the students to informally interact with them. During the pandemic, those engagements were virtual. Currently, many engagements continue to be over Zoom, which is more convenient but less engaging.

AU is proud that many of its partnerships are long-standing. Universities are often criticized for perpetuating helicopter research or engaging in partnerships that are not mutually beneficial. AU's commitment has been to support AU students, staff, and faculty to engage in meaningful, long-term, and transformational partnerships that are mutually beneficial.

However, it is important to note that partnerships require the flexibility of the university and follow-through to make and preserve connections. There are various ways the university could be more willing to execute partnerships, which include making small investments before the partnerships happen, hiring staff to focus on partnerships, developing memoranda of agreement, and following up with potential partners.

CONCLUSION

Communities are dynamic and complex organizations made up of different stakeholders with different experiences and perspectives, and AU is no different. Since 2014's last Middle States accreditation, AU has been intentional in its commitment to community building, both in terms of breadth and depth of its activities. This holds true for belonging, as witnessed by the initiatives, in the classroom and beyond, to create a more inclusive space for the members of our community. This has played out in the realm of governance, with the formal and informal active engagement between the representative bodies for stakeholder groups. And the many partnerships established by AU with Washington, DC, and beyond underline a continued commitment to look outward.

Yet, community building remains an ongoing and essential effort that must be at the center of AU's mission. Beyond the deep impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sense of burnout among many, AU must continue its quest for creating a more inclusive community.

There are significant opportunities to build trust in the context of governance to achieve meaningful change and serve the needs of the university. AU also has opportunities to preserve its commitment to partners through deepening mutually beneficial relationships. This will support AU in reenergizing a sense of common purpose among all its members. The recommendations listed below can be key steps in that necessary direction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Belonging Recommendations:

- Enhance strategic collaboration among key student-facing offices to advance belonging and inclusion for all students and ensure that the implementation of the new Student Thriving Center helps foster these collaborations.

- Create opportunities for staff and faculty, including adjunct faculty, to connect with each other outside of formal roles and responsibilities, including development of on-campus spaces and opportunities to share meals, build social connections, develop scholarly and professional networks, and collaborate on campus and DC-community projects.

Ethics Recommendation:

- Create opportunities to support the Office of Title IX and Equity in aligning its work with other campus partners to create a more integrative response to community members who experience harm.

Governance Recommendations:

- Develop a plan with the various governance structures to strengthen awareness and understanding of their roles, as well as university policies among new employees and students, and encourage governance groups to develop action plans to build more robust and widespread participation in governance activities.

- Develop new policies and processes to repair and rebuild trust in the principles and practice of shared governance; bolster consultation between governance groups and administrative offices for faculty, staff, and students alike, ensuring it happens early enough in the development of and revisions to policies; and establish mechanisms of accountability to make sure that policies are implemented faithfully.

Partnership Recommendations:

- Clarify support for teaching and research activities related to community engagement through consistent messaging and by developing more standard policies across units.

- Develop more marquee partnerships and identify and assess existing partnerships to prioritize where to invest future resources.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Examples of key documents used to inform this chapter:

Board of Trustees Website

AU Leadership Biographies

Campus Surveys

AU Partnership Website

University Governance (Faculty Senate, Staff Council) Minutes

Annual Reports to Middle States, including Evidence of Substantive Change Submissions

Policies and Procedures Website

CONCLUSION:
Opportunities for Advancing AU's Mission

REVIEW OF FINDINGS

The Middle States self-study process has given American University a unique opportunity to examine how well it is meeting Middle States standards through the lens of AU's mission and strategic plan. By using a priorities-based approach, the university was able to assess how well it is meeting key goals and objectives.

The lines of inquiry for each chapter (available in the self-study design were answered honestly, taking an evidence-based approach to answer questions of interest to the AU community. While the answers were not always surprising (AU has been addressing them for many years), they were illuminating. In each chapter, the conclusions point to specific ways in which AU is a high-quality institution that can continue to innovate to better fulfill its mission. The Steering Committee's discussions with the AU community provided other insights that strengthened the report.

Overall, the *Self-Study* finds that AU:

- is data-driven and assessment-focused.
- has robust policies, processes, and standards that govern all aspects of its work.
- is a community of faculty, staff, and administrators who is passionate about its students. People at AU are invested in AU's success and want to play a role in making the university a better place. While this sometimes leads to tensions, it also leads to important innovations and improvements.

- has a strong culture of encouraging and doing scholarship and research. While AU does well on traditional success metrics, success is also measured in other ways, such as the impact of our work on local, national, and international policies, practices, and institutions.
- understands that changes in leadership and organizational structures are opportunities to approach problems from new angles and to innovate the ways in which the university approaches its work.

As a result of this study, AU confirms that it meets each standard of accreditation. In addition, this study found that AU demonstrates significant strengths and is making progress in areas where improvement is desired.

NEXT STEPS

The recommendations in the *Self-Study* will be assigned to Strategic Initiative teams or to specific members of leadership. With a new president beginning in 2024 and the completion of the current strategic plan in 2025, the *Self-Study* can serve as a resource for AU's upcoming strategic planning initiatives. However, as one says at AU, "Change can't wait." Many of the recommendations are already being implemented. Others will be tracked and reported on by AU's Middle States accreditation liaison officer. For the most recent status of recommendations, please visit AU's Middle States website.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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