



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN
PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

October 15, 2007

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

Since the last time I wrote there have been a number of developments worthy of note.

Board of Trustees Meeting

The Board of Trustees (www.american.edu/trustees) met on September 27 and 28 for an orientation of new members and to conduct normal business. Organized by the trusteeship committee, under the leadership of Tom Gottschalk, the orientation consisted of a series of briefings by board committee chairs, assisted by the interim provost, vice presidents, and directors. All of our newest trustees—Gina Adams, Marc Duber, Dan Gasby, Alan Meltzer, Gary Weaver, and Marc Tomik—attended and participated in several hours of discussions devoted to the role of the board, the jurisdiction and work of its committees, the organization and functions of the university, the working relationship between the board and the president, and major issues we currently face.

Friday's business meeting was chaired by Gary Abramson. It consisted of several action items, including receipt and approval of our annual external audit, construction of the new building for the School of International Service, and the creation of a new committee of the board devoted to the university's external relations. This new committee, chaired by David Drobis, will provide advice and guidance on all aspects of the university's efforts to communicate effectively and efficiently with our internal and external constituencies and audiences. I reported on developments at the university since the board's last meeting and posted the report (www.american.edu/president/pdf/Sept07Report.pdf) on the president's Web site for those who wish to review its contents. I also discussed the start of strategic planning, a restructuring of the university's communications and marketing functions, and searches for key senior positions. Each of these topics is discussed in greater detail below. Interim provost Ivy Broder, vice presidents Don Myers, Gail Hanson, Robert Pastor, and Mary Kennard, and Abbey Silberman Fagin, senior director of development, also reported and answered questions. Representatives of the faculty, students, staff, and alumni attended the meeting and reported, as well.

Launch of Strategic Planning

Also posted on the president's Web site is my preliminary statement on developing a new strategic plan (www.american.edu/president/pdf/strategic_planning.pdf) for American University. During the presidential search process, in my brief remarks (www.american.edu/president/statements/072007.html) on the day of my appointment, and frequently since, I noted that our community is ready for a new strategic plan. At this point in our history, the process to develop new and ambitious goals for the institution is particularly important. In the document I identify a process to tap the experience, expertise, and commitment of our faculty, students, alumni, and staff. It is important that a variety of viewpoints are expressed, debated, and respected. It is also important that the results of our planning are sufficiently precise to allow for measurement and accountability, and sufficiently ambitious to move AU to an even higher level of accomplishment and recognition. The plan must be grounded in the university's fundamental mission and values as established in the Statement of Common Purpose (www.american.edu/president/statements/common_purpose.html) and other governing documents. I will soon issue a revised statement to the community for review and comment and the planning effort will begin.

Communications and Marketing

During the course of the presidential search and in recent meetings of the board and the President's Council, the university's communication and marketing efforts have been discussed. At present, the news coverage of AU and its faculty and students is often extensive, we produce publications of high quality, and we have been garnering increasing numbers of inquiries and applications for our academic programs each year. Building on an analysis done over the past year, we know that our Web presence must be re-envisioned, and we have initiated a major effort to do just that. In addition, we must assess our advertising presence and better define our institutional and program needs via this means. With the competition for students growing more intense each year in the Washington higher education market, we must strengthen this effort. To meet the challenges, we will consolidate our communications and marketing operations into a single organization reporting directly to me. The details (www.american.edu/president/pdf/comm&mktgplan.pdf) can be found on the president's Web site. The goal is that a reconfigured organization will become a resource to ensure our constituencies and audiences are fully informed and that our reputation matches our performance and accomplishments.

Army Corps of Engineers

We continue to implement the steps outlined in my September 27 campus communication (www.american.edu/president/statements/092707.pdf) regarding the activities scheduled to begin in late October at the Glenbrook Road properties. Faculty, staff, students, and others in the adjacent campus areas will receive additional information over the coming weeks, and I will update the campus as we near the start of operations. It is important for the community to understand the nature of the operations and the precautions we will take. The measures taken by the Army Corps and the university have minimized the risk to an exceedingly low probability; nevertheless, please review my earlier

communication on the president's Web site and read subsequent communications carefully. We will continue to make every effort to ensure the health and safety of those on our campus while minimizing interference or interruption of university activities and operations.

Library Activities

On August 1, 2007, we welcomed Bill Mayer as our new university librarian. Mr. Mayer has assumed leadership of a unit that is central to all phases of AU's mission and which has performed those roles with admirable professionalism. It should be known, for example, that recent campus climate surveys have found growing levels of satisfaction among our students with most major aspects of library operations. Since his arrival, Mr. Mayer has worked with his colleagues on a number of innovative projects—the most notable, perhaps, was their recent decision to open the library 24 hours a day from Sunday through Thursday. The move to extended hours was requested by students on a number of occasions, and more than 250 students attended the September 26 ribbon cutting to mark this event. I commend the library faculty and staff for making the necessary adjustments in resources and schedules and responding to our students' expressed needs.

Mr. Mayer brings to his position a strong background in technology that will be essential as we confront the challenges to meet the information needs and preferences of our faculty, students, and the extended AU community. Among other things, the library has resumed its instant messaging reference service, launched a real-time service at the entrance desk to inform patrons which computer terminals throughout the library are available for use, and secured a license for access to digital collection of more than 40,000 book titles.

Campaign and Alumni Activities

The campaign continues to make solid progress, ending September at \$145.6 million. The major areas of focus continue to be the building projects at the School of International Service and School of Communication. Alumni participation is up 22.7 percent year-to-date, with 80 percent of the gains from new or long-lapsed donors. Alumni and Family Weekend will be held October 26–28, when we welcome more than 1,000 guests to campus for reunions, social gatherings, service projects, exhibits, and performances. Activities in alumni chapters throughout the world continue. I will spend a great deal of time before the end of the academic year traveling to meet alumni, parents, and donors. We will visit five major cities (Boston, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia) for all-alumni events, and visits to other cities and small group gatherings in Washington are also planned.

Searches for Senior Positions

We are in the early stages of the search processes for the provost and the vice president of development positions. In accordance with the applicable academic regulations, the Faculty Senate is administering an election to select three faculty members to sit on the search committee for the provost. When those individuals are identified, I will make additional appointments, convene the search committee, and work with them to develop the search strategy. The committee

will then begin to develop the overall pool of candidates, including soliciting nominations from the university community, from late October through mid-January. A semifinal group will be selected for interviews with the committee. From that process finalists will emerge and be invited to AU for public interviews with key constituencies and me. Our goal is to conclude this process in late March or early April. The committee will then present its recommendations to me, and I will make my selection and submit the individual for approval by the Board of Trustees, as the bylaws require.

The process to find a firm to assist in the search for the vice president of development also has begun. When a set of final candidates is developed they will be invited to campus for interviews with key officials and representatives of key constituencies. The goal is to complete this search promptly and have a new vice president in place at the start of the spring semester.

Faculty Senate

As is our tradition, I addressed the first meeting of the Faculty Senate on September 3. I provided a brief overview of the state of the university at the start of the academic year and answered questions. Gary Abramson, chairman of the Board of Trustees, met with the senate in a similar series on October 3. The senate has already created a committee to focus on strategic planning that will help ensure a strong faculty voice is heard in that process.

Student Activities

Student Government, Graduate Leadership Council, and the Student Bar Association all are well into their work of the year and each have established ambitious agendas. We held an Eagle Roundtable dinner with 40 student leaders on September 18 and discussed a wide range of matters, including financial aid, international programs, shuttle operators, and the Women's Center.

Staff Council

In late September I met with the new leadership of the Staff Council, and we discussed the council's plans for the year. Among the items discussed was the balance of service and advocacy that the council would like to establish in its agenda, the role of the council in strategic planning, and other university-wide topics. The Staff Council is actively involved with a number of important governance and consultative bodies, with its chair serving as a community representative at meetings of the Board of Trustees and the University Council. Their presence on these bodies underscores the importance of staff to the mission of the university.

Athletics

Our fall intercollegiate sports programs are in full swing with men's and women's soccer, field hockey, volleyball, and cross country deep into their respective seasons. Players and coaches—and our Blue Crew—urge members of the community to turn out for these matches.

Other Matters of Note

The following is a sample of the significant recognitions received by faculty, staff, and programs since the last time I wrote.

- Professor Robert Durant of the Department of Public Administration in the School of Public Affairs is the 2007 recipient of the Whittington Award for Excellence in Teaching from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. The award is given annually to one individual “who has demonstrated excellence in education for the public service over a sustained period of time.”
- Dean Claudio Grossman of the Washington College of Law received the Simon Bolivar Award from the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and the Charles Norberg International Lawyer of the Year from the Inter-American Bar Association. Both are in recognition of his outstanding contributions to human rights. Dean Grossman has also been elected to another term to the United Nations Committee against Torture. This tribunal serves as a reminder of the emergence of torture as a major public policy concern, both in the U.S. and abroad. A number of units are exploring this issue in a variety of programs as part of a university-wide focus on the subject.
- Mary Kennard, vice president and general counsel, was named the region’s best general counsel by the *Washington Business Journal*.
- Trustee Thomas Gottschalk is one of eight lawyers selected to receive the fourth annual lifetime achievement award from the *American Lawyer* magazine for his setting of GM’s in-house standard for promoting of diversity and pro bono work.
- The Economic Club of Washington awarded the prestigious Dearborn Fellowship to Paul Jacobs, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Economics of the College of Arts and Sciences. Mr. Jacobs’s dissertation committee comprises professors Tom Hertz, Bob Lerman, and Jonathan Gruber (MIT).
- Our academic programs continued to distinguish the university when on September 17 the *Wall Street Journal* included the Kogod School of Business among its top regional MBA programs. Of the 51 programs selected for listing, KSB ranked 37 among all schools and within the top 20 among private institutions. Congratulations to the Kogod faculty, students, and Dean Durand for this notable accomplishment.
- The Office of Campus Life has just received a “Bringing Theory to Practice” grant from the American Association of Colleges and Universities to continue their study of the effects of engaged learning in University College seminars on students’ high-risk behaviors.
- Gary Abramson, chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Diane Rehm and Kojo Nnamdi of WAMU 88.5 were named by *Washingtonian Magazine* as three of Washington’s most influential 150 people.

We are off to a strong start to the academic year. I’ll write again in a few weeks with additional updates. In the meantime, all the best for a successful term.

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