



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

MEMORANDUM

October 8, 2008

TO: Campus Community
FROM: Gary Abramson, Chairman, Board of Trustees
SUBJECT: Board of Trustees Meeting Summary and
Next Steps in Strategic Planning Process

The Board of Trustees met on Thursday, September 25, and Friday, September 26, to conduct a meeting and retreat. The main focus was the strategic plan—to enable the full board to review the work done to date, discuss the proposed ideas, and evaluate next steps. The meeting was well attended, the discussion was vigorous, and the review was led by Dr. William DeLone, chair of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, and facilitated by Dr. Brent Ruben of Rutgers University. In addition to assessing the current draft plan, the board also conducted some normal business that included

- approving Mr. David Teslicko as the new student trustee;
- welcoming two new trustees to their first meeting—Mr. Rick Beyer, president, Trimble Mobile Solutions, and Mr. Pat Butler, vice president, The Washington Post Company, who were formally approved at the May 2008 meeting;
- approving Dr. Tom Minar as vice president of development and alumni relations;
- welcoming to their first board meeting Dr. Scott Bass, provost, and Dr. Terry Flannery, executive director of communications and marketing;
- hearing a report from vice president of finance and treasurer Don Myers on the re-structuring of the university's tax-exempt bonds.

The report that follows from President Kerwin summarizes the discussion of the strategic plan draft and the board's recommendations for next steps. Meanwhile, a subgroup of the board plans to meet in late October to review an interim report on the strategic plan's progress and to prepare the board for review of the next plan drafts and possible closure at the November meeting. The board acknowledges and greatly appreciates the significant work invested by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the entire AU community in its commitment to write a vibrant and future-oriented strategic plan.

The next meeting of the full board will be November 20–21.

From President Kerwin:

I am pleased to report that the September 24 and 25 meeting with the Board of Trustees to

review our strategic planning process went very well. The trustees were impressed with the process that has brought the plan to its current state and with the quality of analysis and ideas presented in both themes and goals. The trustees engaged in a comprehensive discussion of the draft materials during their meetings. They took their work seriously and offered a number of ideas to strengthen the plan.

To a considerable extent, the comments and suggestions from the board are similar to views the committee has heard from the broader university community. The trustees expect to review a new draft with a sharper focus on key priorities. These priorities, individually and collectively, should constitute major advances for our university that will distinguish AU from other outstanding institutions. They expect a document that conveys our strategy in clearer, more concise terms that enable them, as trustees, to evaluate action steps and promote true accountability. The raw material for a successful plan is in place. The job that remains is to fashion a document that contains ambitious aspirations—real reach—with the work needed to bolster our already strong foundations.

I have asked the Strategic Planning Steering Committee to develop the next draft, based on their expertise and on feedback they have received from the university community after having guided this process for nearly a year. Their new draft will be circulated to the community prior to preparing a final version of the plan. The committee encourages continued feedback via the [blog](#) and by [e-mail](#). Another town hall meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 28, from noon to 1:30 p.m. in rooms 4–6 in the Mary Graydon Center.

At their November meeting, the board will consider the final draft of the plan, along with budget criteria for our next two-year budget cycle. This will effectively align resources with priorities for the first two years of the plan.

After the plan is approved, the university will begin to develop action steps. These will be the specific objectives taken by the appropriate authority—schools and colleges, divisions and departments—that will bring our plans into sharp focus. By May 2009, we should have both action steps and a budget that will set the course for our new direction.

I would like to express my personal gratitude for your thoughtful engagement and hard work. Many of you have indicated that you will offer your commitment and resolve to the goals, once you see specific priorities and resources committed to their realization.

We are moving to the last phase of the process. Thank you for staying involved as we enter the home stretch.