



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN
PRESIDENT

MEMORANDUM

December 19, 2008

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

I am writing at the conclusion of the fall term with updated information on important topics and, most of all, to thank our campus community members for your ongoing efforts and dedication to American University. In the composition of our student body, faculty prominence, financial stability, institutional visibility, athletics achievement, board governance, alumni engagement, and numerous other measurement standards, our performance has been very strong throughout the past year. We also welcomed a number of outstanding persons to key leadership positions.

To recognize the significant efforts you have invested in American University in 2008 and as a way to say “thanks,” I am announcing that Friday, December 26, will be a university holiday—in addition to the previously identified holidays of December 24–25. If you have any questions about this holiday for time card or annual leave reporting purposes, contact AU’s Payroll Office or Office of Human Resources. I hope that you can spend the day in the spirit of the season with family, friends, and loved ones.

Strategic Plan

We have made a strong statement about American University’s future through the [strategic plan](#) (my.american login required) approved by the Board of Trustees in November. Beginning with a meeting on December 19 and over the next several weeks, the university leadership will consider possible university-wide objectives and action steps that have come from every corner of campus. They will be assisted by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and colleagues in their home units. We will communicate with the campus community and seek input and views on which of these university-wide objectives and action steps can best advance the strategic plan goals as soon as they begin to take form. In parallel, the University Budget Committee will develop proposals for a two-year budget that will be submitted to me, along with strategic plan objectives and action steps, for approval and transmittal to the board.

This dialogue with the community has already begun and will continue through January and the first two weeks of February. At that time I will make final

decisions about this initial set of objectives, action steps, and the two-year budget and forward them to the Board of Trustees for consideration and action at their meetings on February 26 and 27.

Certainly the general economic conditions require us to maintain budget flexibility in general and for this initial stage of plan implementation in particular. Nevertheless, it is very important that we establish our initial set of university-wide objectives and action steps so that our intended path is clear and our academic and administrative units have sufficient guidance to complete their individual plans.

When we first established the timeframe for strategic planning, we acknowledged that meeting the deadlines while maintaining our commitment to transparency and participation would be challenging. Let me thank you again for your dedication, hard work, and prompt response at every stage of the process that has enabled us to remain on target. I look forward to working with the university community as we implement the plan and seek even greater recognition and accomplishment.

Finances and Enrollments

We are on track with revenues and expenditures to produce a balanced budget result for FY09 without needing to tap reserves other than those already planned for this budget year. Usually reliable indicators related to spring enrollment, including course registrations, receivables, requests for transcripts, and requests for emergency financial assistance, are all either positive or consistent with our experience in past years. Retention of fall freshmen is currently over 96 percent which is better than last year. With regard to fall 2009, freshman applications are up slightly over this time last year, and early decision applications are up by 12.8 percent over last year. Transfer applications are down slightly (by only nine applications), but graduate applications are slightly ahead of last year. At this early stage, we are limited in our ability to project the enrollment for fall 2009, but these initial trends are promising.

While we are encouraged by the information we have, we fully understand that current economic conditions require uninterrupted vigilance. As is the case with virtually all other universities, our endowment has lost considerable value. Unlike many universities, however, our dependence on endowment income for our operating budget is not significant. And, as reported earlier this semester, early actions by Vice President Don Myers and our board to restructure our bond obligations have prevented adverse effects from the turmoil in those markets.

After the holidays we will have more definitive information about the remainder of the current year and our enrollment prospects for next academic year. I will write again at the start of the spring semester with an update on those conditions.

Facilities and Campus Operations

The new addition to the Kogod School of Business will open in January and will further enhance our main campus entrance through a vibrant new presence. Meanwhile, work has begun to refurbish the Kay Spiritual Life Center lounge,

and completion is expected in late February; the Mary Graydon bridge canopy will be finished in February; and work continues on pace for the School of International Service building.

The Army Corps of Engineers continues their work on AU property. At 4825 Glenbrook Road, digging operations under the protective structure will begin again on January 5; however, work at the president's residence on 4835 Glenbrook is moving toward completion by summer 2009. Work at the Public Safety building on the main campus continues as the Army Corps finds small amounts of debris in the soil dating back to the World War I era. The Army Corps work will cease during inauguration week, January 19–23.

Inauguration Planning

All of Washington is intrigued with reports of the crowds that are expected for the U.S. presidential inauguration on Tuesday, January 20, which may bring an unprecedented number of visitors to the nation's capital and place a significant strain on Washington's transportation, lodging, and food services. Although inauguration day is a university holiday and is coupled with the Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday on Monday, January 19, we expect that a large number of students will remain in town and on campus to watch in person or participate in inauguration day activities. Utilizing information provided by local and federal officials, university officials will be working to ensure that our campus housing, dining, transportation, health care, and other support services will operate as efficiently as possible. We should acknowledge, however, that if crowd estimates prove accurate our efforts in all of these areas will be hampered. I will update the campus community in mid-January about the specific preparations being put in place by AU offices and support services during the four-day inauguration period.

In addition to the downtown activities, the Office of Alumni Relations will celebrate inauguration 2009 with an afternoon program and evening reception on Saturday, January 17, in the Katzen Arts Center. Details are available at [the alumni relations Web site](#). Other activities are being planned for the four-day weekend, and a schedule will be available in early January.

Web Project

Work has continued steadily and diligently on AU's new Web site, with a project launch anticipated for late winter. From the initial assessment over two years ago (led by Dean Larry Kirkman) that identified the university's pressing Web communications needs, the project has been progressing steadily through various stages that have included customer research, project proposal and acceptance, wireframe build out, page designs, special features development, content management system installation, and content migration and creation. We have used four vendors (Huge for design, North Highland for content migration and creation, Paper Thin for CMS development, and Realview TV for the virtual tour), and we have tapped the communications, marketing, and information technology expertise of dozens of people across campus, who have invested significant time, effort, and expertise in the project to date.

Our goal has been to unveil a site that reflects a strong sense of our AU identity; shares common elements yet provides for unit distinctiveness; and has helpful (or

essential) features, such as a university calendar, virtual tour, and an interactive component that enables AU to enter the world of Web 2.0. The new site will be a significant part of our stronger communications and marketing commitment. We will update campus as we get closer to launch.

Athletics Success

The fall athletics season concluded with two of our teams hosting championship play—field hockey hosted and won the Patriot League tournament (their fourth), and volleyball won their eighth league championship and hosted the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament for the first time. In field hockey, Irene Schickhardt was named an All-American and the Patriot League Scholar-Athlete of the Year, and Christine Fingerhuth was named All-American. In volleyball, Rubena Sukaj was honorable mention All-American and was the Patriot League Player of the Year. We will host our annual Stafford “Pop” Cassell Hall of Fame weekend on January 31 and will induct three former student-athletes into the Hall of Fame.

I'll close by wishing every member of the AU community a happy and healthy holiday season.

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