



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN  
PRESIDENT

December 4, 2009

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

---

As the semester draws to a close, I am writing to share information on a number of important items.

### **General Conditions**

The condition of our university remains strong. The enrollment trends that have been discussed in a variety of settings over the past several months have not changed, and we remain on track to operate within our revenue and expenditure targets for the current fiscal year. However, the larger economy remains a concern, in particular, with the unemployment rate still very high and little prospect for significant improvement in the near term. Consequently, we remain focused on the needs of our current students. While there is nothing unusual in the current payment patterns for tuition and fees, as I reported in my October letter, we have had increased traffic in the Office of Financial Aid. Therefore, as students return home for the holidays and mid-semester break, it is important that they and their families know the financial aid office will continue its efforts to be accessible and provide resources and options for AU students and their families for financing an AU education.

### **Strategic Plan**

Work continues on implementing the strategic plan, *American University and the Next Decade: Leadership for a Changing World*. I reported on the progress to date to the Board of Trustees at their November meeting. That report is posted on the President's Office Web site ([www.american.edu/president/reports/upload/BOT-Strat-Plan-Implementn-Progress-112009.pdf](http://www.american.edu/president/reports/upload/BOT-Strat-Plan-Implementn-Progress-112009.pdf)). It reviews university-wide actions taken to provide resources, transparency, and accountability for plan implementation, as well as signs of progress and challenges we see at this early stage of the process.

### **Action of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

I am pleased to inform you that in late November, we received an official communication from the chair of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education stating that our Periodic Review Report was accepted, our accreditation reaffirmed, and AU was commended for the "quality of the report and the periodic review process."

The review team's assessment contains a number of significant comments about AU. The Periodic Review Report can be accessed online ([www1.american.edu/middlestates/report/docs/PRR-FINAL-REPORT.pdf](http://www1.american.edu/middlestates/report/docs/PRR-FINAL-REPORT.pdf)).

The AU team that prepared our Periodic Review Report deserves our appreciation and high regard for the quality of their work. Chaired by Karen Froslid Jones, the team consisted of:

- Anthony Ahrens, associate professor of psychology, College of Arts and Sciences
- Nana An, executive director, budget and payroll, Office of Finance and Treasurer
- Robert A. Blecker, professor of economics, College of Arts and Sciences
- David Culver, professor of environmental science, College of Arts and Sciences
- Seth Cutter, former student body president and Board of Trustees member
- Frank L. DuBois, associate professor of international business, Kogod School of Business
- Karen Froslid Jones, director, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment
- Robert Hradsky, assistant vice president and dean of students, Office of Campus Life
- Nanette S. Levinson, associate professor and division director of international relations, School of International Service
- Haig L. Mardirosian, former dean of academic affairs and senior vice provost; professor of music, College of Arts and Sciences
- Howard E. McCurdy, professor of public administration and policy, School of Public Affairs
- Andrew D. Pike, professor, Washington College of Law
- Anastasia Snelling, associate professor, School of Education Teaching and Health, College of Arts and Sciences
- David Taylor, chief of staff, Office of the President
- Angela Wu, professor of computer science, College of Arts and Sciences

Our next evaluation visit is scheduled for 2013–2014.

### **Board of Trustees**

The fall meeting of the Board of Trustees was held November 19 and 20, with nine committee meetings and the general session taking place. Board chair Gary Abramson and I held a town hall meeting (one of two held annually) to enable the campus community to ask questions of us. The trustees took a hard-hat tour of the School of International Service building and heard a presentation by SIS dean Louis Goodman, and student leaders hosted a breakfast reception for the board. As is his practice, board chair Gary Abramson has posted a meeting summary on the trustees' Web site indicating the business conducted and topics covered at the fall meeting. The next meeting will be February 18 and 19.

### **H1N1**

Thanks to the planning and vigilance of the entire community, we reached the final day of fall semester classes without significant interruption to the university's normal operation. The number of reported cases of H1N1 continues to decline (only six cases in the last week of November). We completed four successful H1N1 vaccination clinics (two in the Mary Graydon Center and two at the Washington College of Law) to distribute the 2,300 doses we

received (as of December 2). We expect an additional 300 doses in the next few days. This program followed a successful inoculation of 4,000 campus community members for the seasonal flu earlier this semester. I urge everyone to continue to observe the recommended practices of hand washing, coughing etiquette, and self-isolation if you experience symptoms. We must remain on alert for flu activity during spring semester. Special thanks go to the Emergency Response Team, Student Health Center, Housing and Dining Programs, and Human Resources for coordinating the substantial efforts to keep us all healthy and functioning.

### **University Branding Project**

AU has engaged [160over90](#), a full service branding firm located in Philadelphia, to create an integrated brand marketing program based on the research and recommendations developed over the last nine months. The agency works with higher education clients (including Michigan State and Loyola University) as well as corporate clients (including American Eagle Outfitters, SoBe Life Water, and DeLonghi). Working with executive director Terry Flannery and the University Communications and Marketing staff, the agency began their intensive discovery process in mid-November to seek stories and examples that illustrate active citizenship, learning from leaders, and Washington, D.C., as a powerful lab for learning—all AU brand attributes identified by the research. A total of 200 students, faculty, staff, and leaders met with the agency in interviews and focus groups. 160over90 found a community that repeatedly reinforced the positioning ideas and is eager to see them effectively used to benefit AU and its constituencies. Over the next 12 weeks, we will sharpen our positioning strategy, design a creative approach, and select the creative concepts to bring the ideas to life. We will invite the AU community to review the brand concept and its planned implementation at a town hall meeting this spring.

### **Campaign and Annual Giving Update**

The *AnewAU* campaign has passed the important threshold of \$190 million and closed November at more than \$190.8 million. Ahead of December, historically the most productive fund raising month, cash commitments are already more than 23 percent greater in this fiscal year. Alumni donors are also up nearly 13 percent (or 550 donors) year-to-date. Our budget relieving annual funds remain on pace. New major gift commitments, which are important measures of economic rebound and our ability to meet *AnewAU* goals in 2010, are up significantly. The faculty-staff campaign was launched December 3; co-chairs Sarah Irvine-Belson and Athena Argyropoulos and the entire campaign committee encourage your participation. The busy season of alumni activities continues under the leadership of assistant vice president of alumni relations Raina Lenney, with recent and upcoming events in London, Denver, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta, and Washington.

### **Army Corps**

In November, the Army Corps of Engineers resumed activity on the university owned 4825 Glenbrook Road site. The high-probability work will include digging three test pits under two vapor containment structures—one in the backyard and one in the front. Seven other test pits will be done in the yard but do not require working under a containment structure; appropriate safety protocols will be followed, and the neighboring residents have been informed. This work will not directly affect the main AU campus; the Army Corps hopes to complete this work during spring 2010. Meanwhile, the Corps continues its low-probability

work around the Public Safety building, and is finding small amounts of lab glassware and debris. We also await a work plan for the Corps to conduct low probability trenching work around the radio tower and soccer field during late December and early January; when those plans are complete, we will inform the campus when the digging will occur.

In related news, the Army Corps published an engineering report that summarizes much of the work done and materiel found to date throughout the 661 acres of northwest Washington being investigated for the past 17 years. The report is accessible via the Army Corps Spring Valley Web site ([www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm](http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm)).

### **Campus Plan**

Our campus (facilities) planning process continues as we work to prioritize the university's top strategic facilities needs, identify potential project sites, and assess the required funding supports. By design, this is a lengthy, consultative, and evolutionary process that requires numerous on- and off-campus meetings. University campus planning officials are meeting regularly with neighborhood groups to review the concepts taking shape; the circle will continue to widen into the new year with presentations for the local advisory neighborhood commissions, campus groups, city officials, and Board of Trustees. Our goal is to file our 2011 plan with the D.C. Zoning Commission in the second half of 2010. As a reminder, all campus plan documents are posted on the Web site devoted to this topic ([www.american.edu/finance/fas/2011-Campus-Plan.cfm](http://www.american.edu/finance/fas/2011-Campus-Plan.cfm)) for review and comment as the plan evolves.

### **Achievements and Awards**

AU faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees continue to make us proud through their significant accomplishments and well-deserved honors. Among those of recent note include:

- Caroline “Carrie” Johnson—Along with her other considerable achievements, Carrie was a finalist in the 2009 Rhodes Scholarship Competition, of which we are tremendously proud. A 2009 *summa cum laude* graduate of our School of Public Affairs, Carrie also was one of 20 members of USA Today's All-USA College Academic First Team, a Morris Udall Scholar, and the President's Award winner for her graduating class. Her academic accomplishments, heartfelt commitment to help marginalized groups, and tremendous drive ensures that we will hear more about Carrie Johnson in the years to come.
- Margery Kraus—AU trustee, double alumna (BA and MA), and president and CEO of APCO Worldwide, Ms. Kraus was inducted into the Greater Washington Board of Trade Hall of Fame as an outstanding business leader who has made a significant contribution to the quality of life in the greater Washington area. She was one of only five honored in 2009 from across the national capital region.
- Jack Rasmussen—Director and curator of the AU Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Dr. Rasmussen was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary for his efforts to coordinate and host Hungarian cultural events—including some of international political significance. His international collaborations have helped the AU Museum create a strong reputation for powerful and substantive exhibits.

## University Web site Development, Phase II

The Web Steering Committee is evaluating the performance of our Phase I Web implementation while tackling priorities for Phase II of [www.american.edu](http://www.american.edu). Compared with one year ago under the old site, the new site has increased visits by 66 percent and unique visitors by 20 percent; nearly doubled page views; and improved the number of pages visited and duration of time on the site. Usability studies with students have pointed out numerous successes and a few opportunities for improvement. Phase II is underway with the following priorities identified for the remainder of this academic year:

- enhance student and faculty profiles
- develop a more accessible AUpedia (wiki) feature
- pilot a new blogging software and add capacity for all publishers
- encourage content migration from the old site to the new content management system, with a goal to move most old content in the divisions, schools, departments, and units to the new site by July 1, 2010
- continue to support individual faculty pages, research center pages, and other content hosted on the old site until it is migrated—migration of content to the new site may be encouraged at a later date, depending on the purposes of the content and the needs and interests of the page owners
- integrate the design and functionality of the new portal—myAU—with the university Web site, as the portal is being developed in phases with access for students as priority number one
- create a robust Web policy to ensure performance, security, and brand integration to guide the AU community regarding scope and purpose of the new site
- work with the Office of Information Technology to make Web trends tracking software and training more accessible so that metrics can gauge site effectiveness on multiple levels

## Campus Hours during Exams

Following the end of classes on Friday, December 4, many students will be looking for quiet places to study for final exams, complete papers, or to take a break and relieve stress. To assist, a number of classrooms and other campus spaces will be open for longer hours:

- Bender Library—will be open 24 hours a day through Monday, December 14, when it will close at midnight. Free coffee will be offered in the Mud Box every night from 2:00 a.m. until the pot runs dry;
- Kay Study Lounge—Kay Spiritual Life Center will offer a quiet study lounge for extended hours from Monday, December 7, through Sunday, December 13. For specific hours, contact the Kay Spiritual Life Center at ext. 3320;
- Jacobs Fitness Center—will be open from 6:00 a.m. to midnight from Monday, December 7, through Thursday, December 10; from 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Friday, December 11; 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Saturday, December 12; and 10:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Sunday, December 13.

Other rooms and spaces will be made available for study, and notices will be posted by the schools, colleges, and units. Watch for announcements and updates in *Today@AU* about

additional information about extended hours, study breaks, and stress management opportunities.

\*\*\*\*\*

In closing, I want to thank all members of the university community for their efforts to bring this term to a successful conclusion and wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.