



MEMORANDUM

February 11, 2010

TO: Campus Community
FROM: Neil Kerwin, President
SUBJECT: February Snowstorm

I am writing to thank the entire AU community for its resilience, dedication, and ingenuity this week as we endured the unprecedented snowstorms that shut down the nation's capital. I continue to hear stories about entire units and individual staff members who slept in the office, trudged in to work, logged on from home, and did whatever necessary to keep essential university operations going. AU employees have gone to great lengths to remove snow, cook for students, operate the shuttles, repair storm damage, open the library, keep our Web site and internal communications current, provide safety services, and ensure that WAMU stayed on the air with essential information.

The facilities staff focus has been to keep the campus safe and comfortable for residents and others within walking distance, ensure that heat was available in all buildings, and that service calls were answered as soon as possible. Our partners, Aramark and Bon Appetit, were key in maintaining essential student services. Public Safety was on hand to help address conditions on campus and respond to calls. Staff members are in good spirits, though they are nursing sore muscles, dealing with lack of sleep, and missing their families.

We have seen a significant increase in the use of technology and online services, as people have continued to work from home. The Office of Information Technology team, including the help desk, technical support, and management, has continued to work at the 24/7 Network Operations Center both on campus and at home virtually throughout the storm. In addition, the Center for Teaching, Research and Learning has been working with faculty to support their needs.

Appreciation goes to our student staff members, who have provided exemplary service, such as the resident assistants and desk receptionists, information desk staff, and student managers in the Mary Graydon Center. Our residence hall students have been confined in close quarters for days; we appreciate their understanding in light of the unusual circumstances, and thank the fitness center staff for keeping this important activity open. Thursday night's 7:00 p.m. televised men's basketball game against Bucknell in Bender Arena will be played, offering a great outlet for pent up spirit.

Provost Bass informed campus on Wednesday that we intend to keep to the academic schedule as planned, with no changes to the upcoming break, exams, or the end of term. We are encouraging faculty to continue with their planned assignments and course expectations through technology, and to begin working with students online to the extent they can. It is important for students to check email for information about classes and assignments.

Great progress has been made to clear AU walkways, roads, and lots. Many of you may know that the canopy collapsed over the walkway adjacent to the Mary Graydon Center which connects the quad with Butler Pavilion. No one was injured; the damage is being assessed and a time line for repairs established. Into next week, we will size up any needed changes for events, meetings, or other campus activities for which planning was hampered by the snow.

In addition to the challenge of keeping the campus running, I am fully aware of the difficulties that many face at home with concerns about heat, electricity, freezing pipes, house damage, fresh food, and how to get to work in the coming days. When AU reopens, neighborhood conditions may make travel very difficult for some faculty and staff, and individual circumstances and safety considerations are the most important consideration. Human Resources encourages any staff members who cannot make it in to contact their supervisors regarding applicable leave policy. Later today (Thursday) we will post our decision regarding operating status through the usual means, after getting information on our conditions, public transportation, and the D.C. and surrounding roads.

It is gratifying and comforting to know that in times like these, our students, faculty, and staff can count on each other to get through this time and emerge ever stronger. Our campus community has weathered this storm by remaining positive, supportive, and purposeful. Mindful of the circumstances and considerations noted above, we will resume normal operations as soon as possible so we can all get on with this institution's important work. In the meantime—safety first.