



Strategic Planning

STEERING COMMITTEE

August 25, 2008

From the president

In July, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee released two reports to the AU community—an environmental analysis, followed by a list of guiding principles, draft themes and strategies to be further defined in the strategic plan. In the following pages, you will find the committee's first draft of AU's strategic plan. It includes specific university-level goals and aspirations for the next decade—increasing academic accomplishments, focusing upon diversity, and increasing our stature in the local, national, and global arena.

The strategic plan is a high level document—it embodies our mission as defined in the Statement of Common Purpose and presents a summary of the environmental analysis, vision statement and strategic goals drafted this summer to reflect campus input. It is not designed to serve as an action plan—that is, it does not yet include tactics and action items—which will be developed through the late fall and spring, after the strategic plan has been reviewed by the AU community and approved by the trustees.

For comparison purposes, I encourage you to review Cornell University's strategic plan (www.cornell.edu/president/strategic-plan.cfm#goals). Although their language and phrasing is different, their plan—like ours—creates high-level expectations, guidance, and context for the future.

Your continued engagement and input is important in order for the strategic planning process to succeed. In the coming weeks, every school, college, and unit is asked to meet to discuss the plan's proposed strategic goals. In addition, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee will conduct its next town hall forum, Thursday, September 4 at 4:00 pm in the McDowell Formal Lounge. You may also provide input through the committee's email account (strategicplan@american.edu) or via the blog.

As we continue to work toward setting the course for AU's future, the committee needs your feedback on whether the draft plan presents an appropriate mix of strategic goals for AU.

Cornelius M. Keenan

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

I. MISSION (STATEMENT OF COMMON PURPOSE)

The place of American University among major universities with first-rate faculties and academic programs grounded in the arts and sciences is secured by its enduring commitment to uncompromising quality in the education of its students. But its distinctive feature, unique in higher education, is its capacity as a national and international university to turn ideas into action and action into service by emphasizing the arts and sciences, then connecting them to the issues of contemporary public affairs writ large, notably in the areas of government, communication, business, law, and international service.

Recognized for its emphasis on personalized teaching and experiential education, the university provides for the direct involvement of faculty and students in the institutions and culture of the most important capital city in the world. Since its founding by an Act of Congress in 1893 as a private, independent, coeducational institution, under the auspices of the United Methodist Church, American University has been a national and international university. This is reflected in the scope of its teaching and research programs and the diversity of its faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and student body, today representing more than 135 countries.

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The university actively encourages a commitment to public service, inclusive participation in university governance, equity and equal access, and an appreciation of diverse cultures and viewpoints. Its commitment to social justice, its ability to respond to the needs of a changing world while retaining its core values, and its capacity to turn to educational advantage the resources of the nation's capital are hallmarks of the institution.

The university distinguishes itself through a broad array of undergraduate and graduate programs that stem from these primary commitments:

- **interdisciplinary inquiry** transcending traditional boundaries among academic disciplines and between administrative units
- **international understanding** reflected in curriculum offerings, faculty research, study abroad and internship programs, student and faculty representation, and the regular presence of world leaders on campus
- **interactive teaching** providing personalized educational experiences for students, in and out of the classroom
- **research and creative endeavors** consistent with its distinctive mission, generating new knowledge beneficial to society
- **practical application** of knowledge through experiential learning, taking full advantage of the resources of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area

The central commitment of American University is to the development of thoughtful, responsible human beings in the context of a challenging yet supportive academic community.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND SWOT

A vital stage in American University's strategic planning process was the development of an environmental scan. Internal and external data, as well as the subsequent analysis of significant trends offered a footing from which goals would emerge. Environmental scanning tools included identifying external factors, assessment of American University's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (a SWOT analysis), recognizing emerging trends in higher education, and benchmarking.

1. Analysis of External Environmental Factors

Representative external factors included:

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- **Demographic:** Projected numbers of college-bound students by state.
- **Societal and Economic:** American University's ability and willingness to respond to social challenges, the current and future states of the economy, potential impact on current sources of funding, and opportunities for diversifying revenue streams as offered by economic trends.
- **Political:** Key political issues and leadership in the United States and potential partnerships and networks.
- **Regulatory:** The Higher Education Act and other regulatory changes affecting American University's operations.
- **Technological:** Emerging technologies promising to address instructional and student needs in order to remain competitive.
- **Higher Education Industry:** Published institutional rankings and accreditation.

2. Assessment of American University's Strengths, Limitations, Opportunities, and Threats

Key findings of the assessment included:

- **Strengths:** American University's greatest strength is its institutional core values, which include social responsibility and a commitment to ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, and intellectual diversity.
- **Limitations:** Most prominently, American University's lack of a strong and consistent brand identity and institutional confidence. In addition, insufficient resources, a risk-averse organizational culture, and bureaucratic processes.
- **Opportunities:** Strategic positioning and partnerships related to the core values of social responsibility, public service, and human rights as grounded in the underlying mission of knowledge creation and high standards for scholarship.
- **Threats:** External pressures, including economic conditions, increased competition, and the need to diversify revenue streams.

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3. Identification of Emerging Trends in Higher Education

The following trends in higher education also affected this plan:

- The development of new and the enhancement of existing degree programs in response to academic best practices and student needs.
- The growth of distance learning and other online learning delivery systems.
- Enhanced affordability with an emphasis on need-based financial aid, often using endowment funds.
- Globalizing influences in education, including overseas branch campuses, international exchange programs, internationally oriented institutional development, and distance learning, and the creation of academic programs in the United States by overseas universities.
- Multigenerational student and workforce populations.
- Technological solutions to multiple learning style preferences of students of varying ages.
- Strategic university consortia for instruction, research, and business opportunities.

4. Completion of a Benchmarking Study

A benchmarking study gauged American University's relationship to market trends and the institutional effectiveness of peers. The study examined American University's past, present, and future directions. It clarified institutional strengths, weaknesses, and gaps as measured against 39 performance indicators and resulted in deeper insight into American University's rank in a 15-school, peer market basket.

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III. STATEMENT OF VISION

American University will become a vibrant intellectual community committed to prominent research, inspiring learning, and transformative action, capitalizing on its Washington, D.C., location. With a faculty recognized worldwide for its seamless integration of cutting-edge research and exceptional teaching, ours will be an unparalleled scholarly environment emphasizing the development and application of knowledge in an ethical framework essential to confronting the world's most challenging problems. American University will increase its efforts to diversify its faculty, students, staff, and leadership and will embrace the myriad perspectives that flow from their identities. Engaged alumni will stimulate the university's growth and prominence. The university will be a model of best practices in higher education, environmental sustainability, organizational effectiveness, and the advancement of human rights. In all this, American University will number among the most esteemed universities locally, nationally, and globally.

IV. STRATEGIC GOALS

Theme 1: A Culture of Academic Accomplishment and Prominence

The strength of its faculty, students, alumni, and academic programs determines the character of any university. Each of these interdependent qualities contributes to overarching excellence. This strategic plan will emphasize the recruitment, support, and retention of the very best teachers-scholars. The brightest and most engaged students must likewise be recruited and subsequently afforded flexibility and breadth in programming. In order to endow students with an expansive foundation in the arts and sciences as well as the opportunity of testing the nucleus of their learning in real-world challenges, their academic experience must encourage both faculty and students to step beyond their own disciplines. Together, students and faculty will promote the integration of knowledge and learning across the university's disciplines and schools. The future of each component of this plan is intertwined with that of the others through intentional integration of faculty, student, and programmatic strengths, insights, and potential.

Characteristics of academic programs:

1. Highly regarded and verifiably so through student and faculty outcomes, demanding external comparative evaluations, accreditation by regional and professional

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associations, and other invited assessments.

2. Providing students, staff, and faculty with the opportunities and resources for creative thinking and action that enhances national and international visibility while benefiting society.
3. Unrivaled in the pursuit of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and learning, with strong support for centers and institutes that focus on specific areas of the world and major intellectual, social, economic, legal, and public policy issues.
4. Anticipating the needs of society in their design and implementation to ensure the preparation of American University's students for careers and service.
5. Resulting in classifying American University as a doctoral granting "high research activity" institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
6. Resulting in placing American University among the top 200 research universities in the United States as determined by the Center for Measuring University Performance.
7. Renowned for their strategic partnerships with prestigious institutions in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, relationships that underscore the academic accomplishments and prominence of the institution.
8. Responsively adapting their delivery to the needs of graduate students and nontraditional students.

Characteristics of undergraduate programs:

9. Unsurpassed in combining the best of the small liberal arts experience with the resources and opportunities of a national university located in one of the world's most important cities, preparing students to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges via learning communities, general education, honors program, experiential education, study abroad, and conventional and interdisciplinary majors.

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Characteristics of graduate programs:

10. Facilitating graduate student research and learning through increased financial support and facilities.
11. At the forefront of national and international excellence in graduate and professional education by producing leaders in each degree-granting field.

Characteristics of faculty:

12. Emulating the scholar-teacher ideal while providing exceptional service to American University and the larger community.
13. Enjoying salaries, benefits, flexible workloads, infrastructure, and resource support rivaling or surpassing those of benchmark institutions.
14. Influential in their fields.
15. Dedicated and highly expert teachers and mentors, impacting learning and student development as measured by internal and external norms.
16. Engaged and valued adjunct faculty, bringing demonstrated professional expertise, teaching ability, capacity for long-term institutional affiliation, and attachments with key strategic partnering organizations.

Characteristics of students:

17. Accomplished and versatile, recruited for their balance of intellectual ability, academic promise, diversity, and demonstrated capacity to take full advantage of American University's distinctive academic programs and co-curricular activities.

Theme 2: Student Centeredness, Student Experience, and Student Outcomes

One of the hallmarks of education at American University is its student centeredness. As highlighted in the previous section of this plan, the learning experience in and out of the classroom, on campus, in the city, or abroad stimulates creative and critical thinking. In collaboration with award-winning faculty and staff, students contribute to a learning environment that fosters the creation of new knowledge and links to solv-

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ing problems in the community, the nation, and the world. Teaching and research must absorb the entire university community, thus developing each student's fullest intellectual potential. All sectors of the university—from offices that sustain students' everyday needs, like Financial Aid, Student Accounts, the Registrar, Campus Life, the University Library, and the Kay Spiritual Life Center, to individual faculty members, the schools and colleges, the provost, and the president's office—must be dedicated to making the experience of each student truly transformative. Students, upon graduation, will likewise be inclined to positively affect the communities in which they will live and work.

Attributes of student centeredness:

18. Students and faculty renowned for engagement in the great issues confronting our city, our nation, and the world, and clear leaders among their peers in service to the university and the communities beyond.
19. Students who compete and succeed in the most prestigious and selective competitions for scholarships, fellowships, and career opportunities and, for undergraduates, admissions to the most selective professional and graduate programs.
20. A campus providing prompt, effective, streamlined, and courteous service to students.
21. A community encouraging and incorporating student input in university decision making.

Theme 3: Fostering diversity

The academic, social, and organizational strength of American University relies in great measure on its inclusiveness and respect for the identity of individuals, cultural expressions, viewpoints, and contributions of populations that mirror those of its locality, nation, and world. While American University has always considered its commitment to diversity an admirable quality, it must also face the reality that its population of students, faculty, staff, and leadership lags behind the actual population and the projections of population in the decades ahead. Commitment to diversity demands commitment to developing resources to address the sharp economic divisions between majority and minority populations. It may not be possible to achieve exact parity in both domestic and international diversity, but it remains an imperative to insure that the campus population is made welcome, enriched, and retained.

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Steps toward increasing diversity:

22. Through purposeful recruitment, support, and retention of students, faculty, staff, and leadership, foster all aspects of diversity to reflect the nation's population. American University will also continue to expand the percentage of international students, faculty, and staff, thus creating a truly international environment.
23. Significantly increase American University's link with the District of Columbia and neighboring communities, focusing on issues of diversity, education, social justice, and social responsibility that will positively affect the lives of local residents.

Theme 4: Thriving Campus Community and Life-long Engagement

We aspire to be an institution that exemplifies the best principles of civility and shared governance in a community that celebrates both individual and collective achievements. With the implementation of this strategic plan, the staff, administration, and faculty must welcome students, not simply for their years of study at American University, but for a lifetime. This life-long engagement should emphasize academic opportunities and relationships to the whole AU community as well as events, social activities, and opportunities to welcome visitors to campus.

To create a vigorous life-long community:

24. Create an immediately welcoming environment for students, faculty, staff, and alumni that inspires pride and fosters a desire to demonstrate one's affiliation with American University.
25. Offer winning athletic programs, both in their conference and in the NCAA, that bring pride, admiration, and loyalty to the American University community.
26. Develop programs and services to ensure that graduates who have been engaged as students remain connected to the spirit and aspirations of the university as alumni.
27. Involve alumni as a major force in university life.
28. Develop innovative alumni programming and services based on conversations with and ideas of alumni, programming and services that reflect American University's character and values.

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Theme 5: Social Responsibility

American University's founding principles emphasize commitments to social justice and responsibility. We commit ourselves to becoming an exemplar of social responsibility and a civic leader in the District of Columbia, the region, nation, and world. We recognize that even our name compels us to respond in recognition and service of our values. In our policies, curriculum, activities, invited speakers, performances, and intellectual life, we seek to solve problems and improve the quality of life in our communities. Our day-to-day decisions and long-term goals will embody our obligation to be socially responsible and make choices reflecting that commitment.

To be more socially responsible:

29. Address social justice issues as a community by selecting each year a common theme rooted in social justice and social responsibility.
30. Fully comply with the university Presidents Climate Commitment by reducing the undesirable environmental impact of the university and making sustainability a cornerstone of all university operations.

Theme 6: Local, National and Global Leadership

The application of knowledge is a characteristic of American University. Based on a long history of local, national, and international partnerships with other educational institutions, governments, nongovernmental agencies, and prestigious research organizations, American University is determined to increase its influence, provide students with outstanding learning opportunities, and be recognized both for its academic excellence and its commitment to public service.

To assert institutional leadership:

31. Foster debate on local, national, and global issues, such as the environment, the economy, education, public policy, law, and religion, using those discussions to encourage and direct change.
32. Facilitate faculty, student, staff, and alumni engagement with the global community by cultivating opportunities for research, learning, and service around the world.

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33. Establish formal partnerships with prestigious national research and historical agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and the Smithsonian Institution, and with preeminent international universities and organizations abroad to enrich our academic goals.
34. Witness American University faculty, staff, students, administrators, and alumni selected in disproportionate numbers for formal leadership positions in their fields and associations.

Theme 7: A High-Performing Organization

At American University, we envision a future in which the university will set high performance standards for its faculty, staff, administrators, leadership, and students. Everyone employed by the university should be free to capitalize on their talents and skills, be satisfied in their work, and be rewarded for their efforts. We must aspire toward unified goals, recognizing the organizational transformation required to achieve such. We will become a high performing organization as measured by real productivity and outcomes correlated with goals and objectives. High performance will denote high achievement in all sectors, including human resources, procedures, services rendered, physical plant, and financial resources.

Characteristics of high performance:

35. Diversify and increase financial resources and campus infrastructure to achieve strategic priorities; reduce tuition reliance to a level comparable to our peer institutions.
36. Develop an organizational culture embracing continual improvement, innovation, organizational and fiscal integrity, inclusiveness and transparency and one that emphasizes accomplishment, rather than impediments.
37. Exemplify the best principles of civility and shared governance.
38. Create a workplace that empowers and optimizes human capital and qualifies American University as a great place to work, a workplace where decisions are made at the lowest effective level.

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Theme 8: Extending the Visibility of the University Locally, Nationally, and Globally

American University must gain visibility and recognition for the exceptional work it does—and will do.

39. Establish a comprehensive and aggressive—internal and external—communication and identity enhancement program.
40. Achieve national and global prominence and campus spirit through accomplishments in academics, athletics, the arts, and community service, as well as through aggressive promotion of these accomplishments. Always speak well of American University.