



# *Strategic Plan*

## AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Monday, December 1, 2008

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### **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AND THE NEXT DECADE: LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING WORLD**

#### **PREAMBLE**

Our mission, expressed in our Statement of Common Purpose and our vision for the next decade, is based on the intellectual leadership and dedication of our faculty; the committed professionalism of our staff; the talents, idealism, and energy of our students; and the accomplishments of our alumni. We anticipate a future of prominence and influence for American University among the nation's leading institutions of higher education.

#### **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 over 135 countries.

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 develop thoughtful, responsible human beings in the context of a challenging yet supportive academic community.

## **A VISION FOR AMERICAN UNIVERSITY'S NEXT DECADE**

Great challenges and opportunities mark the next decade. Our nation will examine and adjust its role in the world and seek to improve its public and private institutions while exploring the dynamics and possibilities of a changing, diverse society and culture. In these historic efforts, American University will be an active and influential participant.

With our location in the nation's capital, academic vibrancy, philosophical grounding, and dedication to engagement and service, American University will provide the intellectual and ethical leadership to shape emerging world views, forge new scholarly paths, and prepare our students to lead and serve in the city, nation, and world.

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We will be guided in our work by a strategic plan whose framework is structured around the following transformational goals:

## **TEN TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS**

Over the next decade, American University will:

### **1. Epitomize the Scholar-Teacher Ideal**

Our faculty will epitomize the ideal of the scholar-teacher by blending research, teaching, and service into an inspiring whole. They will influence their fields with respected scholarly, creative, and professional work; inspire students to attain the highest levels of excellence; and raise the university's academic stature to new heights.

### **2. Provide an Unsurpassed Undergraduate Education and Experience**

We will be in high demand for the quality of our liberal arts and professional education offerings, which are linked to the unrivaled opportunities of Washington, D.C., and set in the context of a supportive campus environment. Our students will enhance their broad education in the arts and sciences and their expertise in major and minor fields through community-based learning and research, professional study and experience, access to the world's premier institutions, and opportunities to participate in knowledge creation. Our winning athletics program will inspire pride and reinforce the student-athlete model, while our arts will broaden cultural horizons. Staff will deliver high-quality student development programs, campus activities, services, and facilities that demonstrate our student-centered priorities.

### **3. Demonstrate Distinction in Graduate, Professional, and Legal Studies**

We will be a magnet for the nation's next generation of intellectual and professional leaders. With each graduate program demonstrating distinction and increased support for programs that have achieved or may achieve high recognition, we will be known as a world-class institution for legal and advanced graduate studies.

### **4. Engage the Great Ideas and Issues of Our Time through Research, Centers, and Institutes**

The university's schools and colleges are central to its intellectual life and identity. Our strong interdisciplinary focus will be enhanced by our centers and institutes, many of which engage in the great issues of our time. As we attract external funding for research, nurture our faculty's professional growth, and maximize our

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potential through interdisciplinary work, we will pursue a course that increases our engagement and places us prominently among the top 200 research universities and Carnegie classifications.

## **5. Reflect and Value Diversity**

Throughout our history, inclusiveness and diversity have been hallmarks of American University. Our academic, social, and organizational strength is enhanced by our inclusiveness and respect for the unique identity of individuals reflected in their cultural traditions, beliefs, and viewpoints. American University embraces diversity in its broadest sense, including diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, disability, socioeconomic standing, and intellectual viewpoint. The university views diversity as an essential component of the educational experience of our students and an important indicator of our success in adapting to the dramatic demographic shifts that will occur in the decades ahead. We will dedicate the necessary resources to recruiting, welcoming, supporting, and retaining outstanding students, faculty, staff, and leadership who will significantly improve the diversity of our community, with particular attention to the inclusion of underrepresented domestic minority students.

## **6. Bring the World to AU and AU to the World**

Academic life and research excellence will be enriched in profound ways by our worldwide connections and bonds with local, national, and international organizations. These programs, partnerships, and relationships will demonstrate our deep local roots, wide national influence, and broad global reach.

## **7. Act on Our Values through Social Responsibility and Service**

American University is known for its politically and socially engaged faculty, staff, graduates, and students, who are recognized as the most politically active in the nation. We will strengthen our culture of service and social responsibility. Life at the university will be marked by rich opportunities for service, an active pursuit of sustainability, a steadfast sense of ethics, and a vigorous commitment to the city and people of Washington, D.C.

## **8. Engage Alumni in the Life of the University, on and off Campus**

We will renew the university's relationships with alumni here and around the globe. We will invite them into stronger roles with the institution and engage

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them as partners in key aspects of university life. We will utilize our graduates in educational activity, mentoring and career services, alumni education and networking opportunities, and a full range of development activities. Alumni will forge deeper connections with the university, its students, and each other.

## **9. Encourage Innovation and High Performance**

We will build a culture of innovation and high performance. To respond to the needs of the twenty-first century and the requirements of the university and its students, we will encourage innovation and high performance in learning, scholarship, technology, financial management, and organizational processes. We will create effective IT governance that broadly manages IT and computational operations across all pillars of the university. Motivating and rewarding high performance and providing opportunities for professional development and advancement, we will train, inform, and empower staff, faculty, and administrators to make those decisions for which they are best qualified.

## **10. Win Recognition and Distinction**

Our profile will rise as we tell the story of American University to the world. The prominence of the professional leadership roles assumed by faculty and staff will highlight the caliber of the institution. Benefiting from strategic and integrated marketing, American University will build strength, boost pride, and be recognized as one of America's best universities.

## **SIX ENABLING GOALS**

To achieve our 10 transformational goals, we must bolster them by enhancing those aspects of university life that support them in crucial ways: intelligent financial planning, technology, the University Library and research infrastructure, partnerships, civil discourse, and improved facilities. The following six enabling goals underpin the transformational goals and ensure their effective implementation.

### **1. Diversify Our Revenue Sources**

It is clear that the next decade will bring profound changes to the financial markets, which have driven our growth in the past. Recognizing and responding to these changes proactively, we will rely less on tuition and more on entrepreneurial ventures to develop new models for revenue generation and maintain our financial stability for the future.

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## **2. Employ Technology to Empower Excellence**

We will build and strengthen a robust, reliable, and secure framework of information and communication technology to support our activities as a world-class university. By investing in state-of-the-art technology and planning for the future, the university will exploit technology to harmonize a diverse and widely distributed campus; leverage learning, research, and innovation; and empower users in physical and virtual space.

## **3. Enhance the University Library and Research Infrastructure**

As we invest in the continuing evolution of the University Library and the underlying research infrastructure, we will increase AU's ability to bolster teaching, research, and learning. The library's strengthened collection will buttress the specific research and teaching goals of faculty, while its improved facilities emerge as a dynamic learning hub. The library will provide what the community needs when it is needed, wherever that community exists.

## **4. Forge Partnerships by Leveraging Our Capital Location**

Our location in the nation's capital places the university in a powerful position to pursue and strengthen partnerships that elevate our profile and foster collaborations. We will leverage this location by engaging government, business, community, and cultural organizations in partnerships that draw resources to the university and bring the university to the nation and the world.

## **5. Continue as a Model for Civil Discourse**

The campus community will welcome unfettered civil discourse on the most challenging issues of our time, model the best principles of shared governance, be open to the contributions of each individual, and enjoy a work environment that reflects and accentuates its values. Such an environment fosters academic excellence, innovation, and the full realization of the university's potential.

## **6. Align Facilities Planning with Strategic Goals**

A comprehensive facilities plan, including a new campus master plan, will be developed to support the transformational goals. This plan will reflect the university's strategic priorities and financial resources.