



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC
SCHOOL of EDUCATION

Dear Members of the AU School of Education Community,

Greetings, and welcome back!

This semester feels especially meaningful, as we're not only beginning a new academic year but a new chapter for our school, including key partnerships and a [new cohort of staff and faculty](#).

I'm filled with an even deeper appreciation for how our community has come together to support our staff, who facilitated a strike to voice their concerns about wages and work conditions. And special thanks to our other staff who adapted and filled "gaps" in real-time during the work stoppage period. The power of advocacy and activism is real!

More than anything, I'm in awe of how each of you has risen to meet this very moment. It's certainly easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the lingering global education and health challenges before us. But those challenges are *the* reason we're all here—and precisely why we're called to education careers.

Choosing a career in education at this urgent juncture means you've decided to *run toward* the greatest challenges of our time. Nothing has deterred you. Instead, you are *inspired and motivated*. You've chosen a career that many are attacking and fleeing—and you are poised to make a powerful impact and lasting contribution in the lives of countless people.

The litany of crises is daunting indeed, but I remain fiercely optimistic—and that's because of you. When I think of what our students, faculty, staff, and alumni have

already accomplished, I know that we have the strength to drive change. For instance, this past year, [two cohorts of EdD students](#) graduated with a mission to elevate antiracist leadership and policy making. And, our undergraduate students, led by Emma Garry, formed the first-ever student government group to amplify education across campus. We have many smart and courageous community members, and one of the things about AU SOE is the beauty of collaboration and the power of partnerships and advocacy—across disciplines, programs, and across geographic regions.

The Power of Partnerships

If there is one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear, it's that we must partner across sectors and disciplines to tackle both current and future education crises. It is in that vein that we have pursued a number of collaborations that will continue to put teaching and learning at the center of our work, from [Urban Teachers](#), to [TeachPlus](#) to the [DC Teacher Pipeline Project](#), to [Panama Teach](#). These efforts have continued, and they all recognize the need for urgent, sustained action to improve student and teacher outcomes.

Clear Communications

Over the last two years, the importance of strong communication has been key to our thriving learning community. Overall, our School is increasing our media mentions and our consistent presence and messaging about our vision and core values. Jason Pier, our new Director of Strategic Communication and Marketing, continues to relay our vision to the broader community and facilitate our communications strategy to message our impact as an indispensable voice in education. I encourage you to take a few minutes to watch this [video](#), which captures the spirit of our School and vision.

Antiracism, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

As a part of the continued advancement of our antiracism, diversity, inclusion, and equity agenda, several projects and activities will continue and be expanded this year. Within these areas are several faculty, staff, and student initiatives that will be implemented in 2022-23 and led by Associate Dean Corbin Campbell and our [Antiracist Pedagogy Scholar](#), Dr. Annice Fisher. More information about these

initiatives and activities, including how to get involved, will be shared in the coming weeks.

Philanthropy Matters

The necessity of education policy, teacher and leader preparation and global education has become increasingly clear, not just to our committed alumni, donors, and friends, but to the entire world. I am grateful to our donors who have invested generously to support our efforts. As always, two of our highest fundraising priorities are **increasing financial aid for our students** and **endowing professorships** for our exceptional faculty.

To aid in our fundraising, we welcome Danielle Bowes (SIS '08) as our new Chief Development Officer. Danielle is the past Director of Development at the Fairness Project, and she was the Associate Director of Development at the Brookings Institution.

We're embarking on yet another challenging year—for our profession. As the headlines illustrate, education is central to national political debates and community conversations. From banning books about critical race theory to the “don't say gay” legislature, education is at a critical and tiring juncture. So, I encourage you to carve out the space you need to care for your loved ones, each other, and, just as importantly, yourself.

I'm reminded of [Malala Yousafzai's](#) excellent quote that sums up why we are here. *"Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world."*

In our quest for a better world, it's important to reconnect with your *why*. What is your dream for humanity? What is the vision that drew you to this work in the first place?

I look forward to seeing you all in person in the days ahead and continuing our work toward a world as it ought to be—one that is more just for all.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, PhD
Dean and Distinguished Professor