



DIVISION *of* STUDENT AFFAIRS
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

SHARED MOMENTUM

Eagles Meeting the Moment

Division of Student Affairs Strategic Action Plan
2026–2030

Mission

The Division of Student Affairs intentionally engages students by cultivating transformative experiences through open dialogue, holistic support, programming, and services. We aim to empower students to thrive and nurture their sense of belonging and purpose at American University and beyond.

Vision

Student Affairs is dedicated to recognizing students' unique experiences, removing barriers, strengthening resilience, and cultivating a supportive community where they can flourish. Thriving means navigating life with confidence, realizing potential, and contributing meaningfully to society while being accountable for our choices and resulting actions. Our vision is for every AU student to graduate equipped with the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to lead purposeful and impactful lives.

Values

Purpose

Student Affairs intentionally engages, nurtures, and supports the AU student community and staff, empowering them to thrive at AU and beyond. We encourage the adventure of mind and heart, remaining grounded in knowledge and empathy, using informed practices around inclusion and intersectionality, engaging in continual growth, demonstrating adaptability as we serve our community, and consistently examining our impact on our individual students and our larger community.

Leadership

Student Affairs is dedicated to actively providing opportunities of growth, mentorship, and recognition, giving our community of staff and students a pathway to reaching their highest potential at AU and throughout their lives. We hold space to explore the values and practices that drive persistence. Through advocacy and innovation, we help students build a foundation as they elevate their skills and knowledge to affect positive social change in service to the world.

Integrity

Student Affairs teaches and models open communication, ethical, and data-driven decision-making, transparency, sincerity, honesty, and intentionality at all levels of the organization. We listen to the varying needs of our community and work towards just and fair solutions.

Thriving

Student Affairs is dedicated to cultivating a campus culture where students and staff alike can thrive. We are committed to fostering an environment that encourages personal reflection, self-care, balance, and joy, empowering individuals to define and pursue their own success. By promoting empathy and well-being for ourselves and others, we create equitable access to resources and opportunities that nurture personal growth and a supportive community. By exploring beliefs, raising self-awareness, and engaging in meaningful action, we strive to help each person flourish both as individuals and in their contributions to the broader university community.

Belonging

Student Affairs is dedicated to creating an inclusive community where staff and students feel acknowledged, included, and celebrated for their differences. This is achieved through a deep commitment to creating spaces for care, open dialogue, and cooperation between campus departments and those they serve. Through an environment of holistic support paired with intentional programming, we can create an accessible and student-centered campus.

Division of Student Affairs



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SHARED MOMENTUM

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Introduction

Meet Our Moment, American University's five-year strategic plan (2026–2030), is a commitment to preparing students for career and personal success while strengthening the institution's impact on the world. Grounded in three pillars: Readiness, Community, and Curiosity, the plan advances experiential learning and skill development, deepens career preparation, leverages AU's distinctive approach to impactful research, and integrates Washington, DC, into every aspect of the student experience. By 2030, AU aims to be a premier destination for students seeking real-world experience, in-demand skills, and clear professional pathways.

In alignment with this vision, the Division of Student Affairs has developed a five-year strategic action plan to define its contribution to Meet Our Moment. This plan reflects a renewed commitment to preparing students for lives of purpose and achievement, fostering intellectual curiosity, strengthening community, and ensuring accountability for measurable outcomes.

Titled Shared Momentum: Eagles Meeting the Moment, the Division's strategic action plan is grounded in the core values that shape our work and our aspiration to be a national model for programs, services, and partnerships. The plan centers a student-focused approach that integrates curricular and co-curricular experiences, guided by five foundational priorities: Purpose, Thriving, Leadership, Belonging, and Integrity. Shared Momentum is aligned with the University's three strategic pillars, Readiness, Community, and Curiosity- and outlines how Student Affairs will translate these priorities into action through coordinated goals and initiatives. Together, these efforts are designed to help students turn potential into achievement while advancing the broader mission of American University.

Strategic Framework

Alignment with Meet Our Moment

Shared Momentum translates the University's three strategic pillars into six coordinated action areas for the Division of Student Affairs. Each action area contains numbered goals, objectives, responsible units, implementation timelines, and measurable action steps.

Community

Through mentors, cohorts, and a vibrant campus culture, AU provides the framework for students to navigate their unique journey and forge a powerful network that sustains them for life.

Action Area 1:

Student Belonging

Action Area 2:

Student-Centered

Action Area 3:

Holistic Well-Being

Readiness

Prepared for lives of achievement and meaning, AU students graduate with a portfolio of real-world experience and in-demand skills that translate across every industry and career.

Action Area 4:

Active, Engaged, Global, and Civic-Minded Community

Action Area 5:

Resource Development

Curiosity

AU research goes to work. "R1 the AU way" unites faculty and students in a common mission: to solve urgent challenges and transform bold ideas into meaningful action from the nation's capital to the global stage.

Action Area 6:

Staff Engagement and Professional Development





Student Belonging

Action Area 1

We commit to Student Belonging and fostering a community that values inclusive excellence, and accessibility for all students. We strive to create an environment where diverse perspectives are valued, voices are heard, and all individuals have the opportunity to thrive. We commit to developing and supporting student-led programming and organizations that foster community for students across identities and interests.

1.1 Create a Shared Divisional Framework for Student Belonging

Establish and operationalize a shared, division-wide definition and framework for student belonging that is consistently integrated across all student-facing programs, services, and spaces within the Division of Student Affairs.

1.2 Position Student Belonging as integral to Student Success

Ensure that belonging is embedded as a guiding framework across student organizations, student staff roles, and all student-facing offices and spaces within the Division of Student Affairs.

1.3 Build Student Capacity to Cultivate Belonging on Campus

Identify key touchpoints that support students in exploring and deepening their understanding of their identities throughout their college experience.

1.4 Develop and sustain high-impact community-building initiatives that strengthen the residential experience, deepen student connection and belonging, and establish signature traditions that anchor AU's campus culture

Create a coordinated portfolio of campus traditions, residential initiatives, and community-building experiences that strengthen belonging, enhance the residential student experience, reinforce the Residency Requirement, and foster lifelong connections to the American University community.

Student-Centered

Action Area 2

We are committed to a student-centered approach that prioritizes growth, advocacy, and development for students. Through mentorship, recognition, and skill-building opportunities, we empower individuals to enhance their knowledge and create positive social change. Our decisions, policies, and governance are guided by our dedication to students' education and development.

2.1 Foster a unified, student-centered approach across the Division

Align Student Affairs Departments around a shared mission while fostering student development through staff engagement, intentional training, signature events, and a relationship-driven service approach.

2.2 Expand student feedback opportunities and incorporate student voice in decision-making

Expand and formalize opportunities for student feedback and systematically integrate student voice into decision-making processes.

2.3 Promote holistic student development and leadership development

Expand student awareness, deepen inclusive engagement, and support leadership development, intentionally prioritizing outreach to uninvolved students while strengthening community among student employees and student leaders.

2.4 Optimize internal and external divisional communications

Streamline student communications and increase cross-departmental information sharing to promote transparency and student understanding of the Division of Student Affairs.



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Holistic Well-Being

Action Area 3

We commit to prioritizing students' holistic wellbeing. Every student deserves to be healthy, both physically, spiritually, and emotionally to thrive academically and socially. We will provide services and structures that support students in these domains to aid in their retention and their successful completion of their academic careers at American University.

3.1 Increase student and community awareness and knowledge of wellbeing resources

Increase student and community awareness and knowledge of resources, both in and beyond the Division of Student Affairs.

3.2 Increase external financial and resource partnerships

Pursue external relationships and resources. Build and sustain relationships with local organizations and explore opportunities for neighborhood members participation.

3.3 Proactively address students' challenges

Assist in working to address student needs before they are in crisis. Advance a university-wide wellness initiative.

3.4 Identify shared division definition and framework of holistic well-being

Establish one unified definition of a holistic well-being framework and operationalize for the Division of Student Affairs.

Active, Engaged, Global, and Civic-Minded Community

Action Area 4

We commit to fostering an active, engaged, and civic minded student community in service of education, growth, accountability, and understanding of the world we live in and the communities we aspire to create.

4.1 Foster meaningful and sustained relationships between students, administrators, and community partners through shared learning, dialogue, and collaboration with a shared understanding of what it means to be actively engaged and civic minded at AU

Create shared language that defines what it means to be an actively engaged, civic-minded student and student community. Design and institutionalize a comprehensive dialogue and civic engagement ecosystem at American University. Align civic engagement initiatives with key national milestones, including the midterm and national elections.

4.2 Position the Division of Student Affairs as a central driver of American University's "Meet Our Moment" strategic priorities by embedding civic learning, engagement, and community connection across the co-curricular experience, ensuring every student has access to meaningful, documented opportunities to develop as an engaged citizen and leader

Integrate civic learning and engagement across the co-curricular student experience. Expand and scale high-impact civic engagement opportunities

4.3 Build and operationalize an integrated, high-impact experiential learning ecosystem that expands service learning, nonprofit engagement, and community-based opportunities, strategically leveraging institutional resources, including the Eagle Endowment, to ensure all students can access and participate in meaningful, career-relevant, and community-centered experiences

Expand and integrate service learning and community-based experiences. Scale nonprofit engagement and student placement pipelines.

4.4 Operationalize American University's Global Commitment by ensuring every undergraduate student has access to, and the opportunity to participate in, a high-impact alternative break program that advances intercultural competence, career readiness, and civic engagement

Expand access and participation in global experiences, remove financial and structural barriers, and integrate global learning into the student experience.





Resource Development

Action Area 5

We commit to resource development and the alignment of human, physical, and fiscal resources to deliver the highest quality programs and services to the AU Community.

5.1 Emphasize assessment as a best practice to illustrate the effectiveness, impact and value of DSA programs and services

Establish a division-wide assessment committee. Develop a robust, transparent assessment training program for all staff.

5.2 Improve existing and identify new revenue streams within units to support current and new, innovative programs and services

Conduct financial analysis of existing revenue generating sources. Identify existing strengths, operational gaps, underutilized opportunities, and financial risks associated with current revenue models

5.3 Regularly review DSA physical spaces and make suggestions for scheduled improvements, repairs, or general upgrades that will better support our DSA Staff and the larger student body

Develop a short and long-term facility renewal plan. Establish process for incorporating student feedback into assessment of physical DSA infrastructure.

5.4 Leverage technological resources to inform resource allocation and maximize work efficiency and effectiveness

Establish a formal DSA Technology Assessment Cycle. Develop a plan for shared technology solutions that improve functionality and reduce costs.

5.5 Enhance the visibility, impact, and financial stability of the Division of Student Affairs through strategic communication campaigns and external partnerships

Collaborate with University Advancement to align communications and donor outreach with high-impact Student Affairs programs

Staff Engagement and Professional Development

Action Area 6

We are committed to staff engagement in ongoing professional development and continued education around topics and issues most salient to student needs and the emerging and ever-changing landscape of higher education. We recognize that if we want students to do well and thrive, our staff must be equipped with the resources and expertise to support them.

6.1 Engage in service and scholarship to advance the student affairs profession by curating and sharing professional development opportunities across the division

Assess DSA staff's current professional activities. Compile and promote formal & informal opportunities for professional development already in place in division. Expert Learning Series led by peers

6.2 Create division-wide standardized onboarding and offboarding procedures to create a cohesive and comprehensive experience for all team members of Student Affairs

Research best practices in onboarding and develop plans for standardized practices in both onboarding and offboarding.

6.3 Foster meaningful engagement between divisional leadership and staff at all levels to strengthen relationships and exemplify the values and behaviors that define our culture

Expand engagement opportunities at divisional retreats and department meetings. Create social opportunities for staff to come together in an informal environment outside of division-wide gatherings.



