



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

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PRESIDENT

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**TO:** Campus Community  
**FROM:** Neil Kerwin, President  
**SUBJECT:** Priorities for Strategic Plan Objectives and Action Steps

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With approval of our strategic plan, "[American University and the Next Decade: Leadership for a Changing World](#)," by the Board of Trustees, our focus now shifts to plan implementation. We must identify the priority action steps that will stimulate progress on the goals in the first two years. These priorities will shape funding decisions as we finalize our next two-year budget proposal. **A significant step in the process occurs next Wednesday, January 21, at 1:00 p.m. in the Butler Board Room, when Provost Scott Bass and Vice President Don Myers, co-chairs of the University Budget Committee, convene a town hall meeting to discuss alignment of the next two-year budget with the plan's goals.** This memorandum provides information for that meeting.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee collected nearly 700 ideas from the community as potential action steps. These ideas were grouped, consolidated, and presented to the President's Council. The vice presidents and deans considered your suggestions as they made decisions about priorities and budget proposals. Based on their recommendations, I have identified a smaller number of objectives and action steps that are sufficiently ambitious and realistic for this first phase of plan implementation.

**The list of objectives and action steps remains a work in progress.** Many require more precise numbers or specific targets. Some may prove to be inappropriate for this phase of implementation, while others may be added. I am presenting this list to the community at this time to elicit your comments and suggestions on these items. Your input will inform final decisions on the initial phase of plan implementation—including the proposed two-year budget that will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for their consideration in mid-February.

I urge you to review the list of objectives and action steps below. If you cannot attend the town hall meeting or prefer to communicate your views in another manner, please send them to [strategicplan@american.edu](mailto:strategicplan@american.edu). We will continue to consider comments on the objectives and action steps in the next several weeks. In parallel, the University Budget Committee will prepare a final two-year budget draft for me to review and submit to the board in February. I will report again on the specific steps we will take during the first two-year phase of strategic plan implementation, including how we will monitor and report on progress in achieving our goals.

## **Possible Objectives and Action Steps**

(Grouped for your consideration according to the goals of the strategic plan):

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

- Boost the number of faculty.
- Make significant progress toward AAUP level 1 compensation for all tenured and tenure track faculty.
- Enhance institutional support for faculty research and teaching.
- Identify and achieve learning outcomes (per assessment program) for all majors and minors.
- Execute policy, practice, and process changes to enhance academic activities.
- Increase endowed professorships.

### **Provide an Unsurpassed Undergraduate Experience**

- Fully implement the one-stop center to improve student satisfaction with services.
- Create recruitment programs that reflect AU distinctiveness.
- Increase retention, graduation, and yield rates.
- Enhance participation rate for students engaged in active and pinnacle learning experiences.
- Build the sense of history and community through on-campus programs and traditions from welcome and orientation to commencement.
- Regularly review, benchmark, and improve liberal arts foundation (including sciences) and general education.
- Promote and support joint interdisciplinary programs across colleges.
- Boost student engagement in the extracurricular life of the campus, including attendance at intercollegiate athletics events and participation in club and intramural sports.
- Fully develop a center addressing the needs and interests of women.
- Prepare more students to successfully compete for prestigious merit awards.

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

- Enhance financial support and mentorship for doctoral students.
- Expand PhD degree programs and enrollment.
- Increase master's degree enrollment and diversify instructional delivery locations and technology.
- Establish credible baseline of program achievements through alumni survey.
- Dedicate space for graduate students in new library addition.
- Draw upon the professional expertise in the region to enhance graduate learning experiences.
- Promote and support joint interdisciplinary programs across colleges.
- Prepare more students to successfully compete for prestigious merit awards.

### **Engage in Great Ideas and Issues through Research, Centers, and Institutes**

- Increase sponsored and external funding for research activities.
- Seed at least two new university-wide research institutes with start-up funding.
- Enhance quality of activities by existing centers and institutes.
- Increase prominent media, industry, and trade reports on AU research outcomes.

- Improve incentives for primary investigators and units who increase external funding.
- Augment space, technology, and business operations support.

### **Reflect and Value Diversity**

- Annually increase the percentage of domestic minorities among students, faculty, and staff.
- Elevate the importance of diversity in nominations for positions of academic and administrative leadership, as well as for the board.
- Create communities where students feel comfortable and academically supported.
- Raise the percentage of students with 100 percent of financial need met; increase the average percent of need met for others.
- Enhance recruitment of students from Washington, D.C., and neighboring public schools through bridge programs, outreach, and scholarships.
- Create a new competitive Frederick Douglass Academic Program for students interested in serving urban communities and communities of color.
- Develop instruments to measure perceptions of inclusiveness of university community.

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

- Maintain top-10 ranking in study abroad.
- Annually increase the number of international students in entering freshman and transfer classes.
- Make alumni abroad better ambassadors for AU in student recruitment, networking, and alumni outreach.
- Expand academic opportunities for students to understand global relationships and new roles for the United States in the world.
- Boost graduate student study abroad opportunities.
- Increase number of faculty exchanges with international institutions.
- Add dual-degree programs with prominent external partners.

### **Act on Values through Social Responsibility and Service**

- Achieve ECO certification for all university offices.
- Make progress on President's Climate Commitment through enhanced staffing and new project team to provide leadership and oversight.
- Establish carbon inventory and reduce footprint.
- Initiate major energy savings effort.
- Strategically use flexible schedules to reduce environmental impact.
- Develop a social responsibility statement to reflect best practices with our business partners
- Require each division of the university to commit to a significant effort devoted to the quality of life in Washington, D.C.
- Boost opportunities for students to use our location as a lab for service learning and civic engagement.
- Maintain top-level Peace Corp volunteer position.
- Expand opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience in the exploration of social justice issues.
- Maintain and enhance our historical niche in human rights leadership and scholarship.

### **Engage Alumni in the Life of the University, On and Off Campus**

- Increase alumni engagement through participation in dedicated events, particularly intercollegiate athletics, mentorship, networking, student recruitment, and on-campus academic programs.
- Increase total alumni giving.
- Boost total number of alumni donors.
- Enhance outreach to alumni through technology innovations and pilot regional efforts.
- Collect information (through survey noted above) about alumni careers and accomplishments.
- Enhance alumni access to career services and lifelong learning.

### **Encourage Innovation and High Performance**

- Change PMP to ensure rewards for high performance and innovation.
- Establish system to monitor and report progress on strategic plan.
- Ensure funding for academic units is adequate to cover all base operations.
- Adopt academic policies and regulations to reflect best practices nationally.
- Modernize health benefits and incorporate wellness as a cornerstone.
- Institute a market-competitive staff development function.
- Develop robust internal communication mechanisms especially through electronic means.
- Improve communication and understanding of the total compensation package offered to faculty and staff.
- Maintain and improve NSSE scores and high Campus Climate Survey satisfaction with teaching.
- Develop a high-performing technology and business support infrastructure.

### **Win Recognition and Distinction**

- Fully implement the new Web site to deliver the AU brand online.
- Design and launch a strategic university branding campaign.
- Improve the capacity to communicate achievements through digital media.
- Increase placements of AU people and activities in relevant media.
- Boost numbers of senior administrators, managers, and faculty elected to leadership positions in their professional associations and organizations.
- Increase faculty selected to national academics and their disciplinary equivalents.
- Achieve Carnegie Classification consistent with AU's academic strength.
- Increase percentage of entering students whose first choice is AU.
- Improve perception of AU's academic reputation among entering students.
- Build on the distinctive role of WAMU 88.5 among local and national decision makers and opinion leaders.

### **Diversify Revenue Sources**

- Add additional endowment funds.
- Maintain bond ratings at A levels.
- Increase revenue from auxiliary and business activities.

- Reduce tuition dependency.
- Increase externally funded grants and contracts.
- Expand academic revenues via distance learning and new delivery methods.
- Increase summer programming.
- Expand enrollments in revenue-generating graduate certificates and programs that appeal to adult learners.

### **Employ Technology to Empower Excellence**

- Invest in new infrastructure and capital renewal—to facilitate learning, research, and knowledge management, sharing, and distribution—as the foundation of interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Provide 24/7 information access from anywhere.
- Address the dependence on technology day-to-day operations and insulate the community from unintended service disruptions by implementing the IT business continuity plan to meet expectations for reliability and continuous modes of university operation.
- Increase investment in security and risk management activities focused on protecting privacy and ensuring the security of our systems as well as respond to the changing regulatory environment including the new requirements for eDiscovery.
- Support the campus One-Stop initiative by improving online services, including a new portal, online workflow, and paperless integrated processes. Improve access to information and analytical tools needed to support decision making that enable easy-to-use dashboards and ad hoc queries.
- Utilize new and emerging tools of modern communications to augment our capacity to distribute information, interact with our main constituencies, and enhance campus community.
- Improve the collaboration and coordination of the decentralized campus IT service providers in order to better address needs of the campus.

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

- Increase funding for electronic data sets and serials.
- Fund movement of print to WRLC.
- Consistent with objectives related to graduate experience, provide one-time funding for physical space needs of graduate students.
- Transform from print warehouse to collaboration environment.
- Focus on knowledge resources and special collections unique to AU.

### **Forge Partnerships by Leveraging our Capital Location**

- Establish partnerships that leverage our history and strengths, extend the AU brand nationally and internationally, and expand revenue.
- Encourage additional partnerships for each major academic unit and divisions to advance goals of the strategic plan.
- Identify additional collaboration opportunities with WAMU 88.5, given its strong related brand and extended reach.

**Continue as a Model for Civil Discourse**

- Hold an annual meeting of full-time faculty.
- Launch events dealing with difficult issues to leverage perspectives of diverse community.
- Maintain and enhance support for WAMU 88.5 public affairs programming.

**Align Facilities Planning with Strategic Goals**

- Develop campus plan that addresses space needs for the duration of the strategic plan for
  - expanded faculty activities, including instruction and research, professional, and artistic activities.
  - student housing
  - athletics
  - expanded University Center
  - alumni
  - Welcome Center
  - auxiliary and unrelated business activities
  - WAMU 88.5