

American Senator

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The Strategic Plan

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Strategic Planning at American University

President Kerwin

Strategic planning has been practiced in one form or another at our University for decades. In her annual address to the community, Interim Provost Ivy Broder, reviewed this history of strategic planning and offered her thoughts on the work currently before us. I will not attempt to repeat that valuable retrospective here. Instead I will take this opportunity generously offered by the editors of the Senator to reflect on the reasons we plan, the process currently underway to create a new plan for the institution and the essential nature of this work.

We undertake strategic planning for a number of reasons. Standards and guidelines adopted by external accrediting bodies, such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and a number of professional organizations that evaluate our professional schools and programs, call for strategic plans or their equivalents. Conducted properly, planning can involve the entire community in serious and far-reaching deliberations about the future of the institution, thus drawing on the expertise and commitment resident in every major University constituency. Well-defined goals and objectives that result from effective planning provide clear criteria for accountability at all levels of the University. They also establish priorities for the use of our human, physical and financial resources that, however substantial, are always insufficient to match all of our aspirations. These same goals also provide clear direction for our fund-raising and our efforts to secure other forms of external funding. And, if they are sufficiently inspiring, the goals will motivate alumni, friends and sponsors to support our work. That external authorities seek greater specificity about the work of universities and engage in greater scrutiny of our work are important considerations but not controlling. Even if such external pressure disappears we would engage in careful planning as an elemental aspect of responsible University governance. It is

difficult to imagine this Board or future trustees allowing our University to function without a clear statement of the institution's goals and objectives to guide them in the conduct of their fiduciary obligations.

In my inaugural address I suggested that important insights about the future can be found in many of the major milestones of our history. Among these are the purposes and accomplishments of our schools and colleges, the strength of our faculty, the versatility of our students, and the extraordinary lives and careers of our alumni. The community has reviewed and the Board of Trustees has endorsed the scope of the plan, and this provides the substance of our work. I won't offer more specific statements here about the content of the plan. The planning effort now well underway has already generated a rich set of ideas, and I am certain there are many more to come. That said, a sound plan must be firmly rooted in our mission and values, express an ambition and commitment to realize more of our considerable potential, show a willingness to take reasonable risks to achieve new goals, and evince a proper respect for hazards over which we have only limited control.

Our chartering legislation, University By-Laws and Statement of Common Purpose, describe our mission, fundamental values, and principles of governance. In my November 2007 communication to the campus I suggested a number of planning assumptions that sought to define equally fundamental characteristics of our institution that I expect to be dealt with effectively in our current work. These are familiar: the scholar-teacher composition of our faculty, the importance of careful and balanced enrollment management, the communities and stages on which the institution operates.

As an institution we have shown resilience in challenging times and a persistent willingness to innovate and change when opportunities arise or circumstances dictate. I expect those same qualities to be reflected in our next plan. The elements of our future that control are many but elsewhere our grip is less firm. Some we can anticipate, like the changing demographics that affect enrollment trends and, perhaps, programming. Uncertainties that threaten both short and long-term economic health are more difficult. These will require both vigilance and the flexibility to make adjustments when circumstances require.

We have set a distinctive and somewhat risky course for our planning. To avoid errors of the past our process

seeks to involve every major constituency in the development of the plan. While a committee has been formed to guide the process and develop proposals it is designed to be both broadly representative and highly consultative. In addition, each major unit and constituency of the University has been asked – and will be repeatedly – to consider our future, develop goals and objectives they consider important and communicate those through their committee representatives. In addition, the committee has set an ambitious agenda for outreach, including town meetings, a website and an open invitation for input to every member of the community. Every idea will be considered and every submission will receive a response. The Strategic Planning Steering Committee is charged with developing a proposed plan that will be subjected to a full round of consideration and comment before being presented to the Board of Trustees for their review and action.

This effort to engage the campus is distinctive but it also carries risk. It is possible that the community will not participate to the extent expected, and the Steering Committee will be left to forge the proposed plan with little input from constituencies. The extent of involvement to date in the planning process suggests this risk is not a major concern. More likely is that the number of ideas will be many and conflicting, making it difficult to develop a plan that sets a direction that can be expressed in a clear, concise manner. Here we must depend on reasoned discussion and leadership to bring order to the debate, and while this work will be difficult I have faith in the ability of this community to produce a plan that meets the criteria outlined above. The greater risk, in my view, is producing a plan with a process that fails to engage the community. The resulting deficits of legitimacy and knowledge would make the implementation of such a plan very difficult.

I commend our constituencies for their efforts to date and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, chaired by Professor Bill DeLone, for its aggressive stewardship of the process. From all accounts, this planning effort is being taken seriously in most quarters. At the very outset of this effort the Faculty Senate has been engaged, empanelling a special committee to develop goals and objectives. I urge the entire community to review the work of the Senate when it is concluded and I urge the faculty to review the ideas emanating from other constituencies.

The work ahead will occasionally be difficult and a diversion, if not a distraction, from our day-to-day business. But, in the process, we all stand to learn a great deal about what this community considers

important, how we envision our future and what we think is possible.

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The Strategic Plan

Richard Sha

American University is on the cusp of another strategic plan. Whereas the last plan was delivered from on high, this one seems better poised for success in that the administration and the Board of Trustees seem genuinely to want a collaborative process with input from students, faculty, alumni, and staff. It is our hope that we work together closely to produce a noteworthy document.

American University has always been an institution that struggled with limited resources. As President Kerwin has noted, we will be 95% tuition dependent for the foreseeable future. This fact has been our strength and weakness. On the one hand, we have always had to ask the hard questions for any new initiatives: what will it cost? How will it get paid for? On the other hand, lost in all this getting and spending—the world is sometimes too much with us—is the life of the mind. Lost sometimes too is excellence.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that we are and will remain tuition dependent and that we need a strategic plan in order to make the most of our resources. Yet our eyes have so long been focused on the bottom line that we run the risk of letting ourselves be defined if not completely subsumed by it. So this is a plea for us to begin thinking beyond the bottom line. In particular, rather than define academic programs around the need to attract and retain students, can we instead focus on giving our students the challenges they need and deserve? The impetus behind the creation of the University College, for example, was to better retain a certain group of our students. And yet if we challenge and engage each student and mentor them, won't more of them want to remain here precisely because we are committed to excellence and to the success of each and every student? If we continue to hire the best faculty, and if our students continue to get better and better, American University might finally become a place where students genuinely want to be. Quality attracts quality. Certainly retention can be a factor when thinking about new programs and initiatives. But it should not drown out all other factors. As our

reputation rises, we hope to measure more of our students choosing to come to American and to make American University their first choice. Part of the issue is that we have not done a good enough job of marketing ourselves. Part of the problem is that our marketing plans sometimes lose sight of the intellectual experience we want to give our students.

This is also a plea to let excellence for students and faculty alike be our guide. Faculty and students should be held to the highest standards, but they should also be given the resources they need to do their work effectively. Faculty cannot produce the best scholarship and teach creatively when they are overburdened by teaching and service. The University cannot continue to ratchet up expectations for scholarship without rethinking what the ideal faculty load should be. More than anything else, this faculty (though not unanimously) wants to see an across the board reduction to a 2-2 course load. The issue is time. As technology gives us more ways to stay in touch with our students, our interactions take more time. And as more and more archives become available through the web, we are expected to do more research. The books that have a shelf life beyond today take time and energy to produce. With a reduction in teaching load, faculty will be better able to invest the time and energy in mentoring our students, in preparing them for the world, and faculty will have the time and energy to produce more and better quality research. It would not hurt for our merit processes to recognize quality over quantity. Books that open new vistas can take a decade or more to produce.

We also need to find a more genuine compromise between the fact that we market ourselves as a place that has small classes where students get individual attention and the fact that small classes do not pay the bills. If we continue to cancel classes at the last minute because they are too small, then students will increasingly become disaffected and see through our claims as bad faith. Of course, faculty too cannot afford simply to teach their own specializations and offer only boutique courses.

Although one function of a strategic plan is to give us a niche in the ecological market of higher education, the plan needs to do more than help market us. One problem with our last plan is that our "global" identity was never really defined. The jury is still out on whether globalization is a force for good or ill. What do we mean when we say we are a Global University? And should we continue to say it? Recent efforts to expand the global opportunities for our students to study abroad have been wonderful. Yet if the global is going to be

part of our identity, then we need to integrate the study abroad curriculum with what our students are learning here. The time has come for us to think about how to integrate their time abroad with their time at home. This is also a plea for the marketers to come and consult with the faculty so that our marketing slogan is something the faculty can embrace.

Finally, if the faculty does not provide input to this plan, we have only ourselves to blame when the memos we write for the next decade teem with language that we give lip service to, so that we justify the increased resources we want.

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Investing in Academic Excellence

Brian Forst

Strategic plans are essential for providing coherent guidance to large, complex organizations. But they are likely to amount to little more than feel-good exercises if they do not influence the budgeting process and ensure the commitment of scarce resources to the most urgent needs of the organization. Effective strategic plans inform long-term spending in the form of capital budgets. In the near term, they redirect annual budgets to specific uses identified and authorized by the plan.

One strategic issue warrants considerably more attention than it has received at American University: the continuing diversion of current operating funds to the endowment, a fund known as the "quasi-endowment." The creation of the quasi-endowment was essential to put the University on firmer financial ground when AU's endowment was virtually nil. These draws from current operations -- together with the effective investment of those funds by the investment committee of the Board of Trustees (BOT) -- have moved AU from the ranks of the impoverished to the top quartile of all university endowments in the nation. They have improved our bond rating and thus helped bring about a considerable reduction in the costs of our capital improvements. In 13 short years, AU's endowment has expanded tenfold, from \$36 million (ranked #311 among all universities in 1994) to \$397 million (#164 in 2007).

In fact, over 80% of our endowment today derives either directly from the quasi-endowment or indirectly from the investments of those funds rather than from

donations from individuals or funding from external agencies that make up traditional university endowments. In 2007 alone, thanks once again to the shrewd investments of the BOT investment committee, the endowment grew another \$75 million. In spite of this windfall gain, however, the current AU budget shows \$4.0 million to be drawn from current operations to the quasi-endowment for 2008, and a whopping \$8.6 million for 2009.

Consider some of the alternative uses to which these \$12.6 million could be put:

- * Reduce excessive teaching loads for much of our faculty and for outstanding new hires
- * Strengthen our most promising doctoral programs with more fellowships
- * Increase scholarships to achieve greater ethnic and class diversity
- * Create additional faculty lines
- * Offer larger counteroffers to members of our faculty who get offers from competing institutions
- * Offer more attractive salaries to candidates who come out on top of our faculty searches and reject our offers
- * Bring in a renowned scholar or two on either a temporary or permanent basis
- * Stimulate more internal research

One could add to this list any number of other items that could accelerate our ascent in academic standing. We must also consider demographic shifts that are likely to influence our strategic options. These factors are likely to be fully considered in the coming months as we deliberate on the development of the new strategic plan. All the options consume resources, yet some could yield handsome returns as academic investments -- considerably larger returns to our academic reputation than the continuing contributions to the quasi-endowment.

The question we face now -- and it is assuredly a *strategic* question -- is whether funds should continue to be siphoned away from such academic priorities. This is not a trivial matter: we remain an institution heavily

dependent on tuition revenues, and we are by no means out of the woods financially.

Still, it is in order to ask: At what point do we start reversing the flow of funds from current operations to the endowment? Might we build the endowment more over the long term by investing more now in academic excellence and less in financial instruments? To continue to siphon funds from current operations to our financial investments -- indeed, to increase this flow, as the 2009 budget suggests -- could be counterproductive to the long-term health of both our endowment and our academic standing. Surely, our ability to attract more external contributions will grow as our academic standing improves. As a long-time contributor to AU's endowment, I wish to support an academic rising star, and I suspect that my fellow contributors and prospective contributors are of a like mind.

These matters have been regarded as off-limits to the Senate's deliberations over AU's "instructional budget", but they are clearly matters of strategic concern to AU's well-being as an academic institution. American University is, after all, an academic institution, not a financial institution. Our bottom line should be academic excellence.

AU Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Bill DeLone

Sometimes running out of food can be a good thing.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee held its first Town Hall meeting on Friday, March 28, in the McDowell Formal Lounge. We expected about 60 people; nearly 100 members of the campus community -- faculty, staff, students, and a few alumni -- participated

Bon Appetit scurried to refill the platters, but there was no shortage of ideas as members of the planning committee led table discussions with those attending.

The group's charge: Where should American University be five or 10 years?

We spent about 40 minutes in the small group discussions, then each table reported back to all town hall participants.

Ideas ranged from improving communication across campus, to developing a better sense of community, to ensuring that the dialogue continues even after the new Strategic Plan is implemented.

Sarah Bayne of HR said her table discussed how to express the "soul" of American University and its purpose as an institution.

"We are a communicative, inclusive, and aware community of educators," Bayne's table posed as a possible statement of vision.

Other tables also addressed ways to build community across the campus. SOC's Russell Williams said those at his table proposed a better physical space and encouraged an emphasis on wellness. How about a daily 2-mile round-trip walk between the main campus and Tenley as a way to foster both health and getting to know people, his table suggested.

Other tables discussed issues such as student recruitment and retention, financial aid, engaging alums, and increasing staff incentives.

One constant theme: We know there are great things happening at American University, but how do we get the message out? We need to promote our innovative programs and tout our successes.

Our campus community has just begun this ambitious strategic planning process, and we need to hear from more people. The Faculty Senate has been examining these issues and we appreciate the input you've already provided. Keep the ideas coming.

In the town halls and forums the Strategic Planning Steering Committee has been focusing its discussions around six general topic areas:

- Student centeredness
- Academic excellence
- Engagement and service in global, national, and local communities
- A life-long connection to AU
- A community of diverse voices and goals
- Institutional Resources & Competitive Advantage

Our next Town Hall meeting is Monday, April 28 at 4 PM in the McDowell Formal Lounge. The third Town Hall will be held on Tuesday, May 20 from noon until 1:30 PM (location to be determined). We hope that you will take this opportunity to hear what the campus

community is discussing and to share your good ideas.

Also we strongly encourage you to visit AU's strategic planning web site (<http://american.edu/strategicplan/>) regularly. On the web site you will find important events, data, information and reports as well as follow discussions and submit your own ideas.

Strategic Planning

Jonathan Loesberg

The last time I wrote for the Senator, I argued against the restructuring of the University Senate into a Faculty Senate, as part of the last round of strategic planning. Now serving as Past Chair of the Faculty Senate whose institution I then opposed, I'm not sure how seriously others should take my current thoughts, especially since I find myself in the uncomfortable position of being optimistic about the current round of strategic planning. I console myself for this optimism with the odd path that has led us here and the assuaging thought of how many things might yet go in directions that would justify my more habitual cantankerousness.

The first cause for optimism has been widely noticed. In distinct contrast to the last exercise in planning, this one has been much more inclusive not merely in consulting the University community but in figuring ways to get ideas to come from the ground up. So far, at least, the bullet points presented to us by the University committee on Strategic Planning have seemed to come from broad themes from various segments of the University community and also seem without hidden agenda. A second reason for optimism is that so far the ideas discussed have been concerned with making American University better at doing what it does and have encompassed the activities of all schools. Branding has, at least up to now, been noticeable by its absence. AU's problem has never really been its distinctiveness but rather that part of its distinctiveness has been both its particular mix of schools and the idiosyncratic ways they aid each others ends. A plan that genuinely captured that relationship and forwarded it would do more than a new brand ever could in making us be better at what we do.

One obvious danger right now is timing. President Kerwin has set an ambitious schedule for delivering a plan to the Board of Trustees. In principle, there is no

reason the community cannot act according to that timetable. But the one aspect of it that gives pause is that the moment when the Strategic Planning Committee will have to take the numbers of suggestions from the community—that have so far ranged from cosmically broad ideas to suggestions about which carpets need replacing—and shape them into a coherent and focused plan that has few enough features so that it might actually be acted upon is the summer. While the committee may post on the web complete information about its deliberations with opportunities for community participation, expectations for serious faculty and student participation during the summer would be the triumph of optimism over experience. Since the formation of various and diversely originating ideas into a focused plan is surely the most significant moment in this process, even assuming, as I do, the best will in the world on the part of the committee, the danger that the plan we see, upon September re-entry, will be more surprise than recognition is real. Since the first draft of the plan will go to the Board in mid- to late-September, perhaps we should expect that Board reviewing and community re-reviewing may be concurrent activities. This may make for a messy last stage, but neatness is not an end in itself and we will need community deliberation at both ends of articulating the plan for it to have the acceptance of a plan that that community has developed.

A related danger is precisely how to construe what to do with the bullet points so far before us. Saying that the university should be more student-centered, for instance, is a goal that is both unexceptionable and unexceptional. On the face of it, one would think that any university that didn't attend to the needs of its students as one of its primary goals would exist about as long as a life-form that had ceased to ingest. In the absence of knowing either in what ways we have been insufficiently student-centered in the past or what kind of distinctive actions or policies might make us stand out as being student-centered beyond all other universities, claiming that we will be student-centered will not have much meaning. I do not mean this to be a criticism of the broad ends as so far stated. A look at the strategic plans of other universities, helpfully codified by the committee, will show lists of equally unexceptionable and unexceptional anodynes. But I do think that we will not have a plan to make us more student-centered until we have a definition of that goal sufficiently broad to encourage numbers of specific actions, while sufficiently focused to enable it to link up with budget decisions in a significant way. That that work is still to be done and will in all likelihood be done in the summer should make us all participate as much as possible now and then prepare for an interesting

September (“interesting” here being read as in the sentence “God grant that you do not live in interesting times”).

Rather than conclude with specific suggestions of my own—others have already said much of what I would say and the rest will no doubt get said in the near future—I would like to end with a modest proposal, or at least a proposal for some modesty. Instead of looking for grand plans and overarching themes, let’s look at why we have so far generated the anodynes we have (there are numbers of other anodynes we might have generated) and what we might have been thinking is currently lacking at AU in choosing them. If we can identify that in a specifyingly concrete way, we will be able to give edge to goals such as academic excellence, student centeredness, diversity. When we have done that, if we can then include the whole University rather than this target or that one in the steps taken to reach those goals, we will have a plan the whole University will sign on to.

And I have now discussed strategic planning without once saying that the one indispensable goal should be a 4 course load for faculty who are active scholars as of now.

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Faculty Development Committee

Steve Silvia

The Faculty Development Committee has not met this Semester. It does not yet have a full slate of members. The Committee Chair hopes to meet sometime in October.

The Faculty Development Committee has two items on its agenda:

1. Increasing the clarity of the guidelines for applications for University Curriculum Development Support Award.

Last spring, the Faculty Development Committee discussed ways to increase the clarity of the guidelines for applications for the University Curriculum Development Support Award. Suggestions include greater guidance regarding the circumstances of eligibility (e.g., “upgrading” a course vs. creating a new course) and permissible expenditures (e.g., travel and book purchases). The Faculty Development Committee

also would like a revision of the guidelines to include a greater emphasis on the need for applications to include a budget with line items. The Committee Chair met with Provost Broder and DAA Mardirosian in April to discuss improvements. There was agreement to revise the guidelines to take into account the suggestions of the Faculty Development Committee. The revisions have not yet taken place.

2. Facilitation of the Advancement of Faculty from Associate to Full Professor.

Last spring, the Faculty Development Committee expressed an interest in holding a discussion to explore ways to help to facilitate the advancement of faculty from associate to full professor. The Chair of the committee raised this idea with DAA Mardirosian, who expressed an interest in pursuing it. DAA Mardirosian offered to meet with the Faculty Development Committee to discuss the matter. The Chair of the Committee welcomed the offer and will arrange it.

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Committee on Student Learning and Academic Engagement

Ira Klein

This semester SLAE has been involved with such issues as substance abuse on campus, student participation in the Faculty Senate, policies regarding student directory information, and the academic performance of AU athletes.

Substance Abuse: As is common at other campuses, substance abuse, unfortunately, is widespread at AU. Particularly prevalent is excessive alcohol use among younger students. Campus Life makes dedicated efforts to try to curb binge drinking and other substance abuse, and to insure that those who need emergency treatment receive it. Laura Kovich has been employed as a specialist to deal with these matters. Campus Life responded rapidly to SLAE’s call for greater dialogue, organizing a lunch for relevant campus authorities and care givers. It resulted in a worthwhile discussion of key issues. In conversations with Laura and Faith Leonard, SLAE broached the subject of founding and publicizing a new organization, SADD (Students Against Drunk Dying). Laura’s research indicated, however, that students mobilize to take action upon horrendous events. Fortunately a catastrophic incident has not occurred.

Neither has the tide been stanchd. One faculty member on SLAE, Larry Engel, SOC, is developing a film to be used to publicize the dangers of alcohol abuse.

Students and Senate: At the February Senate meeting, the discussion of student participation on the Faculty Senate concluded with a straw poll on students having a voice (but not a vote) on the Senate. I counted 11 against, 8 for. SLAE then drafted the following proposal: *A student chosen annually by the American University Student Government and Graduate Leadership Council will be seated with Senators during Faculty Senate meetings. The student will have speaking rights and access to electronic, paper and any other communications transmitted to Senators.* The proposal does not establish any student as a member of the Senate, it should be noted. Rather, it treats a designated student as a privileged guest and liaison, who can take part more readily in the discussion by being seated at the table. After conferring with Steve Silvia, we decided to delay bringing the proposal forward. Instead, an attempt first is being made to establish better liaison by having a student governance officer attend as guest when possible. Student governance will redouble efforts to fill more committee seats. It should be recognized, though, that any current vacancies are a consequence of high demand, not student leaders' indifference. There appear to be nearly 30 university committees calling for vacancies to be filled, sometimes more than one seat per committee. (SLAE has five student members.) At the moment there are only four committees which have an unfilled student place.

Confidentiality, Student Records: The directory information proposal is now familiar, as are some student views. An elaborate commentary is not needed. SLAE has been pertinacious in seeking to guard against any unnecessary and potentially invasive release of information. The Task Force has been responsive to several of our requests, including restrictions on release of birth information and a return to a stated policy of verifying information from unsolicited, unknown or suspect parties. We have another proposal under consideration, to help deal with some concerns raised at the March meeting. It is that in projected contracts with outside vendors, the Registrar and AU's committee on copyrights (or another suitable body) determine what directory information it is essential to release, if any, and to provide only that restricted amount of data.

Athletes and Academics: We are exercising our charge to track academic support for student athletes, and standards of eligibility, with the advice and help of Keith Gill, Director of Athletics, a SLAE member, and Maureen Breslin, academic coordinator for student athletes. AU has a very strong student academic support program. Beyond meeting the Patriot League's high standards, innovations include placing the coordinator in the Academic Support Center. The position is not under the jurisdiction of coaches and teams, although relations are close. Additionally, AU's coordinator works with our highly trained academic advisors, instead of serving as one. These practices promote effective attention to academics. There is a rich assortment of academic support mechanisms, some mandatory for freshmen. They include study halls, and Talon group programs, featuring presentations on life enhancing topics, e.g. internships, careers, health, substance abuse, relationships, campus existence, academic and social engagement, grades, etc. In addition, counseling, tutoring and other individual attention is provided as needed.

Results are heartening. Among 231 student athletes--members of varsity teams--43% had a GPA of at least 3.5 in the fall semester, and 73% had at least 3.0. Only one athlete became ineligible for academic reasons. The recent official graduation rate was 97% but the real rate was higher, perhaps over 99%. (Unrealistic national athletic association assessments count against the graduation rate athletes who transfer away from an institution.) A majority of AU's athletes are not funded, and of the remainder many have only partial scholarships. Elsewhere, disturbing academic difficulties occur, particularly among students in the big three sports (football, basketball, baseball) in nationally prominent programs. Inversely, here athletes' academic performance is a success story. Some AU students do withdraw from teams, however, because of the rigor of varsity athletics and the time demanded by them. Most persevere. High academic performance is attained among athletes here despite a common campus problem for student activities, insufficient space. For example, there is a lack of discrete, appropriate places for study halls for athletes. It is impressive that AU athletics have had exciting recent achievements, including national firsts in basketball and wrestling, while athletes continue to enhance their academic successes.

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Recommendations of the Faculty Senate Strategic Planning Committee

Final Draft (April 25, 2008)
(Not Yet Approved by the Faculty Senate)

I. Introduction

The Faculty Senate Strategic Planning Committee recommends six specific items for inclusion in the University's strategic plan. These recommendations arose out of conversations, meetings, and written exchanges over several months, not only among faculty, but also between faculty and others both inside and outside of the American University community.

The report has four parts. The first is this introduction. The second addresses the broader environment and objectives that we feel should be addressed in the strategic plan. The third contains specific recommendations for inclusion within the strategic plan, and include specific tools to achieve the stated goal. The fourth discusses the implementation and measurement of progress in achieving the goals outlined in the strategic plan. An appendix lists the members of the Committee.

II. Environment and Broader Objectives of the Strategic Plan

The University community strongly believes that AU is poised to move to the "next level" and that this strategic plan provides an opportunity to implement meaningful change. This view is widespread on campus.

The crux of this strategic plan is to define the "next level" in a substantive way and then to determine how to reach it through specific changes. A fundamental component of this process will be to determine the positioning for AU within higher education, which will include identifying what makes AU distinct within an increasingly competitive marketplace.

As a first principle, the overall goal of AU should be to improve our reputation in the broader academic community. This will require improving the overall

quality of both teaching and scholarship in a substantive way, as these are at the core of our mission as a university. We emphasize that continued improvement in these areas is critical to moving to the "next level," however we ultimately specify it through the planning process. Substantive improvements in both areas will validate our quality both internally and externally, and help AU to communicate that quality in a measurable way to our various constituents. Fundamentally, any plan that does not address improvement in both teaching and research will ultimately fail to reinforce the core mission.

Any future vision of the University must emphasize our joint and longstanding commitment to both the liberal arts and the professional schools, while effectively balancing the relationship among the schools. One group cannot do as well without the other, and both areas have value in their own right. To accomplish such a balance strategically, administrators and faculty need to work together to create incentives for the colleges and schools to work together. Such cooperation is all the more necessary if scarce resources are to be used wisely.

AU should also capitalize more on its Washington location while continuing to expand its national and international activities. AU's greatest strengths arise from two characteristics of the University that are related to this point: (1) our combined emphasis on high quality teaching and scholarly activities, and (2) our engagement with various constituencies in the broadest sense as scholars, which is often referred to as "service." On this latter point we wish to emphasize that "service" is too general a term to describe what we do, and it may not be the best term to communicate our identity to the public. In some instances, these activities may be focused on using knowledge to address collective problems or public issues. In other cases, they may lead to the creation of knowledge for its own sake.

Transparency in the development and implementation of the strategic plan will be critical to the success of the plan. This is particularly important in our climate of scarce resources.

Finally, we note that a hoped for outcome of this planning process is to revitalize faculty commitment and build a sense of shared positive identity.

III. Specific Recommendations

1. Raise AU's academic reputation by improving the quality of both teaching and scholarly/creative activities

Tool: *Implement a four course load* (12 credits) for tenure/tenure-track faculty. This will give faculty the necessary time to devote additional attention to improving the quality of both teaching and research. In turn these improvements will qualitatively enhance the academic reputation of AU and further enhance the identity of AU as both a teaching and research institution. Implementation will require the commitment of additional University level strategic and financial resources.

Tool: *Improve student and faculty recruitment and retention.* If we provide a teaching load that allows faculty simultaneously to spend time with students and to produce high quality research/scholarly output, we can attract and retain outstanding faculty. This in turn will attract and retain excellent students. Quality attracts quality.

Tool: *Develop an appropriate mix of undergraduate and graduate* programs, allowing for differences across units. Currently, short-term budget needs often eclipse pedagogical decisions about program development that are related to quality. We recognize our tuition dependency, but we believe there are important trade-offs in short term decisions to increase revenues and longer term goals. These ultimate academic goals must be discussed in a substantive way. Presently, the faculty groups we have met with tell us that they feel they are not involved at an appropriate level in discussions, and as a consequence, do not always 'buy into' decisions they view as opaque.

Tool: *Ensure that support services are available as needed,* recognizing that different programs require different kinds of support. Support services should reflect and support the academic mission of the various units. These support services include the library, IT, course scheduling and the use of facilities. We should focus on outcomes, rather than processes.

2. Enhance institutional trust within the AU community and in our relationships with outside constituencies

Tool: *Increase both transparency and accountability internally* at all levels (e.g., budget, reviews of programs, faculty and administration). Full transparency is a pre-condition for accountability. Each is essential

to enhance trust and maintain integrity. Even more effective communication of information that is already available is an additional and important component in the implementation of this tool.

Tool: *Increase transparency and communication with outside constituencies* including alumni and the greater Washington D.C. community through coordinated outreach programs. This will enhance our reputation and help us reestablish ties with alumni.

3. Improve outcomes and promote innovation and creativity in faculty development, curricular development and the general management of the university. In recent decades, institutions of all sorts and in all parts of the world have increasingly embraced decentralization. It has a proven record of success as a governing principle in improving outcomes and promoting innovation. Decentralization also avoids demoralization, which can occur when individuals believe their professional judgment in an area of particular expertise is ignored. Such perceptions lead to employees/colleagues feeling disillusioned and this leads to disengagement.

Tool: *Decentralize decision making* to the lowest effective level so that we match decision making closely with deep knowledge of the issues under consideration. This will improve outcomes and institutional commitment.

Tool: *Move away from rule driven to more flexible outcomes based management.* Again, focus on outcomes not processes.

4. Foster diversity and inclusiveness within the administration, faculty, staff, and student body. Diversity is the life blood of any university. It is only through diversity that we can benefit from the full variety of experiences and arguments that serve as the foundation of learning and scholarship. In particular, more attention needs to be paid to recruiting from the domestic population with attention to race, ethnicity and social economic class.

Tool: *Charge a cabinet level officer with promoting and coordinating diversity and inclusiveness* efforts on campus.

Tool: *Establish clear goals and assessments of diversity and inclusiveness* on the campus. This will require funding and significant outreach efforts.

5. Encourage interdisciplinary curricula and programs. A powerful trend in contemporary academia is to promote interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship. This is not a “politically correct” trend, but one that reflects the added value of having multiple viewpoints in an intellectual community. This trend has largely passed AU by, to the detriment of students and faculty alike. All too often faculty encounter barriers to interdisciplinary pursuits at the University. Team teaching is difficult, particularly across disciplines, because of disincentives built into the current structure of accounting for teaching and tenure review. As a consequence, interdisciplinary structures and activities remain underdeveloped on campus. Those that exist often seem to be the product of entrepreneurial efforts rather than the product of a concrete decision to either meet a broader demand of faculty and students or to assist in establishing an identity for AU.

Tool: *Identify cluster areas where joint programs make sense for the strategic development of the institution.* Establish faculty lines and centers and/or programs with necessary investments in infrastructure.

Tool: *Support and facilitate research and teaching activities* that involve core faculty who share common substantive interests.

6. Increase financial accessibility of AU to students.

Tool: *Fund raising should be targeted* specifically for scholarships for disadvantaged students.

Tool: *Consider targeting a particular population locally* for focused recruitment.

IV. Implementation Issues and Goals

The Committee realizes that one of the biggest obstacles to implementing the Strategic Plan will arise from resource limitations.¹ We also believe that getting the university community to “buy into” the plan is important for the success of the plan. Taken together these two issues make the need for transparency paramount. Since it is unlikely that we can accomplish all that we would like to strive for simultaneously in the ten year scope of the plan, the various units and groups

on campus need to understand the timeline for decision making, and why some items make it into this plan while others are left for future plans.

A finished strategic plan should include clear objectives and dates for both final implementation and interim reports. It should also charge some office with the responsibility of realizing these goals. An important part of the process will be to develop a clear delineation of expected outcomes for each objective, and a “deadline” date for each phase or part of that final outcome so that we can measure progress over the course of the implementation of the plan. Finally, all of this information should be clearly communicated to the AU community throughout the development and implementation of the final plan. We ask that the Steering Committee create a mechanism to report progress and outcomes to the community on a regular basis.. We realize that it is unlikely that we will have a 100% success rate in achieving all goals, but both positive and negative outcomes must be reported, and the entire AU community must feel they have complete information. We believe this level of transparency is critical to the success of the plan.

Faculty Senate Strategic Planning Committee:

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 Barlow Burke, WCL
 Laura Langbein, SPA
 Matt Nisbet, SOC
 Gwendolyn Reece, Library
 Richard Sha, CAS
 Stephen Silvia, SIS and Vice Chair, Faculty Senate
 Lyn Stallings, CAS
 Gary Weaver, SIS and Chair, Faculty Senate

¹ While we do not make specific recommendations, we recognize and appreciate that an important component of the plan will be fund raising through various means, but we believe other groups on campus can speak to the details better than this Committee.