



September 24, 2014

TO: American University Community
FROM: Jeffrey A. Sine, Chair, Board of Trustees
SUBJECT: Summary of September Board Retreat and Meeting

The American University Board of Trustees held its annual fall retreat on Thursday, September 11 and Friday, September 12, at the Mount Vernon home of the nation's first president.

The retreat was devoted to a trustees' review of AU's recent and considerable successes in a number of areas, with an eye toward laying the groundwork for strategically planning AU's future. A brief business meeting (one hour) also was held, with outcomes described below.

Retreat Focus

By a number of objective measures, AU has made tremendous progress over the past two decades in academic performance, physical facilities, financial strength, and in the process, has become a much more selective university and "first choice institution." The recent, laudatory Middle States accreditation report; Campus Plan approval and ensuing construction; and AU's series of strong bond and credit ratings are credible affirmations of how far AU has come and how highly it is regarded in key areas by external authorities.

The board and university senior management must now focus on how to maintain that momentum and build upon AU's current levels of performance to secure AU's future. Looking toward the next strategic plan, how can AU differentiate itself from the competition? Where has AU enjoyed academic and programmatic success, where have we not, and how can AU improve?

These questions were posed as a framework to assess the reporting out by the president, provost, and vice presidents. Among the topics reviewed were the changes in undergraduate and graduate enrollment; campus life and the student experience; faculty hiring and staff distribution; budget planning and resources procurement; facilities built, under construction or needed; technology; alumni engagement; and other important areas.

Trustees also heard from Chris Miller, executive director of the Education Advisory Board, about future trends in higher education from his organization's perspective.

While the university is firmly into its current strategic plan, the two-day retreat provided trustees with substantive data to review and utilize as we begin to consider AU's next cycle for strategic planning, campus planning, and accreditation.

Business Meeting

The one-hour business meeting (September 12) included a number of items to report out:

- Executive Committee: Following endorsement by the Executive Committee and approval by the Academic Affairs Committee, a resolution was proposed and passed to enable new academic degree program proposals to seek board approval via electronic means at periods between regularly scheduled trustee meetings. This action was motivated by the need to be innovative, flexible, and rapid in the competitive academic marketplace.
- Academic Affairs Committee: A master of science in analytics degree in the Kogod School of Business was approved, effective fall semester 2015.
- Audit Committee: The university's audited financial statements (FY 2014) were approved and accepted.
- Trusteeship Committee: Following the recommendation of student government leaders, interviews by three trustees, and endorsement by the Trusteeship Committee, the full board voted to approve the selection of Evangeline (Evie) Unsworth as the new student trustee-elect. She is a sophomore in the School of Public Affairs. Her selection now will be submitted to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church for final approval. As student trustee-elect, she will shadow current student trustee Joe Ste.Marie to become familiar with the workings of the AU board and become eligible to serve as the next student trustee from May 2015 thru May 2016.
- WAMU Subcommittee: Committee chair Pat Butler reported out on action taken over the summer by the full board, which approved WAMU 88.5 FM's purchase of radio station WWED 89.5 FM in the Spotsylvania/Fredericksburg area. Settlement is projected for October, with the intent to be on the air with WAMU's main signal shortly thereafter.

Next Board Meeting and Open Forum

The next full meeting of the Board of Trustees is Thursday, November 20 and Friday, November 21, on the AU campus. In conjunction with this meeting, a town hall/open forum will be held for the campus community to meet with trustee and university leadership and provide an unscripted opportunity for questions on any variety of topics. We will be glad to devote time to any specific topics of heightened interest.

Until then, let me know of any questions you might have. You can reach me at AUBOT@american.edu.