

**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY**
 WASHINGTON, DC

CHANGE MAKERS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

2019-2023

**STRATEGIC PLAN
PROGRESS REPORT**

YEAR 2

THE PATH TO AU2023

When we started on our changemakers journey at the beginning of 2019, no one could have foreseen the challenges of 2020. Despite the uncertainty and constant changes all around us, American University remained focused on our mission and strategic vision to expand knowledge and create meaningful impact. Our core pillars—scholarship, learning, and community—continued to guide our work. But we also adapted to meet the needs of the AU community in this unique time and seized upon new opportunities. Through it all, AU has risen to the challenge.

Our strategic plan, *Changemakers for a Changing World*, both prepared us to navigate the difficulties of COVID-19 and positioned us to thrive once the pandemic subsides. We must continue to empower students, faculty, staff, and alumni whose education, experience, and purpose enable them to change our changing world for the better. We do so by building on AU's strengths and creating new expertise as we chart the future of the university and new paths in higher education. Our work extends beyond the university in a number of ways. For example, our focus on Inclusive Excellence not only helps to create a more equitable AU, but contributes to the ongoing dialogue as we reckon with the challenges of systemic racism throughout society.

The Changemakers strategy is shaping innovative approaches to learning and the student experience; bringing us to new opportunities in the future of work and ways to better support our faculty and staff; enhancing research and scholarship; cultivating partnerships that fuel learning, discovery, and community impact right here in DC; implementing transformative approaches to inclusivity; and changing the culture and improving how AU works.

In the second year of this strategic plan, more than 160 faculty and staff—led by our strategic imperative directors—continued to implement AU's bold vision and transform the AU community. This Year 2 progress report outlines each strategic imperative, documents our impact, and highlights recent successes as we continue to blaze the trail to AU2023. This report is a snapshot the comprehensive work happening every day across the AU community and represents the dedication of so many of our people.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PLAN, THE IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEMBERS, OR HOW TO GET INVOLVED AND SUBMIT FEEDBACK, PLEASE VISIT [AMERICAN.EDU/STRATEGICPLAN](https://american.edu/strategicplan).

MEASURING SUCCESS AND OUTCOMES

SCHOLARSHIP

IMPERATIVE: AREAS OF STRATEGIC FOCUS

- **Growing Our Research:** In 2020 AU launched the Institute for Community Adaptation, Resilience, and Equity (I-CARE) and the Center for Behavioral Neuroscience (CBN). The existing Center for Latin American and Latino Studies (CLALS) was designated a university-wide center.
 - ♦ I-CARE will respond to the challenge of environmental degradation and its placement of outsized burdens on vulnerable and marginalized populations. Indeed, the inequitable experience of environmental change is among society's most pressing political and moral problems. I-CARE will leverage the university's Washington, DC, location and its longstanding strengths in environmental protection and social justice to incubate innovative ideas, generate impactful and equitable actions, and prepare a more diverse and inclusive next generation of thought leaders to advance a just transition to global sustainability.

- ◆ CBN strives to create a setting where students and faculty from different disciplines interact collaboratively to generate new ideas, methods, and discoveries; produce new synergies and economies of resources that increase the breadth and scope of research; promote the ability of center members to increase basic and applied knowledge that can improve quality of life; and enhance national and international stature and visibility of scientific research and training at AU.
- ◆ CLALS was established in 2010 as a campus-wide initiative advancing and disseminating state-of-the-art research. The 84 faculty affiliates and partner institutions are at the forefront of efforts to understand economic development and social inclusion, security and diplomacy, democratic governance, cultural diversity and change, as well as matters of health, education, and environmental well-being. CLALS generates and distributes high-quality, timely analysis on these and other issues in collaboration with researchers and practitioners from AU and beyond.

IMPERATIVE: RESEARCH

- **Increasing Our Scholarship:** In FY2020, AU received \$20.3 million in externally funded grants and contracts. By the end of the first quarter of FY2021, AU received nearly \$7.89 million in sponsored awards from foundations and government agencies—a year-over-year growth of 125 percent for the same period in FY2020.
- **Streamlining Research Development and Support:** The Office of Research is building on the results of a university-wide assessment of the current state of the research enterprise to develop a new model to support research at AU. This model will include recommendations for streamlining current processes for staffing, systems, technical infrastructure, research mentoring, and faculty incentives for externally funded projects.

LEARNING

IMPERATIVE: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- **At-Risk Students:** To create registration pathways for students who wanted to stay at AU but faced barriers, we launched a pilot intervention for first-year students on academic probation and the Eagle Team rapid response retention initiative. The retention rate for students in the pilot increased to 70 percent from 58 percent the previous year. Fifty-two students were referred to the Eagle Team with pathways to retain created for 29.
- **Developing Retention Strategies:** AU shifted focus during the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a multi-dimensional strategy grounded in data to identify individuals and groups with immediate retention risks resulting from transition to distance learning or who took a temporary leave or deferred.
- **Developing New Systems:** To support the new retention strategies, we built a retention database and retention dashboard that allow for a highly coordinated and data-based approach to retention work.
- **Supporting Student Wellness:** The university launched You@American platform for all students and enhanced Counseling Center services to provide virtual support. To build on this work, AU will review students' experiences during the pandemic to analyze patterns and trends to inform system shifts and resource focus as the ongoing changes in health and wellness needs are identified.

“The Tailored Recruitment and International Recruitment/Global Engagement teams have been at work identifying barriers and strategies to bring talented students of diverse backgrounds to American University. Going forward the teams will look to develop partnerships with organizations as well as how best to leverage our internal resources to facilitate achievement of these goals.”

—**SHARON ALSTON**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Enrollment, Imperative 3 Director

“We’re focused on supporting students holistically from the day they apply to AU to the day they earn their diplomas. Our goal is to continue to build an inclusive community where every student thrives, with built-in supports at every stage of a student’s academic journey.”

—**JESSICA WATERS**, Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost for Academic Student Services, Imperative 3 Director

- **Increasing Class Diversity:** Through more outreach to underrepresented populations, including increasing the number of visits to high schools with high concentrations of underrepresented populations, the Admissions team increased the number of underrepresented populations in the incoming class from 21.5 percent in 2019 to 25.3 percent in 2020. The launch of the AU District Scholars initiative also was a contributing factor. Additionally, programming directed to students of color continued, albeit in a virtual format. Finally, the Office of Enrollment has maintained its commitment to meeting the full demonstrated financial need of eligible students, thus eliminating a barrier to access.
- **Creating Opportunities for DC Students:** Exceeding expectations, AU awarded 11 DC residents with the American University District Scholars Award, a scholarship directed to high-achieving, low-income students attending the city's public or charter high schools. The launch of this program also led to a significant increase in the number of students from the District who applied and who were subsequently offered admission.

“The Wellness Workstream pivoted over the past year to focus on navigating the immense changes to how we deliver services and foster a community of caring that prioritizes wellness development. We are preparing to bring these lessons of flexibility and resilience into a year of welcoming multiple classes of students to campus who have yet to be with us residentially- emphasizing the holistic learning that comes from prioritizing wellness in an inclusive and engaging environment.”

—TRACI CALLANDRILLO, Assistant Vice President, Campus Life, Imperative 3 Director

IMPERATIVE: LEARNING FOR UNDERGRADUATE, GRADUATE, AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

- **Expanding Capacity for Creating an Inclusive Environment:** AU increased support for faculty development in inclusive pedagogy. In 2020, the Inclusive Pedagogy Fellows Program added three new fellows, whose activities saw attendance increase from 66 to 283 faculty. This year also saw the launch of the Faculty Learning Communities for Chairs and Program Directors with 26 participants.
- **Faculty Development and Support:** Faculty development and software re-alignment enabled the pivot to course delivery online.
- **Growing Graduate Studies:** A graduate brand campaign, a set of bachelor's and master's events and promotions, and a new landing page to capture graduate leads enhanced and brought awareness to the AU graduate brand. Leveraging data analytics led to a 13 percent increase in residential enrollments over the previous year and an increase in the amount of graduate financial assistance from 18.4 percent to 25.3 percent for enrolled students.
- **Experiential Learning for Undergraduates:** Improved how we connect competencies that employers seek to experiential learning opportunities of undergraduates. Presented competencies at capstone courses and cohort presentations, helping students connect learning and competencies. Pivoted to identify ways students could emphasize competitiveness in AY20-21 given the virtual internship landscape. Implemented a cross-campus process for vetting all internships for credit and other experiential activities sponsored by AU to ensure that any in-person component required by the employer/host could be conducted in compliance with federal, state, and local health and safety regulations.

“Our team worked to create a more rigorous learning and scholarly environment through innovative approaches to transdisciplinary teaching and scholarship, developing our faculty in the area of inclusive pedagogy, expanding experiential opportunities within the classroom, and identifying ways to support the scholar-teacher ideal. The pivot to online instruction in 2020 sharpened our strategic focus and going forward, we'll explore more dynamic and flexible teaching and learning opportunities and build the pathways for faculty to deliver on these opportunities.”

—MONICA JACKSON, Interim Deputy Provost and Dean of Faculty, Imperative 4 Director

IMPERATIVE: LIFELONG LEARNING

- **Supporting Student Learning Needs:** AU launched a Cybersecurity Bootcamp and several masters and doctoral degree and certificate programs with three new partnerships in 2020 to support the lifelong learning effort:
 - ♦ Master's in Legal Studies
 - ♦ Master's in Education
 - ♦ Doctoral in Education
 - ♦ Master's in Health Promotion Management
 - ♦ Master's in Management with the US Navy
 - ♦ Certificate in Healthcare Project Management with Dignity Health Global Education
 - ♦ Certificate in Equitable Evaluation with Booz Allen Hamilton
- **Expanding Our Online Capacity:** The Office of Online Learning and Digital Strategy accelerated the implementation of Canvas, the foundation for future development of online and hybrid programs. The university also revised the non-credit academic calendar, expanding potential program starts from four to 12 times per year, which will significantly increase enrollment opportunities, and launched digital badges, which recognize specific skills, achievements, and milestones that may be earned through online programs, either concurrently or separately from a degree.

COMMUNITY

IMPERATIVE: INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

- **Training, Learning, and Development:** To expand our commitment to inclusive excellence, 750-plus faculty and staff attended more than 25 inclusive teaching workshops, 800-plus students participated in more than 18 inclusion-focused trainings and intergroup dialogues, and 100 percent of the university's senior leaders engaged in ongoing learning about racial equity.
- **Systems, Policies, and Procedures:** The university established a new Office of Title IX and Equity to centralize bias, discrimination, and harassment complaints, and enhance prevention and response.
- **Creating Change:** Forty-seven new AU faculty affiliates joined the Antiracist Research and Policy Center to build scholarly community and enhance research impact.
- **Providing Access:** As part of AU's Community of Care, the university provided \$13 million in additional financial aid support for AY 20-21.

“The first phase of Inclusive Excellence work aimed to build a sustainable foundation for the next chapter of the work, focused on increasing access to educational opportunity and building an antiracist community that fosters inclusion and innovation.”

—**AMANDA TAYLOR**, Assistant Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Imperative 6 Director

LESLIE ANNEXSTEIN joined AU on September 30, 2020, as our inaugural assistant vice president for equity and Title IX. Leslie will lead the new Office of Equity and Title IX that launched in August. With a career focused on civil rights enforcement, Leslie is passionate about creating values-based communities and working across institutions to build strong bonds that yield exceptional results.

IMPERATIVE: WORKING WITH WASHINGTON

- **Advancing Education:** AU advanced its commitment to preparing local students for post-secondary education and careers in the teaching profession through the launch of the AU District Scholars program and continuing AU's Dual Enrollment program.
- **Remaining Competitive in Today's Economy:** Kogod and SPA launched the digital technology generalist credential program.
- **Convening the Best and Brightest:** The Sine Institute of Policy and Politics' third class of fellows includes Suzanne P. Clark, president of U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Ann Curry, award-winning journalist; Kolinda Grabar Kitarovi, fourth president of Croatia; Gary Locke, governor of Washington and former US secretary of commerce and ambassador to China; Lt. General H.R. McMaster, former national security officer; and Wes Moore, CEO of the Robin Hood Foundation.
- **Connecting in DC:** AU was the host sponsor for On the Table, a virtual event that brought hundreds of people from across the Washington metropolitan area together to discuss initiatives to transform and uplift their communities.

“Working with Washington has allowed AU to move beyond the borders of our campus and connect with the people and communities that make DC the great city that it is. There is more work to do as we strive to strengthen our ties and have a greater impact on the future of DC through our partnerships.”

—ED FISHER, Assistant Vice President, Community and Government Relations, Imperative 7 Director

IMPERATIVE: HOW AU WORKS

- **Examining Policies and Procedures:** A review of university policies and procedures has led to revised university policies that contribute to more contemporary leave benefits for employees that reflect their needs, leading to improved policy, staffing, and processes.
- **Improving Application and Onboarding Processes for New Staff:** The university improved applicant and onboarding processes to streamline work and create more diverse candidate pools; these projects include adoption of a new applicant tracking system, improved reference checking, and implementation of more convenient, paperless pre-boarding processes.
- **Streamlining Financial Aid:** Financial aid self-service was launched within EagleService to streamline the experience for students.
- **Supporting Financial Transparency with Staff Training:** The curriculum for a new training and certification program was developed for budget and finance staff across the university. The seven-module program, which will be piloted and launched in 2021, expands functional training to offer a deeper understanding of AU's financial policies, systems, and roles and responsibilities.
- **Utilizing Space More Efficiently:** The group charged with assessing the university's overall use of on-campus space utilized the opportunity brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic to catalogue all existing rooms and determine how to employ class meeting spaces in physically distant ways. This work will lead to additional space utilization information and strategies in the coming years.
- **Sharing Critical Information with the Community:** The COVID-19 pandemic required ongoing, detailed, and transparent communications to inform the AU community about key developments. With expanded online resources, bi-weekly messages from AU president Sylvia M. Burwell, virtual meetings with community members, and detailed presentations about the state of the university's finances, we expanded awareness and increased engagement with internal constituencies.