




Ronald Mason, Jr., J.D.
President

MEMORANDUM

TO: UDC Community

FROM: Ronald Mason, Jr. 
President

DATE: August 30, 2019

RE: 2019 – 2020 Outlook

Welcome back! I hope you had a refreshing vacation with family and loved ones. We continue to make progress every day toward our goal of becoming a model of urban student success, and we have an exciting and pivotal year ahead of us. Below is an update on work that we accomplished over the summer, and matters about which you should be aware as we proceed through this year.

Faculty Union Negotiations

We have worked with union leadership to construct a proposal that will bring salaries more in line with national and local markets. If approved, it also will position us to speak with one voice when we seek future cost of living increases from the District. It is my hope to resolve the compensation component of the 8th Master Agreement, and immediately begin work on the remainder of the document.

We also have commenced negotiations with the Adjunct Faculty Union, and hope to come to terms in the near future.

Strategic Thinking

The *Equity Imperative* is a living document which requires adjustment from time to time. Therefore, the various Cabinet units have held a series of retreats to assess our progress to date, adjust work plans and timetables where appropriate, and make any budget adjustments necessary to continue forward progress. A retreat also was held with the Administrative Council to generate “big ideas” necessary to achieve our common vision of enabling the highest level of human potential.

As a result of these activities, we will present to the community a proposal to update the *Equity Imperative*. It will suggest prioritizing four major areas of activity over the next year: Building a Conducive Learning Environment; Planning a New Academy; Strengthening the Open Admissions Portal; and Personalizing Student Development and Success.

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Building a Conducive Learning Environment

This will continue the process of infrastructure improvement and cultural change. We must be “operationally ready” and holistically engaged to properly serve our students, our community, ourselves, and each other.

Planning a New Academy

The Academy, as it was conceived in medieval Europe, no longer serves the needs of the modern world. Our opportunity is to rethink a higher education model in a way that better serves the urban reality and experience. Such a model would include: meta-majors, seamless pathways, fundamental competencies, online and hybrid options, experiential learning, and multiple in-demand market credentials leading to bachelor’s degrees. We already possess all the component parts: high quality faculty, multiple admission doorways, multiple campuses, urban and land-grant focuses, and a national stage in the nation’s capital. Our task is to see it, plan it, and build it. You may find a schematic of our new approach, a matrix of possible pathways, and the “big ideas” that we generated at the above-mentioned retreats, at the following link <https://udceir2.com/> We offer them in order to help spark conversation and stimulate creative thinking.

Strengthening the Open Admissions Portal

Our “community college” is key to our equity responsibilities. It is the door through which most local public high school or GED graduates enter the University. It is a combination of the first-year university experience, community college, and junior college. It should lead the way to a better understanding of the everyday needs of the District, including the segment of the workforce that does not require academic degrees. It is an asset unique to our University which helps make the goals of the *Equity Imperative* achievable.

Personalizing Student Development and Success

Based on National Clearing House data and reports, we know that in any given year almost 800 of our students leave UDC, and do not attend another college or university. We do not yet fully understand why, but it seems clear that for many, life is simply too challenging to allow them to pursue an education. We will rethink our approach to out-of-classroom support to include well-being needs assessments, pathways charted to bachelor’s degrees that include personalized timeframes, financial plans, life support plans, and intermediate credentials.

Budget

As we start another academic year, we also will be approaching the beginning of a new fiscal year (FY20). The *Equity Imperative* (EI) envisioned a 4-year, \$60M+ increase in recurring support -- approximately \$40M in the first two years, to implement its goals, and acquire or develop the talent required for its success. However, our recurring support has increased only \$7.5M in two years. We have also received \$9.5M in one-time funds during that time.

While any budget increase allows us to make progress, the current pace of District investment requires us to slow the pace of implementation of the *Equity Imperative*, and redirect available funds to maintain as much momentum as possible. To that end, you have probably noted that each unit’s NPS budget is 20% less than last year. We redirected \$2M of those funds to areas of high *Equity Imperative* priority and University-wide benefit. Special unmet NPS needs this year will be considered on a case by case basis. The funded high priority areas can be viewed at the following link: <https://udceir2.com/>

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Organizational Changes

Now that the Cabinet is fully staffed and the work for the upcoming year is being charted, there may be a reallocation of duties and functions across the University. We are currently examining organizational charts, job descriptions, current and prospective talent, skill sets, and job performance to place the right people in the best structure to get the work done. Stay tuned.

Finally, we have leadership changes of which you should be aware. Ms. Patricia Johnson, Vice President for Talent Management, has decided to retire, effective January 3, 2020. She has led the ongoing modernization of the Human Resources function at the University, and we thank her for her service. Ms. Deborah Sullivan will assume day-to-day oversight of Talent Management operations, effective September 3, 2019.

Dr. Sabine O'Hara has decided to join the faculty full-time, effective October 1. She has brought global recognition to UDC through her urban sustainability work in CAUSES. She has served the University well, and we look forward to her continued presence in her new role.

I have asked respective Cabinet members to prepare more detailed announcements celebrating the accomplishments of VP Johnson and Dean O'Hara, and additional information about forthcoming leadership transitions in the Office of Talent Management, and the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences. Stay tuned.

Thank you all for your efforts to date. I would like to especially thank the dedicated and understanding members of our Board of Trustees, who continuously give time and energy to guiding our University to the next level of excellence.

The time has come to see, plan, and build a model of urban student success. I hope you are as excited as I am about the possibilities.

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