

State of the University Address

President Celeste Schenck

October 21, 2011

May I begin by saying how proud I am to have as Chair of our Board an AUP alumna, especially one who so embodies what it means to have emerged seasoned from the formative crucible of this University. I'm also very grateful to Judith for suggesting that we have, as an annual event, a State of the University Address, and for this opportunity to bring together in our own living room, the Grand Salon, all of the constituencies of The American University of Paris:

- the Trustees who voluntarily pledge loyalty, time, treasure, and support to AUP
- the faculty and staff of this University who encircle our students with a devotion I have never seen anywhere else
- the very special group of students in this room, our student leaders, presently engaged in a historic 50 year review of student government at AUP. Elected by your peers, you are standing in for them today. You, of course, are our reason for being here at all.

I am taking seriously the term address, today, in order to present directly to you three things in turn—first, a frank estimation of the State of the University during what we all know to be difficult times; second, moving to the heart of the matter, a few musings on what a 21st century education entails and why we are so uniquely positioned to deliver a world-class one at AUP; and, finally, I will end with a few exhortations to our extended community as we enter into the fiftieth year of The American University of Paris.

I

I'm going to begin on a pensive note, and then build from there. When I was discussing with a colleague this upcoming talk, we couldn't think of a single national leader, or, for that matter, university president, in Europe or in the United States, who would relish the idea of making a "State of the Union Address" just about now. These have not been the boom years. The financial crisis that began in the US in 2008, the week I took office, in fact, will pull over 50 million people worldwide below the poverty line before it can be said to be over; the longer it lasts, the farther it spreads, the more those figures are being upwardly revised. The US currently faces a double dip recession; questions about Europe's viability are in the news every day. Even the Dubai sovereign fund took a big hit. The dollar has been very weak as against the Euro for many years now, a fact that has not a little incidence on a small, tuition-dependent university such as our own. Then, too, the effects of the financial crisis have been experienced as powerfully by universities as by the financial sector and national governments, prompting the suggestion, by people such as Vartan Gregorian, former president of Brown and the Carnegie Foundation in an open letter to President Obama, that public universities in the US should receive a small percentage of the stimulus package. Higher education is lining up to be, so say the Cassandras, the next bubble to burst. At the same time, education is also more important to the future of our nations, to the future of the world community, than any other endeavor and it is everywhere—save in S. Korea, Saudi Arabia and China—in big trouble. When the University of California's in-state tuition will top \$20,000 a year; when HEC in France, amongst other private business schools in Paris, announces tuition at 30,000 euros, when the for-profit educational group, Laureate, sets up house in central Paris in 11,000 square meters, unbeknownst even to the French Ministry of Education, to offer low-cost vocational education, it's a whole new day in global higher education. This is not what I would call business as usual.

How you look at the present world economic situation may depend more on your nature than your politics. Some of us are pessimists, seeing in the present global economic conjuncture the signs of the end of the world, or at least the death throes of global market capitalism. Some of us—watching the Arab spring unfold on social media, or the shot fired by Occupy Wall Street repeating round the world—see opportunities for a whole new social and economic configuration beginning here—at the juncture of globalization and digitization. Waddick Doyle spoke of this at our last Faculty Senate. Susan Perry sent me an apt opinion piece by Thomas Friedman in last week's New York Times that sketches out the two extremes, the two master narratives of our time.¹ The first is the theory of the Paul Gilding, the Australian environmentalist, author of *The Great Disruption*, for whom the “growth-obsessed capitalist system is reaching its financial and ecological limits.” Gilding, quoted by Friedman, puts it this way: “Our system of economic growth, of ineffective democracy, of overloading planet earth—our system—is eating itself alive. Occupy Wall Street is like the kid in the fairy story saying what everyone knows but is afraid to say: the emperor has no clothes. The system is broken.” The second approach is that of John Hagel III, the co-chairman of the Center for the Edge at Deloitte, along with John Seely Brown. In their recent book, *The Power of Pull*, they suggest that we're in the early stages of a “Big Shift,” brought on by the merging of globalization and the Information Technology Revolution. “In the early stages” —I'm quoting Friedman here—“we experience this Big Shift as mounting pressure, deteriorating performance and growing stress because we continue to operate with institutions and practices that are increasingly dysfunctional—so the eruption of protest movements is no surprise. Yet the Big Shift also unleashes a huge global flow of ideas, innovations, new collaborative possibilities and new market opportunities, as well as possibilities for the complete reorganization of society such as we know it.” Whichever you subscribe to, “The Great Disruption” or “The Big Flow,” says Friedman, we ignore these signs of huge, large-scale change at our peril. The world, such as we have known it, has inalterably changed.

To address within this broader swell of economic and social forces the state of our particular university, I need to speak very honestly. AUP—falling into the most vulnerable category of university—small, private, tuition-driven, and unendowed—has had its challenges in recent years, mainly having to do with enrollment. At the height of the financial crisis in 2008, we lost, in a single year, 120 visiting students; the next year, 2009, the worst year in higher education history, we experienced another drop in enrollment along with virtually every other university on the planet that wasn't having an endowment crisis. Endowment and enrollment crises amount to the same thing—a budget crisis. At AUP, we have struggled to make budget for three straight years after the shortfall in Admissions; we've seen some of our most beloved students leave for strictly financial reasons; given new forms of competition, we have had to learn to be a recruiting institution, a two-year haul during hard times that is just beginning to get some traction. We had some difficulties this year with retention of returning students—in part because we bit the bullet on academic excellence and dismissed some students who could not make the grade, in part because of long, unrelenting impact of the financial crisis on some AUP families. That's the bad news, but don't think that I am going to leave you there. There is also a lot of good news to celebrate.

But, first, here are a few interesting facts from our Dashboard:

- For the first time this year in four or five, the trend of rapid growth in graduate admissions reversed itself. Generally grad enrollments are counter cyclical in a recession, because when the job market is tight, students tend to go back to get further qualifications.
- Graduate student admissions slowed, while freshman, transfer, and visiting student numbers picked up again for us. This shift corresponds precisely to a Chronicle of

¹ Thomas Friedman, “Something's Happening Here,” *The New York Times* (Oct. 11, 2011).

Higher Education Act report that graduate enrollments were down 5% across US colleges. There are two reasons for this. After three years of recession, apparently, students were less willing to pay the opportunity cost of going back to school for a qualifying degree. But there are also fewer students to go around—2010 marked the end of the Baby Boomer's children's educational life cycle on all the charts.

- It's also true that AUP's graduate directors were particularly selective last year—our accept rate went down, which is good—and we brought in a stellar class of grad students.
- Last year, AUP awarded 1,343,060 euros in institutional financial aid, 13% of our entire annual budget, up from 979,716 euros the year before
- We certified \$5,761,567 in US federal loans; a huge 72% increase over previous year.
- This year we have a total 954 students enrolled, 751 undergraduates, and 2020 graduates. The current split between undergraduate and graduate is 78%/ 22%—precisely our target—of which 8% are visitors, and 69% are women. That's very close to the national average for liberal arts-style institutions, and we are in Paris.
- The entire student body of AUP is 42% American, 11% French. After that come the Saudis, edging out German students this year for the first time. Norway and Turkey, where we're recently seen our degrees recognized, appear on the charts as highly represented in our diverse student body.
- Our graduation rate—the percentage of students who enter the University, including transfers, as degree-seeking undergraduates who have indeed graduated 6 yrs. later is 67%. That means that nearly 70% of all undergraduate students who enter AUP leave with a diploma. I am always seeking to improve those figures, but that's not so bad for our globally mobile population of students from 100 different nationalities. We're a very different population from a residential college in US, and our students have a range of different educational trajectories.
- And finally, this year for the first time, incoming graduate students brought as many languages and dialects into the University as graduate students: 28 languages and 5 dialects for each. This tally brings our ten-year survey of entering student languages to 88 different languages and dialects.

Now the good news. Despite the difficulties of the last few years, we delivered a balanced budget this year and finished the year in a significantly stronger cash position than last. Trustee giving was strong and generous. Thank you Valerie Gille and Florence Gagnieur, and the whole finance team; thank you, members of the Board.

But the best news of all is that we have just delivered in Admissions the third best enrollment year of the decade—and that's including the two years when we were packed to the gills with NYU and University of California visiting students. I believe that this is a harbinger of things to come. I want to take a moment to thank the entire Admissions staff, our deputy director Randy Vener, and our new director Brad Walp. We expect a great deal of you next year and you must know that we will all be willing—faculty and staff, students, trustees—to help you recruit our next class. I'll come back to that idea later.

The financial crisis is just the latest in a series of challenges our university has faced down in its history. One of the things you have to love about AUP is its sturdy unsinkability, its agility, its capacity to regroup, reorganize, and stride forth undaunted. I was very moved, last year, when I re-read our founder, Lloyd DeLamater's memoirs at the moment of his passing. I recognized our university in his description—there was a way in which AUP hadn't changed in 50 years, still bravely dodging the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

But we have also become what he dreamed. Dr. DeLamater was a visionary who, after the war and his marriage to a French national, asked the deeply pertinent question “how might one bridge the gap of narrow nationalism,” a question that we are still answering exuberantly today on our campus. The literary scholar in me who cannot resist close reading wants to point out to you that he used the bridge metaphor that still today informs our imagery and our particular curricular mission—inspired by the bridges of Paris, we now have FirstBridge, EnglishBridge, FrenchBridge, interdisciplinary bridges, even careers that bridge cultures. Our job here is not simply to produce graduates who can succeed in the global workplace, taking their place in multinationals the world over, but to graduate students who understand how much it has become their own life’s work to bridge, or connect, cultures and the people who inhabit them.

As did Dr. DeLamater, I too wish for our students that you experience firsthand, and hopefully a little uncomfortably, the feeling of being “not at home,” of being “in the home of another” so that you can stretch yourselves into new ways of thinking, new ways of being in the world, new ways of resolving the inevitable tensions between human beings different from one another in a complex world. This is the equipment for living that Dr. DeLamater hoped to give the very first class of Americans he “called” to Paris by the force of his personality and the ardency of his belief in the educational experiment he had embarked upon. It is the same transformative education we hope to give AUP students today. Only those of us educating on the frontier of the international know how overrated tolerance can be—it takes empathy, curiosity, the experience of having lived and learned together, and very good negotiation skills to bridge everything that divides us from one another. That was an intangible but essential part of the curriculum, then as now.

Clearly, Dr. DeLamater had a passionate stake in the importance of international education, a vision that had not yet had its time when he embarked on the founding of the American College. Even while weighed down with the minutia of desks and classrooms, and imported English books, and inscriptions and publicity, he saw beyond the present moment to the day when the ACP would be a “complete university and even have centers in Rome, London and Madrid.” He reasoned even then that that our world would require increasing numbers of international exchanges in all fields, ranging from the diplomacy and business to science and even tourism. He knew even then that a student at the well known Georgetown School of Foreign Service in Washington would be less experienced in what he called international understanding than those he could educate at the American College in Paris. I would argue that, in words different from the ones we use today, Dr. DeLamater was envisioning the rapid globalization that has overtaken our world and the pressing need for cultural translators who can bridge cultures and value systems with ease and aplomb. He had a clear-eyed vision even then—amidst the stress of the founding years—of where the world, and consequently the University, would be going.

AUP is today one of the most, if not the most, international university on the planet. We have founded a thriving consortium of 22 American universities across Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. We do have partner schools in Rome and Madrid, in a sense, and in Beirut and Cairo and Bulgaria and Kyrgyzstan. We have evolved from a college to a four-year comprehensive university, and from that to what Carnegie classifies as a “Master’s university, small,” and in the process have become an increasingly recognized institution for interdisciplinary research and academic convocation. We welcome students from over a hundred different nationalities, have taken our *assise* in eight buildings across the 7th arrondissement, and have a mission and student and faculty constituencies that are unique in the world. We partner with the Sorbonne, with Oxford, with Emory, and a host of other universities. We graduate students every year who return to transform the cities, countries and civil societies they go back to after their American University of Paris years. The model of sending and receiving American students that inspired Dr. DeLamater has been replaced today by the diverse demography he envisioned and we have become.

II

I am going to turn, now, to the heart of the matter; that is, to what we teach on this campus, and what that has to do with who we are and how we tell our story. I wouldn't be standing before you now if I didn't believe that there is no substitute for the kind of learning that goes on at The American University of Paris. No substitute for the intensity and quality of student/faculty relationships. No substitute for global liberal learning at its best. And there is no equivalent for the unique learning environment that is ours and that inflects all teaching and learning. Wherever I go to speak about the University, whatever conference I attend, as soon as I describe what goes on in the laboratory of the AUP classroom, people respond with curiosity and, to be frank, envy. You can't bottle what we have here simply by "internationalizing the curriculum."

Let me give you some very concrete examples—some stories that come right from my classroom.

- Right after 9/11, in my FirstBridge class, I had two Muslim students, a member of the Saudi royal family and a feisty Moroccan feminist, argue respectfully but passionately about sharia, about whether law and religion should be coextensive. They disagreed wholeheartedly, but civilly in the space of the classroom. You couldn't almost feel the air crackle with learning, as the other students, particular the Americans still aching from what happened at the World Trade Center, got a modulated, differentiated notion of Muslim belief. I will never forget the reaction of the other students at the recognition of what kinds of differences, and thus conversations, were possible in contemporary Islam.
- FirstBridge, as we all know, is a very special classroom experience, more familiar somehow than an ordinary classroom, because the students are together five times a week in a learning community designed to create bridges amongst them. In one of mine, as we were reading together a novel in which sexual identity and preference was foregrounded, one of my students, right in middle of class, decided to come out to the class as a gay man, courageously I might add, while a number of Muslim students fasting for Ramadan looked at back at him as if he were speaking in tongues. What I love about AUP is that nothing was required of me in that moment except to keep the space safe for all students so that they could explore their differences. As we studied the social construction of power together that semester, we also negotiated cultural differences across the novel we were reading together, religious differences, and ideological differences, in a way that brought that class together. Most of the students in that class evoked this moment in their evaluations at the end of the term as a moment of growth and discovery.
- In my first year of teaching at AUP, when I was still recovering from the shock of having left Barnard—where I was a feminist daughter of a feminist mother teaching feminist daughters of feminist mothers (talk about homogeneity!)—I taught a course on Contemporary Feminist Thought in the remarkable space of the AUP classroom. There were four black students in my class—one a young woman from LA whose brother had been killed in the Watts riots, two Jamaicans, one struggling to make ends meet, another a Vice President at Citibank, slicker, older and wealthier than the rest of the class. The last was a Kenyan. We had amazing discussions in which it was impossible to generalize about race relations, so different were the experiences of these students. One thing I have come to love about the AUP classroom is the way that looking at differences within, subtle and more interesting in nature than stark contrasts, provides remarkable occasions for exchange and learning.

How do we wrap words around that kind of learning? How do we tell our story to the world?

We are very lucky to have the Dean that we have, a humanist and a writer and a teacher, who shares with us the deep belief that liberal learning is still the best, most transformative way to learn. He is engaged in a slow, thoughtful, year-long dialogue with the faculty, in Extraordinary Faculty Senate meetings, about what the liberal arts means in our unique context, in global context. We are reinventing the meaning of this terminology for our special context and the still-new century.

With our Dean and my faculty colleagues, the future of higher education is something I think about all the time. Central to the state of our university is its academic identity and vision. I'd like to share a few musings with you today on the topic of who we are and who we might become as we take our rightful place as a world leader in global higher education.

In early September—the Global Liberal Arts Alliance, a consortium we joined two years ago—assigned to four of its presidents the task of defining liberal education in global context and writing a white paper on it to share with the group. We couldn't have been more different. One was first non-profit private women's college in Saudi Arabia; one an American University in Paris with 100 nationalities in its student body, twenty something in its faculty body. The last two were prestigious liberal arts colleges in the Great Lakes College Association (Midwest), one with a Christian mission, and one with a surprisingly global mission for a college located in the cornfields. Interestingly, we managed to agree on just about everything, except our ethical priorities. The two religious schools linked learning to revelation and interpretation to religious hermeneutics; the two secular schools resolutely rejected those notions.

Here is what we came up with, all four of us, despite our differences (geopolitical, religious, demographic, etc.). We agreed that the single most important mission for higher educational institutions at this moment in history is to foster in our students a sense of responsibility for the Global Commons. We agreed that such an education is more interdisciplinary, more collaborative, and more attuned to global commitments than to narrow self interest. We agreed that such an education would necessarily have a practical or applied component—it would produce students who could deploy or transfer skills, make use of their learning in complex situations, which is not the same thing, believe me, as career readiness or vocational training. We agreed that such an education is based on the principles of liberal learning (broad and deep study, close faculty student relations, development of critical judgment and ethical commitments), but also represents a kind of paradigm shift in the way we educate students. You can't just pour "global" onto the "liberal arts" by sending cohorts of students on study abroad, or creating learning outcomes measuring cultural competency (a term I truly dislike). Where liberal learning traditionally centered upon the individual student, focusing on his growth, intellectual productions and moral commitments (the quintessential evaluative instrument the term paper produced by a single author), education for stewardship of the global commons requires that a student situate herself amongst others, produce knowledge and make decisions in collaboration with others, situate her own ideas against and amongst those of people coming from very different traditions and value systems, and understand her own belonging to this world held in common. An image for the former kind of educational experience might be that of Plato sitting at the knee of his mentor Socrates, where, in reverent interaction, the student masters a tradition and makes it his own. An image of the latter might be that of a group of students, open to both the impact and the influence of the world, surveying its immensity and variety and mapping for themselves, aided by teacher/guides, the vast, shifting landscapes of global history, politics, economics, arts, religions, technologies, and even climate.

I wish I had time to lay out for you the literacies, the skills and the dispositions for global engagement that we hammered out in my office over a weekend (I will be writing about them in my blog), but let me just mention two or three here. Note that both of these new skills take technology as metaphor.

Two Skills for Stewardship of the Global Commons:

- Mastering Scalar Thinking: a method of Google Earth style reasoning that permits us to zoom in and zoom out on issues in ways that reveal the connections between the global and the local; at each scale of analysis, different features and relationships emerge.
- Achieving Global Positioning: a GPS is only reliable if it is coordinating information from a variety of differently situated sources. This skill is something that students gain in the AUP classroom, situating their own ideas with more clarity as they are registered against and influenced by the very different ideas of others.

Two Dispositions of Globally Educated Students:

- Agility: the capacity to continually revise one's notion of one's own identity and that of others in constellation with new cultures, persons and experiences
- Vulnerability: a disposition not to recoil at difference, but to see encounters with difference as opportunities for growth and learning, for innovation, and for joyful encounter with others

When I say that what we are doing at AUP is way ahead of the curve—blessed as we are with the perfect culture of our “third country” location (and I’m referring here to culture as the nourishing environment of a petri dish)—I mean that as a teacher who has had this experience in the classroom for 20 years, a former dean who worked to build curricular structures in the service of it, and president working tirelessly to resource an institution that makes this kind of education available to its students. We are already, by virtue of the learning environment itself, a university of the future.

I’m going to end this section with some provocative questions about the kind of 21st century education that we are uniquely suited to provide at AUP.

- Although I believe passionately that there is no better way to learn than in small heterogeneous groups of students engaged in acts of discovery and interpretation with teacher/guides, although I believe liberal learning is most likely to produce thinkers who possess discernment and critical judgment, openness to alterity, and ethical commitments, I genuinely wonder whether we should—in our global context—be using the term Liberal Arts to describe it. I’ve come to think that it’s a freighted, culturally bound, and even nostalgic term that doesn’t translate well. It doesn’t even translate in the US context any longer—the AAC&U has written much about how liberal learning is read as politically leftist, sort of the MSNBC of educational approaches.
- How else might we describe the mix of deep learning and practical, hands-on, passionate application that we practice here at AUP? AUP’s greatest strength is—or should be, I would argue—to refuse the false dichotomy between the liberal arts and the pre-professional. Every liberal art major is pre-professional—it leads prepared students to places in the world where they can importantly stand and contribute via the exercise of critical discernment, judgment and decision. Every pre-professional major in this university should also be liberal arts inspired and infused, or we will end up producing technocrats who have no history and no notion of ethical behavior. We first got that balance right in the graduate programs here, and it is my hope that we will devise our own brand of this rich,

merged kind of learning for the 21st century, that we will find original language to describe it, and that it will rapidly become characteristic of all learning across the curriculum.

- I know another thing—and I speak lovingly here as a humanist of the humanities—we need to begin teaching the humanities differently. The crisis of the humanities is global and it is not going to disappear on its own. The perspectives the humanities bring at a moment of such complexity as I have described above are crucial to the education of our students, but if we don't adapt our methods to the moment, we will be alone in our classrooms. I can't think of disciplines capable of shedding more light on globalization, on the information and communication revolutions, than the humanities; yet, they remain on some college campuses curiously out of step with these phenomena. The students we are teaching today are substantially different from the ones we were ourselves—but if we meet them where they are, and find ways to package our beloved texts in ways that are meaningful and life changing for them, in ways that are relevant to their life experience, there is a whole new way forward for the humanities. I want to cite on our campus the work of Julia Wildberger, the most classical of classicists, back in the sandbox of FB teaching Environmental Ethics to our first-year students. Oliver Feltham, one of AUP's philosophers, has just turned in a superb proposal for a new Master's program on Public Policy and Climate Change. And Charles Talcott, moving from Comparative Literature to Communications, leads our graduate students to Pondicherry, India each winter where they work with local NGOs devoted to sustainable projects involving women and children.
- Maybe we should even be thinking beyond a curriculum that is department-driven or discipline-driven, instead envisioning movement of faculty and students across a curriculum that is complex as a web, both cross-cultural and transversal (interdisciplinary). That has already begun at AUP, as faculty have stepped across disciplinary boundaries into new spaces. And so have students: I am not surprised that some students, enough to be statistically significant, in our new self-designed major are choosing courses arrayed around sustainability studies, courses as wide ranging as philosophy, literature, politics, public policy and science.
- Maybe we should consider organizing learning not around traditional disciplines, but around the most pressing and important questions facing humankind today: poverty, public health, the environment, religious and ethnic conflict, etc. This is what Michael Crow has done at Southern Arizona State University to much hue and cry on the part of faculty there. But this may be the way of the future.

But this is no longer my job. It is now the job of a Dean I trust profoundly and a faculty I respect. It is the President's job to create an updraft—by putting before you the value proposition that this is what AUP could be the best in the world at, and suggesting that we should not miss an opportunity to get this right. This is a project that should call the whole soul of this faculty, indeed the whole soul of this campus, into action. I entrust it into your capable hands.

III

The challenge of this University in the coming years is to take its special character, its completely unique learning environment, its thoughtful and ahead-of-the-wave curriculum to the world, drawing to it self-selecting students and faculty (I prefer that to traditional notions of selectivity based on exclusion) who will thrive in our environment, who will change it and be changed by it in the rare alchemy of our classroom where differences so naturally abound.

It takes, in the meantime, a team to raise a University, and that team—with all of its constituencies represented—is in this room.

In the past three years, we have addressed on every single front the issue of governance, which Judith and I felt to be fundamental to the University's health. It all began three years ago with the trustees, under Judith Ogilvie's leadership, who came together around a Trustee Compact, a conflict-of-interest statement, new ways of working together as the stewards of this University. The faculty has followed suit with a partial revision of our twenty-year-old Faculty Manual, a job they will be completing with their Dean this coming year. Finally, the students, responding to this example, rewrote their own constitution, and, most exciting of all, are in the transformative process of re-founding student governance—creating, first and foremost, a place for graduate students. The partnership between Pierre-Emmanuel Bach and Sara Finnigan this year, along with all the students on their teams, is going to have a multiplier effect on The American University of Paris. We will be celebrating our 50th next year having rewritten our fundamental governance documents from top to bottom of the house. That gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction, for governance is the solid foundation upon which everything else rests.

I'd like to say a few words about each constituency of our University:

As president of an American university in Europe, one of the questions I tend to get most often is: "who owns AUP?" I then speak, of course, of the particularity defining American higher education: the presence of lay citizen governing boards and the leadership partnership of such boards with university presidents and senior staffs. In countries where public, and even private education, are dependencies of the State, that is a concept impossible for my interlocutors to get. "Yes," they ask again, but who owns AUP. The real answer is that all of us—trustees, faculty, staff, and students—own AUP and are responsible for its leadership and for its flourishing.

First, the cohesiveness, ambitiousness, and energy of a Board makes the difference between a good institution and a great one. And as a president who has worked with this Board for three years, I can say that we are well on our way to greatness. I believe that a powerful future for an institution can be secured if there is 100% buy-in from an institution's Board—and both leadership and passion behind the effort. Boards are responsible for the mission and heritage of an institution, they are responsible to the public and all the institution's constituencies, for strategic direction and policy. As you can see, our Board enjoys being present on campus, going to classes, and meeting students for lunch and conversation. AUP's Board, which stepped in expertly during the crisis to help me manage exceptional circumstances, is now stepping back to its governance role as AUP's own professional senior team steps up. The work we have to do as our 50th beckons is very clear—together, we will take responsibility for ensuring the University's future, its second fifty years—an effort that may include a capital campaign and the start of an endowment for AUP.

Next, the faculty is the jewel in the crown of an educational institution. No faculty, no university; it's that simple. I am immoderately proud both of coming from this particular faculty and of currently leading it. For the other constituencies in this room, it is important for you to know that the quality of teaching and learning rests with the implication and commitment of faculty. Our own is exceptional in that regard. Faculty is essentially responsible for the curriculum of the University, the delivery of the educational product, if you will, its continual assessment, refinement, and improvement. Faculty share in the governance of an institution by bringing forward, through clear governance channels such as the Senate, recommendations to their Dean who in turn, considering these recommendations thoughtfully, brings them to the President. Neil Gordon is, after years of transition, re-opening and re-establishing these channels with faculty. While a faculty's recommendations are advisory—responsibility for the University's financial health resides elsewhere—a Dean and President would do well to heed faculty recommendations, as we do here at AUP.

The role of staff in a University is less well defined from a governance perspective, certainly in the American system, than some of the other roles. But I have felt the staff's role at AUP to be crucial to our success as a University. That is why I have spent such effort these past three years handpicking the six senior staff members to lead each of our major departments, why it has mattered to me to create a team of middle managers and directors whom we can groom for leadership, staying alert for ways in which they can move upward through the University's ranks. That effort has paid off in an AUP that is better administered and on the cusp of acceding to a new planning, forecasting, and assessment culture. I can feel the approach of the day when we will be a proactively administered institution and my heart leaps up at the thought of it.

The *comité d'entreprise* is a staff and faculty body that is mandated by law to monitor the working conditions of employees and to work with the employer to address all such issues via consultation. Although French Labor law occasionally comes up against our revered academic traditions of American higher education, on the whole we do a thoughtful, generally good job of balancing them at AUP. I am proud that recent years have brought with them real dialogue at the bargaining table, the capacity to hear one another, and increasing trust. The last *comité* elections were a watershed at AUP with more staff and faculty participation than ever before and a fine slate elected.

You, the students of AUP, never cease to amaze us. You are our *raison d'être*. In the last two years alone you have held fundraiser after fundraiser, creating student-to-student scholarships, and sending student-raised funds to Haiti and elsewhere in a year that saw more than its share of natural disaster. You partnered with the administration to make AUP the first institution of higher learning in Paris to have a comprehensive recycling program. You turn out professional quality publications, videos, and projects in the service of student life at AUP. Last year you revised your student constitution, and this year, in the partnership of Pierre and Sara we will finally achieve governance parity for graduate students. I hope I'm not jumping the gun in saying you are considering a proposal to have two leadership councils, undergraduate and graduate, and to bring all student government under the banner of the SGA. At the Plenary, the board and the community will learn more about what you are accomplishing with Kevin Fore to rethink your work in the service of your constituencies and the University.

Each of us in this room—the true “owners” of AUP in the deepest and most meaningful sense of that word—knows what a special, engaging, indeed life-changing institution AUP is. We have all fallen in love with it, myself included, and have found ourselves willing again and again to support this little crucible of diversity and connectedness, this “third country” space of intellectual freedom—no political correctness here. Our work in the coming years is to become a recruiting university, increasing our student numbers only slightly so that we can achieve greater financial balance. We do have the economy against us, creating headwinds that may slow our progress, but our need in the scope of things is so small that in spite of the dire global economic prognosis, there are, I am convinced, 250 more students on the planet who would love to come to AUP, and who would be transformed by the experience, if only they knew it existed. If every one of you in this room made it your business to bring one student into the University, we would be half way there. I have made it my business for several years to ask every entering student how he or she found out about AUP, and in a vast majority of cases it was a chance connection to a member of our community. As we round the corner of our fiftieth year and begin a year-long celebration next fall in honor of it, I call upon each of you to be champions, ambassadors, recruiters, bloggers—but most of all storytellers for AUP wherever you may find yourselves.

The state of the university depends on it.