

**Faculty Senate
President's Report
May 9, 2025**

It's a pleasure to join you with GW's commencement on the horizon and to share some university news and updates. I want to again welcome the new Senate members, and I thank you for all you do to represent the GW faculty and to provide insight and guidance on some of the most pressing issues at the university. I also want to welcome back those returning to Senate service this year.

First, I want to acknowledge what I know many of you are feeling: frustration, uncertainty, and concern. Recent changes at the federal level have added a layer of complexity to a budget environment that was already under pressure. And I know that when it comes to budgets, people feel the impact personally and professionally.

Last week's message from Chris, Bruno, and Scott highlighted the actions we are taking to steward the university's resources so that we are able both to correct the structural imbalance in our budget as well as navigate the headwinds that are out of our hands. Those include changes to federal research funding, the risk of the government targeting other university funding, the possibility of disruptions to student aid distribution or international student enrollment, and economic and political instabilities, to name a few. As difficult as it will be, this course correction is of strategic importance to the university and will help us enormously as we move forward, particularly should the current instability continue over several years..

I appreciate all you can do as faculty senators to make sure that lines of communication remain open. I'm very grateful for the partnership, support, candor, and feedback many of you have shared. As I've mentioned before, my colleagues and I are working to stay informed, prepare for multiple scenarios, advocate for our community, and ensure GW remains as safe and secure as possible.

I've discussed with the executive committee the role faculty could play in supporting the university should we end up in the target of federal action and this will be a topic of discussion at the upcoming session between the BOT executive committee, FSEC, and university leadership.

In terms of the situation at the federal level, I am seeing some areas of escalation and others of retrenchment. For example, the war between Harvard and the Trump administration only appears to be escalating, as are the messages coming out of the Department of Education.

In the Department of Justice (DOJ), there looks to me to be some reorientation now that the new assistant attorney general for the civil rights division is in place. The department is not backing away from action directed at universities, but it does look like the new Assistant Attorney General is taking some time to consider how she wants to approach this part of her portfolio. As one example, several visits scheduled by the DOJ task force on antisemitism appear to be on hold for now. At the same time, the DOJ has sent out numerous inquiries focused on universities' compliance with the Supreme Court decision in *Students for Fair Admission vs. Harvard*, the decision that ended the consideration of race in college admissions.

The AAU has launched a targeted public relations campaign focused on support for research; all AAU members will support this campaign through a special assessment. The campaign is focused on areas of opportunity; unless you spend time in states like North Carolina, Texas, or Louisiana, you won't see these advertisements. There will be a tool kit available that will be suitable for use by any university, and our communications and marketing team is standing by to amplify the messages. We were also encouraged to reach out to our alumni in the targeted states and ask them to keep an eye out for this campaign.

Yesterday I saw a preview of a terrific new website we are launching featuring GW research as a way of communicating the value, impact, and variety of research underway at GW. We are joining many universities in telling these important stories and asserting the value of higher education. Please watch for an announcement in GW Today next week about the launch of this site.

Admissions and Fall 2025 Enrollment Update

There have been many national stories about changes in various student enrollment trends this year. Overall, our early enrollment indicators reflect positively on the strength of our academic programs, the dedication of our admissions and enrollment teams, and the appeal of our university experience to outstanding undergraduate and graduate students. As usual, we will continue to monitor trends closely this summer and adapt our strategies as needed to meet our enrollment and institutional goals, but I wanted to provide a few highlights of the early trend data.

Undergraduate Enrollment

I'm pleased to report that undergraduate enrollment patterns have remained relatively steady throughout this spring. New student admissions and returning student registration processes have progressed as planned. We again attracted over 27,000 applications from highly talented students across all 50 US states and more than 150 countries. We had over 5,000 admitted students and their family members come to campus in April to see the Only at GW experience firsthand.

As of today, our first-year and new transfer student profile is very strong and the new student deposits are in line with our enrollment targets. We will continue to manage the incoming class by leveraging transfer admissions and proactively using limited waitlist offers to shape and complete the class over the summer.

Undergraduate student retention rates are also on track, and early Fall 2025 registrations are slightly ahead of this time last year.

Graduate Enrollment

In February, we highlighted our expanded national and global outreach strategies to strengthen the graduate applicant pools. I'm proud to share that those efforts have paid off—we exceeded our goal by attracting more than 27,500 new graduate student applications. While applications and admission patterns vary across schools and degree programs, this overall result is a strong indicator of our growing appeal in a very competitive graduate education marketplace.

Total new graduate student deposits are currently tracking slightly below last year's pace (-1% to -3% or 124 fewer new graduate student deposits compared to last year). This is primarily attributed to fewer early deposits from international students.

Based on historical trends and current engagement levels, there will be a lot of activity over the next three months. We expect around 1,800 additional new graduate student commitments between now and the start of September.

Monitoring International Student Markets

Given the ongoing economic, political, and environmental uncertainties affecting international travel and planning, our enrollment and international services teams are keeping a close watch on international student trends. Our teams are actively working to support our global students through visa processes, communication touchpoints, and transition resources. Through all of our outreach and support efforts, our teams are focusing on GW's commitment to helping our international students fulfill their goal of joining us this fall and letting them know we are prepared to assist them as much as possible to help them succeed.

Now I would like to update you on some key planning processes.

Strategic Framework

Thank you for your continued engagement and thoughtful insights on GW's Strategic Framework process, which was released for public review last month. We hosted nine leadership briefings, including with the Faculty Senate as well as the Board of Trustees, Student Government Association, Staff Council, and division and community leaders. We also hosted five community briefings and solicited feedback via the strategic framework website. Feedback during this phase was robust, as it has been throughout the process.

We received very positive feedback, with several great suggestions for strengthening the final framework. The community encouraged us to build on and expand the framework's bold ideas, clarify how the goals will be implemented, and ensure the framework remains grounded in academic excellence, cross-campus collaboration, and long-term impact. We plan to present a final draft to the Board of Trustees for review with approval at the retreat in June.

Campus Master Plan Update

Another major planning effort underway is the Campus Master Plan. The current Foggy Bottom campus master plan spanned 20 years, and it will expire in 2027. Sasaki Associates has been selected as our design/planning partner and will also be leading our Campus Space Utilization Study. The internal engagement strategy is being developed, with the formation of a number of committees to provide guidance and input. The Campus Master Planning Steering Committee is helping guide this effort and includes a number of stakeholders from across GW, including faculty.

The overall schedule for the plan's development will last about two years. In 2025, we will focus on internal engagement and plan development. The focus will shift to city engagement and plan approval in 2026, followed by implementation in 2027.

Marketing and Branding Refresh Update

We are making significant progress on the brand refresh initiative, which is closely tied to our work on the strategic framework. This work aims to strengthen our ability to tell the university's story and further enhance the university's reputation. Our agency partner, Ologie, has completed discovery interviews with more than 70 stakeholders ranging from trustees, university leadership, deans, faculty, students, alumni, and staff. We are gathering input from the entire GW community and have thus far received more than 1,600 responses. We have also established a 40+ person working group that is providing feedback at every stage of our efforts. In the near future, Ologie will begin testing various positioning statements in focus groups that will serve as the foundation of our messaging and creative approach.

The fourth planning element, which I'll just mention briefly, but which Provost Bracey will talk more about, is the Budget Model Redesign on which we are making good progress.

Engagements and Events

In April, we installed Professor Mary Anne Franks as the Eugene L. and Barbara A. Bernard Professor in Intellectual Property, Technology, and Civil Rights Law.

InnovationFest was held on May 1; I visited the event and was very impressed—I also signed up for my AAAS membership. The Smith Center was filled with more than 150 scholars and inventors from all 10 schools. The participating students were especially impressive; a few presentations that stood out to me included the Columbian College of Arts & Sciences' Mind Brain Institute (with matched life-size brain models), the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences' Assistive Robotics and Tele-Medicine (ART-Med) Lab, and a product that makes central line insertions much safer—this was a collaboration among faculty, clinicians, and students in the School of Medicine & Health Sciences. My thanks and congratulations to Bob Miller and the team that put this remarkable event together.

One of the highlights of the year for me has been meeting with faculty over coffee and lunch. Open conversations like these are vitally important to encourage communication that will allow us to track and manage concerns and issues at this time of change. These featured both tenured and untenured faculty; I have learned a great deal about what it is like to manage teaching, research, scholarship, and sometimes patient care at GW, especially in this contested time.

Several positive actions have come out of these coffees, the most visible of which is the weekly federal update, the idea for which arose during one of these events. These conversations have been of the major highlights of my experience leading GW, and I am looking forward to continuing these in the fall.

Next, my thanks to those of you involved in the selection process for the Humanitarian Internship Program. Last month, we held a reception to celebrate the inaugural cohort of students participating in the Humanitarian Internship Program. We received 176 applicants for a cohort of 20, with 11 undergrads and 9 graduate students. The students represented the Elliott School (10), the Milken Institute School of Public Health (3), Columbian College of Arts & Sciences (6), and the School of Engineering & Applied Sciences (1). The program includes eight partner organizations, including Jubilee Housing (which serves the District) as well as World Central Kitchen, Engineers Without Borders, and others.

Finally, some news from the community:

- The Cedar Hill hospital ribbon cutting was held on April 10, with the official opening on April 15.
- I recently had lunch with DC Fire and EMS Chief John Donnelly as part of my efforts to get to know the city's leadership.

Commencement is upcoming on May 18, and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Again, I want to welcome new senators. I hope you all have a great summer, and I look forward to working with you over the next academic year.