

Letter from Washington Area Alumni to the AUP President and Board of Trustees

The current AUP leadership has been especially creative in its effort to transform the school from a globally focused liberal arts college into a small world university of the first rank. Key elements of this initiative include partnerships with major institutions like New York University and the decision to establish a new campus on the Ile Seguin. Recognizing the challenge that such a move entails, in January several Washington area alumni sent the following letter of encouragement and support to President della Paolera and the Board of Trustees:

TO: President della Paolera and the Board of Trustees

FROM: The Washington Chapter of the AUP Alumni Association

Members of our Washington Chapter applaud your efforts to strengthen the University's position as a quality international academic institution. As graduates who in large part have pursued careers in international and/or public service, we are heartened by these new developments. We express ourselves now because we want you to know that alumni are eager to be engaged in this process as it moves forward, and we want to underscore our strong support for these forward looking initiatives, which are designed to enhance and strengthen AUP's academic standing and unique character.

We understand that the University has evolved considerably since its founding in 1962 as a two-year college aimed primarily at adventurous Americans who wanted to study in cosmopolitan Paris and gain university credits that could be transferred to institutions in the United States. Beginning with some one hundred students who took most of their classes in the American Cathedral and American Church, the school attracted a growing and increasingly international student body who appreciated its unique learning opportunity. Over the years, dedicated and determined ACP officials and alumni overcame many challenges and transformed the school into a four-year college and then a university.

As the school evolved, it largely retained its original character. Each graduate has his or her own personal version of what is unique to the American University of Paris. However, the learning experiences of all former students is likely to have been seminal and also to include the memory of American and international classmates developing cross-cultural friendships and becoming global citizens within an American pedagogical model, with all of this taking place in one of the great cultural centers of the world.

Successive generations of students have valued the University's location in the Seventh Arrondissement, which is convenient and sophisticated, but also very expensive. Like most alumni we wish that AUP could remain in the Seventh Arrondissement and retain the Bosquet Center, which many of us consider the heart of the University. However, we recognize that this option has become increasingly difficult and probably financially unsustainable.

We recognize that establishing a new campus on the Ile Seguin offers an opportunity not only to maintain the University's viability but to increase its stature as an international learning center. However, the Paris experience may be compromised if access to the heart of the city is difficult. In addition, AUP's current character and historical roots should be preserved to the extent possible and facilitate access, through facilities and otherwise, to the intellectual and cultural life of Paris.

As AUP moves forward in planning this initiative, it may want to take into account the experience of the American Students and Artists Center, which stood for many years on the Boulevard Raspail. In the 1990s it sold its land to Cartier, then bought a site on the eastern edge of Paris, and commissioned Frank Gehry to design a new building. The building itself was finished, but its cost and out-of-the-way location financially doomed the project. Sadly, the American Students and Artists Center went bankrupt and disappeared.

We endorse your efforts to secure the future of AUP and to continue to build its academic and intellectual strength through the cooperative arrangement with New York University in order to provide to future generations of students the same sort of enriching and incomparable experience that each of us had at AUP. We believe that under your leadership, the result will be an improved financial situation and enhanced prospects for maintaining the model of a liberal undergraduate education through American pedagogy in a Paris setting. However, the difference in size of the two universities means that AUP must work assiduously to preserve its own identity, and we wish to engage ourselves with you in this process, as we believe will other alumni throughout the US and indeed the world.

Again, we commend your efforts to preserve and enhance the legacy and future of the American University of Paris and look forward to working with you on this historic initiative.

Sincerely,

Darryl Crompton, '69
Richard Nagel, '80
Peggy Montgomery, '79
Judith Ogilvie, '65
Josef Ruth, '65