

April 11, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

I recently let President LeBlanc know that I am planning to step down from my role as provost. President LeBlanc asked and I agreed to continue serving as provost until a successor is named.

This decision was tough. It has been a true privilege to serve with faculty and staff who care deeply about the university's teaching and research missions and to see the progress we have made together on so many dimensions. Likewise, I have loved, (as I have since I joined GW's faculty in 1993) the challenge of continuous improvement that our students and faculty rightfully seek every day.

The university's recent and successful reaccreditation and the approaching end point of GW's Vision 2021 strategic plan make this the right time for me to step down. Moreover, it is time for the university to develop, adopt, and implement a new academic strategic plan. It is also important for me personally to take advantage of my first sabbatical in over twenty years and for me to have the opportunity to do what I love: teaching the amazing students who come to GW. I look forward to returning to eating lunch every day with my colleagues and assorted crashers in the Political Science Department's Lee Sigelman conference room. (Crashers are always welcome!)

I committed myself to a career in higher education because I believe that universities have the capacity to drive important social and economic change and to improve lives. Indeed, I view myself as an institutionalist, and I am proud of the organizational and institutional change my teams and I have helped to drive at GW. Enhancing institutional reputation and research and advancing the mission of increasing access and academic success for students have been my passion. I know that GW today is a different, and I hope better, institution than it was when I took on a central administrative role in 2011.

Many of you know that I am intrigued by data and enjoy "kicking the tires." When I kick our tires at GW today, I see gains in our research ranking and progress in the number of fellowships and awards secured by our faculty. All of us should take pride in the impressive array of publications, patents, exhibitions and performances that are reflected in our faculty annual reports. And, none of us should be surprised at the quality and productivity of the faculty we have been hiring.

There is no better measure of how well a university meets the needs of its students than its graduation and retention rates. On this metric, GW has made significant strides. Our six-year graduation rate has for the first time in modern history exceeded 80% for five years straight. Last year, we set an institutional record when 78% of students graduated in four years ([Core Indicators - slide 3](#)). And last fall, our first to second year retention was 93% and our first to third year retention was a GW record of 88% ([slide 4](#)). I have no doubt that with a university-wide sustained effort, we will continue to improve for our students and enhance the university's reputation.

Despite market pressures, demand for our graduate and undergraduate programs—a sign of GW's reputation and accomplishments—continues to grow. Indeed, 2019 will be a banner year: We have already topped 60,000 undergraduate and graduate applications and are running far ahead of our healthy four-year average ([slide 7](#)). And, consistent with the Vision 2021 plan, we continue to create opportunities that allow our students to take full advantage of the GW curriculum. Likewise, the number of students who have majors and/or minors in more than one school has nearly doubled ([slide 9](#)), and the percentage in STEM has increased by more than 50% since 2011 ([slide 10](#)).

Institutions such as GW do not have the luxury of putting innovation and change on the back burner. We need to focus on those changes that will have the greatest impact on our mission. I want to highlight important steps we have taken recently that help distinguish us from others and position us well for the future. We have enhanced our tenure and promotion standards; built a strategic enrollment operation that is one of the best in the country; created an online portfolio replete with engaging and challenging courses; institutionalized programs and activities to make our campus a more inclusive and welcoming place; increased support for doctoral education; developed mechanisms to enhance student success; adopted Title IX policies that protect the community in a fair and humane way; made our data more accessible and useful; invested in our research infrastructure and technology transfer efforts; hired, (and retained with a few unfortunate exceptions) a creative, diverse, and dedicated faculty; decreased the proportion of our revenue derived from our traditional on-campus face-to-face programs; and prioritized being careful stewards of the resources our students and donors entrust to us.

I cannot overstate the importance of our shared governance in driving change and ensuring that GW thrives. Shared governance requires us to explore ideas from multiple perspectives, to inform ourselves with evidence, and to ask tough questions and challenge each other.

Any contributions I have made to GW's progress stem from the collaborative partnerships I have forged with faculty, staff, student leaders, members of our Board, and current and past Presidents LeBlanc and Knapp. I am grateful for this support and engagement, and I know GW is better as a result. Finally, I acknowledge what is obvious to all: Our progress—and the pitfalls avoided—would not have been possible without my decanal and vice provost teams (and their own teams) and the vice presidents I have served alongside. They serve this institution well, have been my daily partners, and will always be my friends.

I trust GW will continue to collaboratively build upon our strengths to ensure that we continue to innovate and thrive. And I have no doubt that our students and our research will make the world a better place.

I thank Presidents LeBlanc and Knapp, my predecessor Provost Steve Lerman, and our Board of Trustees for the opportunity to serve GW. And I thank all of you for trusting in me to help lead this great institution.

Best,



Forrest Maltzman
Provost and Professor of Political Science