



James E. Lyons, Sr.
Interim President

April 9, 2015

Washington Post Editorial Board
1150 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20071

Attention: Jo-Ann Armao

Your editorial on Friday, April 3 applauding the Mayor's proposed budget plan and specifically pointing to UDC for recommended cuts, is an unnecessary indictment of the District's only public land grant university and negligently disregards the tremendous progress made over the past few years.

In 2012, the Board of Trustees boldly moved toward greater efficiency by eliminating underperforming programs and reducing staff – an unpopular “rightsizing” that has resulted in a University more capable of fulfilling its mission to offer affordable and effective undergraduate, professional, and workplace learning opportunities to the citizens of this city and region. A new strategic plan, Vision 2020 that was adopted last year further strengthens our academic offerings and better aligns the University's programs with the District of Columbia economic priorities.

Furthermore, a budget plan that targets UDC to absorb a recommended \$3.5 million in spending cuts seems inconsistent with the Mayor's comprehensive policy agenda to provide “pathways to the middle class” and undermines the essential role of this University in elevating our collective community status.

The University of the District of Columbia has long been a vehicle to uplift DC residents and provides a stepping stone to improve the lives of a non-traditional and diverse student body, which includes full-time workers, people with disabilities, second-language learners, and veterans. While your news archives reflect a series of stories about our past challenges, the Post has consistently chosen to ignore the many significant contributions and exciting achievements that reflect our successes and the spirit of teaching and learning that exists on our campuses.

Despite our past struggles, UDC continues to be a pathway to the middle class by admitting more DCPS students than any other local college or university, and consistently graduates more than 700 students each year who are among the ranks of city taxpayers, and include DCPS educators, government workers, business professionals and civic leaders.

We are proud of the ongoing growth and development of UDC's schools and colleges, including the UDC Community College (UDCCC), and we are establishing more comprehensive academic and workforce development programs to serve the intellectual and vocational needs of DC residents. Total enrollment in the two programs this academic year stands at 8390 students, many of them completing programs at the Community College and transitioning into 4-year and graduate programs available at UDC's Van Ness campus. Included in that number is the largest class ever of 174 dual-enrolled DCPS high school students.

The College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) houses UDC's land grant Centers; integrating research with academic and community education and therefore offering experiential learning and professional development to UDC students. In 2014 alone, CAUSES conducted 5,222 workshops, demonstrations, events and community classes to more than 32,000 participants of all ages, working with 65 DCPS schools and 28 faith-based and community centers.

The UDC David A. Clarke School of Law consistently achieves top-ten national ratings for its clinical programs – higher than Harvard, Stanford, Columbia and numerous other nationally respected law schools. It is also ranked number two nationally in student diversity. Through its community service, summer fellowship, externship and signature clinical program, it annually provides over 100,000 hours of free legal service to our most vulnerable residents, civic organizations and government agencies and its graduates are held in high regard and can be found hard at work throughout the District government as well as in non-profit organizations and private practice.

It's also important to recognize the recent expansion of the University's revenue streams, including a research portfolio in excess of \$20 million that supports faculty research across an array of subject areas ranging from prostate cancer to STEM training, biomedical engineering, early childhood education and water quality research. We've also concluded a successful \$1 million dollar fundraising effort, which will be matched by the District Council and signifies a strong base of community support that recognizes our value.

With even more to say, I encourage you to take a closer look at today's UDC, pay us a visit and consider collaborating with us. Once you learn more, you will be as positive as I am about the contributions that this University makes to the District of Columbia, our region, and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "James E. Lyons", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

James E. Lyons