

October 7, 2008

Honorable Vincent C. Gray
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia
Committee of the Whole
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 504
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Gray:

Enclosed for consideration and introduction by the Council of the District of Columbia is proposed draft legislation that would amend the District of Columbia Public Post-secondary Education Reorganization Act to provide the University of the District of Columbia with the autonomy and ability to control its budget, contracting and procurement, financial affairs and personnel operations.

As I stated during the September 19th roundtable on “The New President of the University of the District of Columbia”, most major public universities in the United States enjoy a level of independence that allows them to function effectively and efficiently without being overburdened by procedures unsuited for the academic environment. Universities from California to Indiana to Maryland, Virginia and Delaware are the stewards of their own future, accountable to the public and fully transparent. The elements of this proposed legislation seek to accomplish the same for the University of the District of Columbia.

The legislation provides the university with the authority to set its own budget and allocate funds within that budget as well as exclusive control over use, acquisition and disbursement of all UDC funds and property. All funds would be subject to annual audit by the District for District funds, with other audits for other funding sources. The Council maintains its budget submission oversight and review. I believe these changes will deliver a transparent and accountable budget and spending process within an independent framework.

The legislation provides that the Board of Trustees shall carry out the procurement of goods and services for the University of the District of Columbia through a procurement office or division and shall not be governed by the Office of Contracts and Procurement. All contract negotiations would be governed by

District law, but implementation would be carried out by the university. It further provides the University with the authority to issue bonds for the financing of university facilities and to exclude contracts from council review. Additionally, the proposed legislation provides for the development of independent personnel rules suitable for a university while retaining appropriate protections for all employees as well as the right to collectively bargain.

UDC is currently embarking on a period of significant development of academic initiatives that have the potential to bring enhanced support to the University. Whether addressing ongoing discussions about a community college role for UDC, or making better use of our faculty resources to maximize reaching students and conducting research, these amendments will promote the structural flexibility to allow the university to move its reforms along expeditiously.

I urge you to take prompt and favorable action on the enclosed legislation.

We look forward to working with you to strengthen support for the University in general and we thank you for your leadership and support of the University. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 202-274-6016 or Thomas E. Redmond, Director of Governmental Affairs at 202-274-5622.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Allen L. Sessoms
President

cc: Mayor Adrian Fenty, Peter Nickles, Victor Reinoso, Joanne Ginsberg, Councilmembers Jack Evans, Kwame Brown, Jim Graham, Muriel Bowser, Harry Thomas, Jr., Tommy Wells, Yvette Alexander, Marion Barry, Carol Schwartz, David Catania, Phil Mendelson, Mary Cheh

Enclosure:

