

AU Celebrates the 2019 Scholarship Luncheon

By Hunter B. Martin | March 27, 2019



Provost Daniel J. Myers welcomes Janice Anderson and Alexandra Long, CAS/MA '18, PhD '23, benefactor and recipient of the Barnard Scholarship.

On Wednesday, March 20, more than 160 students, alumni, faculty, and donors gathered for the American University's 2019 Scholarship Luncheon hosted by Daniel J. Myers, AU's new provost and chief academic officer. The 22-year tradition honored the impact of philanthropy on student success at AU.

"Generous donor support is the key to unlocking an AU education and everything it offers," said Myers. "Thanks to donors who have endowed more than 350 scholarships, almost 500 donor-funded scholarships are awarded every single year to help our students. Ensuring that all admitted students have access to the entire breadth of the AU experience and the financial freedom to pursue their intellectual passions are among AU's greatest challenges. Donors help AU students achieve their potential and realize their ambitions."

At the event, Provost Myers announced an extraordinary new \$2 million gift to create and endow the Karin A. Akerson Memorial Scholarship Fund. The gift significantly advances AU's efforts to reduce financial barriers to higher education and empowers more students to pursue their academic careers at AU. Karin Akerson was a proud AU alumna who passed at an early age in March 2018. Her

husband, Daniel F. Akerson, chose to honor her memory and regard for AU by advancing a plan they originally structured to be fulfilled well in the future, after they both had passed. By making his donation this year, Mr. Akerson makes it possible for AU to mark Karin Akerson's legacy now.

"The Akersons's generosity allows AU to further advance its commitment to academic and inclusive excellence," said Provost Myers. "We are grateful for the leadership and generosity of the Akerson family, and welcome the positive impact this gift is sure to have."

The program also featured student speaker Alexandra Long, CAS/MA '18, CAS/PhD '23. Long, who is pursuing a PhD in psychology at AU, is on her way to becoming a "double Eagle;" she received her master's in psychology from American University, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. During her master's studies she earned the Academic Research Excellence Award from AU's Sexual Assault Working Group and the Mellon Award for Graduate Student Research. Long is the recipient of the Barnard Scholarship, which provides support for deserving AU psychology students.

"The Barnard Scholarship has had a huge impact on my life," said Long. "It gave me the ability to immerse myself in learning, focus on my coursework and my research, and dedicate whatever free time I had left over to the rigorous PhD application process." Her dedication paid off; Long was accepted into AU's clinical psychology PhD program in spring 2018. "I can move forward on my career path as a psychologist-in-training with the confidence that AU believes in me as a student and a scholar and will continue to support me as I work hard towards achieving my goals."

Long thanked two people instrumental to establishing the Barnard Scholarship who attended the event: Janice Anderson, who encouraged her late husband John Barnard Fiske to create the scholarship, and AU psychology professor James Gray whose teaching inspired Anderson, Barnard, and Long.

"One of the aspects of this annual scholarship luncheon that I find so exciting is this opportunity to bridge scholarship donors and recipients to bring to life the stories, and faces, the trials and successes, the dreams and motivation," said Courtney Surls, vice president of Development and Alumni Relations. The annual luncheon brings together those who created donor-funded scholarships with current students whose AU experience is positively influenced by such philanthropic support.

"Donors, your support changes lives for the better," said Long, the student speaker. "I and my peers in this room, who are the beneficiaries of your generosity, promise to 'pay it forward' one day and to make you proud as we continue to grow and evolve from our education here at AU."