

# AMERICAN

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The student experience at AU



**Above:** Pressing the flesh. President Bill Clinton, *foreground*, shakes hands with some of the enthusiastic AU students who surged down to the front of the stage following the president's speech. **Above right:** A new vision. Calling America's diversity, "a huge gift in a global economy and a global society," Clinton said, "We can study the demographic patterns and know what America will look like in the twenty-first century, but we have to look inside to imagine what America will be like . . ." **Below right:** AU applause. Clinton responds to the crowd's enthusiasm.



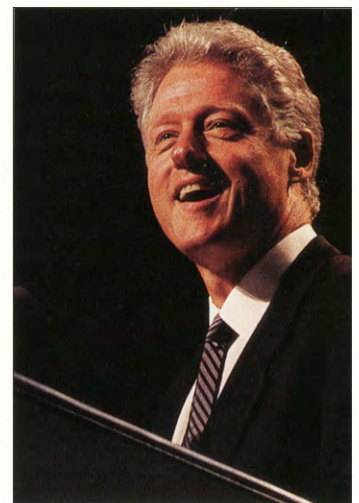
## Cover Story

### Clinton visits AU, calls for imagination in visualizing America's future

Calling human imagination "the most important force in the world," President Bill Clinton called on the AU community to visualize the United States in the twenty-first century as "a truly multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious democracy that still runs in a straight line from here all the way back to George Washington." Comparing his vision to that of President John F. Kennedy's in his historic 1963 commencement speech at AU, Clinton said, "President Kennedy looked forward and saw a day when Cold War [would be] a thing of the past. Because of decades of work to uphold our values . . . we are now living in the world John Kennedy imagined 34 years ago at American University . . . Now it is up to you and to me and to our

fellow Americans to imagine what the twenty-first century will be, and then to do what is necessary to make that vision a reality for all our people."

Calling AU with its international student body "a laboratory," the president said, "You come here in this magnificent university environment . . . you look at each other and



you're different and you like it. That's the way we've got to make daily life in America . . . I'm convinced we can do it, but I'm convinced that all of you have to lead the way."

Clinton's remarks came at the end of his September 9 speech to the university community. About 4,000 faculty, students, staff, trustees, alumni, and administrators—some of whom had waited up to eight hours for a front row seat—crowded into Bender Arena to hear the president speak. The visit was Clinton's second to the campus. In 1993 he accepted an honorary degree and made a speech as part of the kickoff to the university's centennial celebration.

In welcoming Clinton to campus, AU president Benjamin Ladner read a poem he had written in the president's honor and then noted the affinity between Clinton's values and those of the university. "For more than 100 years, Mr.

President, this university has been turning ideas into action and action into service—which is why whenever you are among us, you will always be at home," said Ladner.

Student Confederation president Neal Sharma '98, who introduced Clinton, brought up a theme that would resonate with the president's remarks. Noting that frontiers were a "uniquely American experience," Sharma said the frontier for the twenty-first century would be "within the human mind, within the human heart."

The balance of the president's speech, his first major address since returning from his summer vacation, outlined his agenda for the rest of the year. Calling the beginning of the new school year, "a time of genuine hope and earned optimism for America," Clinton said much remained to be done "to renew our values, to strengthen our nation, [and] to deal with

problems still unresolved, if we are really going to give you the twenty-first century you deserve."

Chief among the initiatives he outlined were:

- congressional appropriation of funds for federal budget provisions affecting such educational benefits as Pell grants, additional work-study positions, computer funding to provide Internet access in schools and libraries, and the America Reads initiative
- development of national education standards through the establishment of a non-partisan board to approve the development of examinations for fourth graders in reading and eighth graders in math
- continued efforts to ensure that Medicare and Social Security "will be there for the next generation of Americans"
- more integration of the world's economies through increased trade to "promote

peace . . . freedom . . . stability, [and] raise the . . . living standards in others parts of the world even as it maintains America as the world's most prosperous nation"

- legislation to curb the effects of smoking "that focuses first and foremost on reducing smoking among young people"
- a national policy for curbing the emission of greenhouse gases that some scientists believe contribute to global warming
- campaign finance reform
- foreign policy issues, including America's relationship with China

Completing the agenda, Clinton acknowledged, will require hard work, close co-operation with Congress, and a hefty dose of imagination. "We are in uncharted territory to some extent," he said, "but we know the times demand action . . . Now we have to take the steps that are clearly before us."