

**Political Engagement and the Chemical Warfare Cleanup**

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General University Honors

**Uncovering American University's Chemical Past and Today's Remediation:**  
**An Account of a Student's Efforts to Confront a Controversial Subject at American**  
**University**

Foreword

The institutional memory of a university is transient. Students, the largest portion of a university community, leave in an average of four years. In most of these four year rotations, knowledge gained is taken and lost, leaving a void, yet also giving the new freshman class the opportunity to conduct their own educational endeavors.

Some information, however, should not be forgotten. Some information should be passed down and retained in the nucleus of a university so that the natural amnesia that comes with the arrival and departure of students will not allow it to be lost.

I am specifically referring to the history of chemical warfare testing at American University and the multi-decade chemical remediation that has taken place here. Through this journal and forthcoming report I hope to provide both a lasting account of a long-spanning and remarkable story, and to contribute a student voice to the vast body of information pertaining to the topic. My final objective is to collect the decentralized information into one location, which can give voice to all of the disparate nuances and angles of this story.

It is my sincerest intention that this journal and report becomes a resource for future AU students, staff, faculty, Spring Valley residents and researchers. I hope that future generations will not have to live with the legacy of chemical warfare on our campus. Towards this end it is not only important but necessary that this story live in perpetuity, both to ease the collective conscience of future generations at AU and to ensure that the blunders of the past are not conveniently forgotten for the interests of the present.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

George Santayana

**Note:** To the reader, the pages below reflect my exercise in political engagement with federal agencies, local government and American University on the AU and Spring Valley chemical cleanup saga. This journal is a chronicle of my attempt to learn thoroughly about the Spring Valley cleanup and effect changes in the policies and behaviors of the abovementioned parties.

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### **11.18.09**

In preparation for my capstone project next semester, I decided to go to AU's archives last week and learn more about the history of the American University Experiment Station and cleanup. In my conversations with Charlie Bempohl, a former NW Current reporter who is writing a book on the Spring Valley Cleanup and for whom I am doing research assistance, there is so much more than meets the eye when it comes to this issue.

In particular, I was looking for information on files related to the Army Corps, EPA and AU correspondence in 1986. I know in that year AU commissioned the EPA EPIC to do a photographic analysis of the area for possible munitions burial sites. That EPA report is in AU's archives. However, there is no information on correspondences between the three above mentioned parties. I asked University Archivist Susan McElrath to look into the matter and this was her email response today:

“I regret to report that I haven't found any further documentation relating to American University's 1986 request for information from the Army about the Chemical Warfare Experiment Station. Though we have files from AU's President at the time, Richard Berendzen, they are not extensive and there is very little correspondence and none from 1986.

AU established an Office of Risk Management under the VP for Finance and Treasurer in the summer of 1985. It is possible that this office made the request. AU still has an Office of Risk Management. It might be worth contacting that office (x2706).”

I think I will go ahead and try to schedule a meeting with Don Myers, the VP of Finance at AU, at some point next semester.

### **12.15.09**

Today I went to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland with a few prominent individuals working on exposing the history of AUES. This includes Charlie Bermphohl, Kent Slowinski, Ginny Durrin and Jeffrey Hanley. It was a very educational experience. After the past few months of researching and after my experience today I am quickly realizing how vast the amount of information on AUES and the remediation there is out there. It has taken me more than three months to just get my head around this issue. While unfortunately, we did not find too much groundbreaking new information at the archives today, we do plan to come back and investigate more. Between the five of us we must have gone through about 15 boxes of documents and 6 hours of the day. I have a new appreciation for researchers and historians.

One potentially new piece of information that I found pertains to the shipment of gas masks to AUES in 1918. I found a letter from that year from Colonel Burrell indicating that 341 gas masks were being shipped to AUES. That seems like quite a lot! The letter went on to say that the masks could withstand gaseous temperatures of up to 350 degrees Celcius.

### **1.14.10**

It seems as though I have run into my first obstacle. I went into the Honors office today to get all of my paperwork signed to register my project as an independent study. Head of the Honors Department, Michael Mass, took a look at my documents and said we needed to meet. So then I walked into his office and we discussed my project. He was receptive at first, but once he read my capstone proposal and work plan he quickly grew skeptical. He said he was hesitant of giving me credit for distributing brochures to prospective students about the history of AUES and current investigations because it would mean that the Honors Department at AU would be in conflict with AU. He didn't feel comfortable giving me credit, which is basically money, for something that could hurt the university.

He then asked me what would go in the brochure and I said basically the history of AUES, the more recent history and current cleanup efforts with a few pictures of the Corps' cleanup activities.

He asked me why I wanted to advertise to prospective students and I said I did not necessarily want to but would as a last resort if the university did not want to talk to me. He asked me what my “deliverables” – ie – tangible products- would be from the project, and I said a 15-20 page research paper, 10 page journal and a document of recommendations from the student body to be issued to the administration (like a petition). He said that it is not a very research heavy paper and that the topic itself is not ‘research-heavy.’ I said that there are volumes of documents on it and I could make the paper whatever length necessary.

He said he had never come across this before and needed to check with the ‘school’ and see if this project would be permissible before he signed my papers and approved it so I could take it to the registrars to get credit for it. He took my papers and then I asked to have them back. He gave them back and asked me to send him the documents via email.

He then asked me why I wanted to advertise to prospective students and said that the information is readily available. I replied that when I was looking at AU I was not informed of this information and felt it only fair that prospective students be given the information. He asked – how do you think the students would feel if another AU student was telling them about chemical cleanup issues on the campus? He said it would deter students from coming here. I said it might but that my aim is not to hurt the university.

He asked if I would have chosen AU if I had known all about the situation. I said probably yes, but I still think it’s unfair for students not to be informed.

He asked if I took the part about advertising to prospective students out of the project if I would accept the revision. I said yes, but that I would write about being told not to do so as a part of my project. He said he is not trying to be obstructionist as an academician but that my brochure and advertising campaign would not be constructive, inferring that it would only serve to deter prospective students away from AU.

I said I have learned from AU about transparency and I would make the panel discussions very objective and he said, but of course you know there is no such thing as pure objectivity.

He said he would talk to the school about it and get back to me. I said I had already invested so much time into it, and he said this is the first I am hearing about it and that I could do something else - that I need to do some sort of a capstone, not necessarily this.

It seems as though my project is getting much more critical attention than other students' projects. AU is fine with its students writing about the injustices, corruption and humanitarian crises occurring all over the world but the minute it comes to their own policies this attitude of scholarly investigation, transparency and journalistic diligence is no longer valid or permissible.

### **1.19.10**

Today I had another meeting with Michael Mass. This time I had my advisor professor Wapner join us, and it went much more smoothly. He had a lot of questions about the focus and direction of my project and was concerned that it was too broad.

Lately, I have been a bit concerned with my own objectivity. I know I have done a lot of independent research and the facts speak for themselves. However, I have spent a lot of time with Kent Slowinski and Charlie Bermpohl. I need to make sure that I am my own independent researcher with my own ideas informed by my experiences and research.

Professor Wapner mentioned having a "Student's Perspective" pamphlet as my final document for this project. I would like to consider that idea, what it entails and what will go into it. Thankfully, it looks as though the project will go through and Michael Mass will approve it. However, I have to edit out the part about advising prospective students. I think he will finally approve the fourth iteration of my project work plan, which involves much less community and campus activism than the previous three.

### **2.2.10**

This project has been far more challenging than I had expected. However, I think I have learned more about peace and conflict resolution, which is the focus of my major in SIS, than in any

class I have taken. There are many obstacles. There are three major parties involved in the cleanup and each has a reason to hide, downplay or obscure information. There is AU, which is rightfully worried about the impact of the chemicals on the AU community and as a tuition-based school is concerned with maintaining the University's high enrollment. There are Spring Valley residents, who have put a lot of their money into their homes and are likely afraid that if too much information gets out that property values will decline. Lastly, there is the Army Corps, which faces pressure to spend less taxpayer money on a cleanup that has already cost around \$250 million.

So, I am getting real world experience in how to maneuver through various obstacles poised to halt or obstruct my work. This is a very long-spanning issue and in my meetings with various involved parties everyone has come to the table with different preconceptions. It is hard if not impossible to start with a clean slate. However, I hope my efforts can help to bring people together on this issue and help take politics and fears of liability out of the question so that the most thorough cleanup possible can take place and residents can either be assured of their safety or informed of potential health risks. Isn't that what idealism is for? Heck, I'm turning ideas into action and that is AU's slogan!

### **2.16.10**

At tonight's Restoration Advisory Board Meeting, which was delayed due to the snowstorm, I spoke with the Army Corp's public affairs specialist Joyce Conant. It looks as though I may be facing my second hurdle. In preparing for the panel on campus on the remediation and health issues I emailed Joyce to ask her if an Army Corps representative would partake in the panel. She told me that it should be alright as long as AU is OK with it. She told me that she asked AU's Senior Communications Director Camille Lepre if it would be permissible for them to partake in the panel. Camille wrote to AU's Chief of Staff David Taylor in an email today, Feb. 16, which tonight Joyce Conant showed me a printed copy of: "is this an activity we should be encouraging or discouraging?"

It is time to contact Camille and argue it is in AU's interests to allow the Corps to partake in the panel. I am disappointed but not too surprised that AU is hesitant to allow the Army Corps to come to campus and speak. I will work on making that happen.

Also, after tonight's RAB meeting, astonished by the Army's presentation on perchlorates, in which the Army concluded that perchlorates are decreasing despite a whole host of conflicting variables, such as seasonal effects on ground water, former AU student, SG Vice President Jeffrey Hanley and I drafted the following editorial and submitted it to the Eagle:

Does this taste funny to you?

Defying probability and sound statistics, the Army Corps of Engineers has concluded that perchlorate in AU's groundwater is decreasing in magnitude based upon limited data with many variables at play. Even a fifth-grader would know better than to cite it as sound science...

Perchlorate, a chemical that affects the thyroid as well as child development, was noted most recently at an excess of 50 parts per billion (ppb) at a monitoring well by the Kreeger building (the EPA water health advisory is 15 ppb).

It seems the Army does not care that the most recent 'low perchlorate level' groundwater sampling was conducted in November, while all other sampling was conducted during summer months when rainwater impacts groundwater flow more drastically. The Army neglects to consider that this is the first well water sample conducted in over two years. They disregard that in the past, perchlorate levels from well water samples have been erratic in nature, ranging from 23 ppb to 124 ppb at the same well. Most troublesome, they fail to account for why some wells actually recently registered an increase in perchlorate.

Just as in 1986, when the Army said there was no conclusive evidence of buried munitions, and in 1994 when, after discovering munitions, they declared that no further investigation was needed, the Army continues to be beleaguered with a decision making process that is nearly as bad as Metro's safety determinations.

In convincing itself that the perchlorate plume under AU's campus is conclusively shrinking, the Army has done the 'Potomac two-step' and it is the AU community that will pay. The



perchlorate plume, munitions under the Public Safety Building and other chemical debris sites will continue to elude the Army and plague generations of AU students to come if the Army continues to make hasty and conveniently-drawn conclusions. We can only hope that the Army and the Department of Defense are operating with more intelligence than those who constructed the canopy outside MGC.

### **2.23.10**

Today I spoke with Penny Pagano, AU's Director of Community and Local Government Relations about having my panel on campus. Penny actually emailed me to come and talk to her because I think she heard I tried to contact Camille Lepre, who never got back to me (I left her a message last week.) After having a nice conversation with Penny and an interview she asked me to email her an outline for my panel, which she said she would show to some of the people that she works with in the administration. She said she would get back to me with comments and suggestions to change it to accommodate AU's concerns. I will wait to hear back from her and amend my outline to accommodate their concerns so that the panel can take place on campus.

### **3.2.10**

I just found out that Charlie Bempohl passed away last Sunday. Ever since I heard about Charlie's passing, I have been thinking about that quote from George Santayana - "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." We always lose our most wise and seasoned leaders. Yet I think perhaps Santayana wasn't fortunate enough to have worked with someone like Charlie

Thinking about that quote and Charlie's great work I realized that's why humanity keeps repeating its mistakes – because we so often fail to learn from our most wise and seasoned leaders. It's sort of like college – the seniors leave and with them their memories, maturity and well-earned worldliness. Then the freshmen arrive and have to learn to cope with challenges and make their own mistakes. It makes sense that we so often forget the mistakes of history. I hope to

help Charlie finish his important book on Spring Valley in some way. He did such a service for the community.

### **3.19.10**

After emailing Penny Pagano again on March 12 I finally got a response from her two days ago. She called me on the phone and told me that AU is "not interested in having the panel at this time." I asked her what changes AU would like to see made to my outline and she told me that she didn't want to change my panel and that the people she spoke with in the administration felt that "no new information could be revealed" in such a panel, since it has all been reviewed before, is online and in congressional testimonies. I emailed Penny asking her to email me this response, and she never got back to me over email. Here are the emails I sent to her:

1.) Mar. 17: "Hello Ms. Pagano,

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me on the phone today. I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more in detail in regards to the proposed proposal outline why AU would not be receptive to such a panel. For instance, which questions and points AU has taken issue with and which points seem all right in the panel.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Michael"

2.) Mar. 18: "Ms. Pagano,

I need to know AU's decision regarding this panel before the weekend. I am working on a tight deadline for this project and the semester is swiftly coming to a close.

Thank you,

Michael"

After this email, Penny left me a message but no did not send me a response over email.

3.) Mar. 19: “Ms. Pagano,

I received your voicemail. However, since having or not having this event will affect my grade for the capstone I need a response from you in regards to the panel in writing to put in my file. If you would prefer you can write it on official AU letter head and mail it to me. My address is: 3220 Connecticut Avenue Apt. 406 NW Washington, DC 20008.

Thank you,

Michael”

After this email, I received no further response from Penny. This afternoon, however, I went over to Wesley Seminary to ask if they would hold my event, spoke with their Associate Dean Shelby Haggray and she has graciously agreed to host it. I will be sending her my outline shortly.

### **3.21.10**

In response to Penny and these clearly obstructionist tactics, I drafted the following editorial to submit to the Eagle to raise awareness about the panel and tell students about AU’s reluctance to host the panel and be transparent. Ultimately, I decided to hold the editorial because I don’t want to burn any bridges with the administration. Here is the editorial:

#### **Transparency at AU and the Chemical Warfare Cleanup**

Most would agree that the chemical remediation occurring on and around our campus is a complex issue. However, American University has difficulty permitting different interpretations of the cleanup other than its own. When I attempted to invite an Army Corps representative to campus to partake in an open panel about the cleanup, AU forbade it on the grounds that no new information could be revealed from such an event and that all information needed is on their website dedicated to the subject.

AU consistently refers all inquiries on the subject to its site, which simplifies and filters information on the remediation process to fit and suit their angle. The information is carefully chosen to fit their pre-determined version of the story, which must fit AU's truth - that students are definitively free from health complications and that the cleanup will address all possible left-over materials from WWI. For instance, the website states, "There are no signs that anyone on campus has been or would be affected by exposure to arsenic in the soil."

Both of those assertions have never been proven. There are in fact signs that students playing on the Athletic Fields *have* been affected by exposure to arsenic and other chemicals in the soil. An epidemiological health study must be done before there can be proof one way or another that Spring Valley chemicals cause or aggravate illnesses ranging from hyperthyroidism to Aplastic Anemia. AU wants you to believe that you are safe when in reality you are not, not in the sense that you are going to die of some acute illness but that long term health problems are a real possibility due to exposure to these materials. However, AU's website makes no mention of these potential health threats. And despite that the Army Corps plans to wrap up their digging efforts around 2012, this does not mean there are no more munitions and chemicals underground yet to be found 10, 20, 50 years in the future, haunting generations of AU students, faculty and Spring Valley residents many years to come.

AU does not allow room for multiple sides of this story. Denying discussion is a form of neglect and disrespect for AU students. Students, who, by virtue of the fact that they live and attend classes on a Formerly Used Defense Site, are affected parties in the remediation.

How can AU be interested in "ensur(ing) that students and staff are fully and regularly informed about the Army Corps Project on campus," as indicated on their site, when it forbids an open panel for students?

I propose it is because AU is not truly interested in open dialogue on the issues at hand, but in preserving and maintaining its sanitized presentation of the facts. Come on AU, you are an educational institution with a stellar history of training future leaders to cast a critical eye on the injustices and inequities of the world. It is time to practice what you preach and allow true open

discussion and dialogue right here at home. If this does not occur, you will all know why an open panel on the remediation will be held off campus instead.

### **3.25.10**

Today I testified before D.C. Council members Cheh and Mendelson at the D.C. Council Building downtown. I think this was a good opportunity to communicate some of my concerns to the Council members about overall communication and transparency from AU and the Army Corps. Below is my testimony:

#### **Testimony for Joint Public Oversight Roundtable on Public Safety Plan for the Destruction of Spring Valley Munitions**

Good morning Council members. My name is Michael Ginsberg, and while I am not an expert on munitions disposal safety procedures, I have been engaged in research on the history of the American University Experiment Station and the remediation process. In effect, I have come to represent an important and repeatedly neglected party affected by the Spring Valley remediation, students at American University.

The current safety protocols being discussed must be implemented with proper vigilance, and viewed in the context of a history of negligent decision-making. In my research I have come across misjudgments in the history of the Spring Valley cleanup made by the Army Corp of Engineers. For instance, after conducting historical research in 1986 the Army determined that there was no official evidence of chemical weapons burial. Again in 1994, after conducting soil sampling at American University, Lieutenant Colonel Crotteau declared that “there were no chemical warfare agents, explosives or their breakdown products...present in the soil samples collected. Therefore no further action is necessary.” Even this year in February, the Army concluded to the Restoration Advisory Board that perchlorate in the groundwater was decreasing in concentration despite testing inconsistencies and limited data. Just as has happened in the past and still happens today, the Army neglects to mention critical information when presenting its conclusions not only to the general public but also to its oversight board.

My point is that while the stakes were not high enough to necessitate the transport of the munitions to a military base, the stakes are still high enough, the risk to human health in the area still prevalent, to require a clear and well-communicated safety plan.

This brings me to my second point. The level of awareness amongst the AU student body on these issues is astoundingly low. In my opinion the cause can be attributed both to a lack of interest and a lack of accessibility to the information. Regardless, a clear and direct channel of information must be established between the D.C. Council and the AU community on the issue of the public safety plan for the destruction of munitions and any upcoming topics, or ignorance will prevail. An open forum should be held on AU's campus once a public safety plan has been developed to allow the community to be informed and ask questions. Such an open forum on remediation related issues should be held, at minimum, annually to facilitate transparency and community awareness and involvement.

Any sensible individual who learns of the remediation and potential health risks will be concerned and seek out ways to learn more. As an AU student I did not know that AU was the site of the first chemical testing center in the U.S. until well into my second year, and was not informed of the full extent of the issues until my senior year.

To sum up my points, if information is not regularly and clearly communicated, the AU community, which comprises a significant percentage of Spring Valley's population, will remain ignorant. Furthermore, it is time for the AU administration to cease to be the middleman in the AU community's relations with the D.C. Council and USACE. We are affected parties and deserve to be properly informed and updated. We live in Spring Valley just as much as anyone else and the potential health consequences from these munitions will impact us just as much as anyone else. Thank you for your time and consideration.

### **3.26.10**

I sent Don Myers an email on March 19 asking to schedule a meeting with him so I could ask about those files from 1986 that may have been moved to his office of Risk Management. I just got a response from his assistant Melanie Ringle. Instead of agreeing to meet with me Don

Myers referred me to David Taylor, AU's Chief of Staff, who I have already arranged to meet with. This is all a bit frustrating. This was Melanie's brief email:

"Michael:

I discussed your request with Mr. Myers. He stated that David Taylor, Chief of Staff is the appropriate person to answer your questions. I forwarded your email to David.

Thank you.

Melanie Ringle"

#### **4.6.10**

Today I interviewed David Taylor, AU's Senior Counsel Beth Bridgham and AU's Environmental Health Consultant Dr. Paul Chrostowski. The meeting enhanced and deepened the quality of my research. We discussed my four pages of questions on topics ranging from AU's public safety plan to health issues for the AU community to legal issues and liabilities, in particular AU's lawsuit against the USACE and the Loughlin residences's lawsuit against AU and the U.S. government. I will include much of this invaluable meeting in my report and I appreciate the hour and a half that the three of them took to meet with me. I appreciate that David Taylor, Beth and Paul all met with me, it shows they care about student concerns.

#### **4.22.10**

I think last night's panel was a success. Aside from Kent's last minute issue with Ginny Durrin filming, everything went smoothly. I was, however, hoping for more of a turnout from the AU community, students and faculty, but I understand this is finals week. A former Spring Valley resident Camille, who was interviewed by Melanie Alnwick in the Fox 5 report from 2002 actually came to the panel as well, to my surprise. She grew up on top of the Sedgewick trench, one of the munitions burial pits, and has dealt with various health issues her entire life. It gives

me all the more reason to push for this sort of an open panel to occur once a year or once a semester and *on* AU's campus.

No one from AU was at the panel, which was very disappointing. I originally invited David Taylor and AU's Environmental Health Consultant Paul Chrostowski to participate as panelists. Dr. Chrostowski told me he had a prior engagement, and after three emails to David Taylor - with the original one three weeks in advance of the panel - he told me just a few days ago that he had a meeting with students that night. I don't believe anyone from AU, aside from Dr. Hirzy, the panelist, was present last night.

David Taylor finally responded to my original invitation from Mar. 29 on Apr. 19, 22 days later. While he spoke at an event on important issues that night, it is blatantly obvious that he has not prioritized attending the panel, and for that matter ensuring transparency and open dialogue on the munitions cleanup. To me it seems like the administration is trying to ignore the whole panel, to them it is almost as if it does not exist at all. AU is an essential partner in this remediation, and I wish there were more that could be done to make sure AU accounts for their actions and decisions in front of the AU campus community and Spring Valley community.

According to AU's Army Corps website transparency and open communication is a priority. It reads: "To ensure that students and staff are fully and regularly informed about the Army Corps Project on campus, AU President Cornelius Kerwin has assigned senior members of the University staff to monitor the Army Corps activity and communicate findings and progress to the AU community." Again, in light of those words, I wonder why there was no one from the AU administration or senior University staff at last night's panel to learn from EPA's Senior Spring Valley Cleanup representative, Johns Hopkins University's representative and the Spring Valley ANC and answer questions on current health and remediation issues relevant to the AU community.

#### **4.24.10**

Today is the memorial service for Charlie Bermpohl. I will be sharing my reflections of him, which are below:



## Memorial for Charlie Bempohl

Charlie Bempohl was an inspiration to me. I remember first meeting with him back in October and immediately thinking *I want to be like him when I grow up*. I remember in conversation once how he recalled that he reported on Woodstock as if it were nothing special. *This is a man accomplished*, I thought at the time. *A man who tasted life and lived it to the fullest*.

Charlie took the wisdom gained from his experiences and shared them with me, and in the short time that I knew him he grew to have a large impact on me.

Charlie was working on something very important, he was compiling years and years of tireless research into a book on the history of chemical warfare in Spring Valley. It was to be the culmination of many years of service to the people of that community and I am honored to have worked with him on it.

Charlie was one of the most passionate people I knew, and from him and his life I have distilled three important virtues that I carry with me. The first quality is courage. In covering the Spring Valley story Charlie was up against many forces that sought to halt him in his path. That courage helped to make me resilient in my own project on Spring Valley in the face of criticisms, red tape and other obstacles. Which leads to the second quality: Persistence. To me this is to continue on with your work despite that there may be an easier path, a simpler less tiresome path, yet history is never made this way, and Charlie was certainly a trailblazer. Progress is always forced by the unwavering who persist in the face of 'no.'

The last quality is integrity. Charlie was a true journalist in every sense of the word. He was committed to the full and honest truth. He had class, in the same tradition as Walter Cronkite, who took time with his stories and cared deeply about them and the people he wrote about, and like Cronkite, Charlie's audience came to trust and adore him.

These days, when faced with a predicament, I often think to myself – what would Charlie have done? It is good to use the Charlie standard because I know I won't steer far from good ethics, fairness and proper diligence. In that way, I know that Charlie lives on with me. I am honored to have known him.

#### **4.25.10**

When thinking about the fact that in just two short weeks I will be graduating from AU, my mind turns to my experiences here overall. I leave with a great sense or perception of duality. When I think of AU I both admire and cherish it and feel frustrated and disappointed with it. It is an odd feeling, to say the least. In effect, there is a duality in my emotions towards the university. There is also a duality within the university itself. In academia at AU, and particularly the School of International Service, professors teach the importance of transparency in democracies around the world. While when it comes to the topic of chemical warfare and the remediation American University keeps its communication with the students and faculty remarkably shrouded and cloaked. Questioning and intellectual skepticism is strongly discouraged on the topic. That much is evident by my experience in trying to get credit for this project and have a panel on campus and in student activity's response to Eco-Sense when they had student tours of the remediation sites - Student Activities told Eco-Sense to stop giving students tours of the remediation sites because all of the information on the issue is available on AU's website. Needless to say, the sort of response and the obstacles I encountered as I tried to put my panel in motion do not reflect a culture of democracy and transparency, or an ideal atmosphere at a university.

Frankly, the way AU deals with the history of chemical warfare on its campus and the history of the remediation reminds me of the way China deals with the history of Tiananmen Square. You cannot find any explanation of it on google in China; the way AU presents AUES is not much different from the Chinese government.

AU students deserve more. They deserve to be well informed and advised as to the potential health risks, however large or small. The fact that most of the AU community, students, staff and parents, remain tremendously ignorant may work to reduce liability issues for AU, but it is immoral, dishonest, disrespectful and, I often wonder, potentially illegal.

There is a difference between revealing information on an obscure and difficult to understand website and making an effort to inform students in a simple yet substantive way. My project involved the latter. I know it takes effort to simplify and communicate Army findings and dense

EPA reports, but AU students, who live on a Formerly Used Defense Site *deserve* and *should* have a college that properly and adequately informs them.

For these reasons I leave AU with deeply conflicted feelings for the university. I know I received an excellent education here and thoroughly enjoyed my classes and professors, but I am fatigued by the hypocrisy that AU practices when it refuses to engage students in an open dialogue on the chemical warfare cleanup.

With the opening of the new LEED Gold certified SIS building in the background, the duplicity is ever more apparent to me. The building's designer and author of "Cradle to Cradle" William McDonough said in the April 21, 2010 issue of the NW Current that he selected AU because of its philosophy. "They talk about 'waging peace' – what we're about on a material level, they're about on a pedagogical level," he said in the article *Area universities lead with green buildings*. In the same article SIS Dean Goodman said, "transparency was another main idea for the building," with its open windows and space. I applaud the university for this building and for its pedagogical stance, but if it wishes to be respected and taken seriously its actions must reflect its ideological values.

If there is anything positive that can come from my efforts, I would sincerely like to see an annual or per semester open forum for the AU community with the USACE, DDOE, EPA, health representatives, Council members and local community representatives. While I doubt AU would ever do so I believe parents of AU prospective students deserve to know what happened here, what is still being remediated and what remains unknown. AU can never claim transparency without holding such an annual or per semester panel. Since I don't think AU will ever tell prospective students I unfortunately don't think AU will ever live up to its full ideals of transparency. But perhaps someday I may be surprised.

I look forward to meeting with Dean Goodman and Professor Wapner to discuss the possibility of establishing this annual open forum as a policy at AU. It took quite an effort to put one panel together, but it was well worth it.

Much of the difficulty in putting the panel together, as you can see in my journal, came from the university itself. I know that all who attended gained a lot of information and perspective from it.

Such an event would forward AU's proclaimed goal of making sure the AU community is safe and the cleanup is thorough. I think my recommendations are consistent with and would help further President Kerwin's goal for the cleanup, which, according to David Taylor, AU's Chief of Staff, is to have a thorough and fast cleanup with all in the community safe and free from harm.

I will be releasing my report with my full recommendations in the next few weeks. While AU does not completely fail in communication and transparency on this issue, there are many areas for improvement. I look forward to working with the university in addressing those areas. I hope this process that I have gone through will be helpful to the university. For this reason I am making this journal and my forthcoming report available to all who wish to read it. If they wish to and are open to criticism and the potentiality for change, I know they can learn something from it. I sincerely hope this journal and upcoming report do not fall on deaf ears.

I plan to stay involved in this issue so I can be a helpful resource and advocate. I plan to organize a trip to Johns Hopkins University to visit the team who worked on the 2007 study with Council member Cheh and the media to help push forward a follow up study. I will be releasing a full report called, "A Student's Guide to the Chemical Warfare Cleanup" shortly and will continue to keep a journal for the benefit of the public and the AU community who are key players, often unwitting ones, in the chemical remediation.

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