

August 22, 2017

Dear members of the AUB community,

I am writing to update you on progress towards our mandate of making AUB a tobacco-free area by the start of 2018. The Tobacco-Free 2018 Task Force, composed of 30 members from all parts of campus and the medical center, has delivered its recommendations to achieve the goal while providing interim measures allowing smokers to adapt to the new arrangements. The initial plan is to phase out certain designated smoking areas in the heart of campus at the beginning of Academic Year 2017-18 before moving to a comprehensive solution.

The diversity of the Tobacco-Free 2018 Task Force, working intensively since March 2017, has meant that deliberations and discussions on ways forward have been comprehensive and inclusive of all opinions of our community, including current and former smokers. I am satisfied that the requisite considerations have been made to mitigate safety, crowding, and littering issues and allow for transition, while assertively leading us towards a healthier community and educational space, and especially setting a positive example to its younger members who may not have started smoking.

Please consult the [MAP](#), which will also be displayed around campus and the medical center, and take note of the following changes to expect starting Fall 2017.

- Starting August 30, 2017: Nine designated central campus smoking areas will be reassigned as non-smoking areas (marked in red on the map). Brown benches will be painted green and ashtrays removed. Four peripheral areas demarcated by new signage will remain as interim smoking areas (marked in yellow) until December 2017 although without brown benches.
- Starting January 1, 2018: The interim smoking areas will be closed and smoking will not be permitted anywhere on AUB property, except for night-time smoking areas near the women's and men's student dorms and faculty apartment; and beside the Laundry building. These exceptions will end by August 2018.
- Starting August 2018: AUB and AUBMC will become completely tobacco-free.

In order to minimize crowding and littering at entrances to AUB, ashtrays to collect cigarette ends will be placed at least seven meters away from all gates. Please use them carefully as discarded filters will be used for recycling projects. The Task Force has also launched a competition to involve AUB students in the design of these off-campus locations; the winning designs will be announced in September and will be implemented by December 2017. To help smokers who wish to quit, the AUBMC Smoking Cessation Program will provide the necessary support.

The changes taking place this Fall are now reflected in the current Non-Smoking Policy, which was issued in 2008, allowing smoking only in designated areas. A new Tobacco-Free AUB Policy, which is under active study, will come into effect on January 1, 2018. Our goals are to protect the health of our community to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, compliance with the policy is mandatory, and violations will result in disciplinary measures to students, staff, and faculty, with no exceptions.

How can you contribute to making this initiative a success?

In line with experiences of tobacco-free university campuses in the US and across the globe, the task force has embarked on building a volunteer ambassadors'/ champions' program to support the implementation and enforcement of the policy. This group will participate in ensuring the new policy is properly communicated and monitored. The group will consist of volunteer staff, students, and faculty members. Interested volunteers will participate in training led by the Center for Public Health Practice (CPHP) at the Faculty of Health Sciences in the Fall semester. I encourage all staff, faculty, and students to volunteer and contribute as a service to AUB. I count on the understanding and support of department heads and supervisors in facilitating this issue.

I look forward to getting feedback from you about Tobacco-Free AUB and, to this effect, I shall hold two town hall meetings in September and look forward to seeing you there.

To volunteer in the champions program, please send an email with your contact details (AUB extension, and mobile number) to: maryk@aub.edu.lb. For more information about this initiative and the policy, please visit our website: www.aub.edu.lb/tobaccofree.

Best regards,

Fadlo R. Khuri, MD
President