

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 24-11-2017

## **Message to the AUB Community from the Board of Deans**

Dear AUB community,

We write to outline the facts surrounding the ongoing process to develop a new graduate assistantship (GA) policy, and to update you on developments concerning the administration's decision to issue sanctions to a group of graduate students who erected an unauthorized structure outside College Hall for more than a week.

One of this University's key priorities is to support and grow graduate programs, with the aim of becoming a world-class research university. To this end, we have been working steadily since the beginning of the fall term, in consultation with students and faculty, to develop a new GA policy that can best serve AUB and its graduate students. The dialogue has been constructive, inclusive, and comprehensive, with nine meetings already held with different groups of graduate students, including elected representatives.

The engagement to date has established foundations and a clear roadmap for a new policy that provides students with significantly improved financial support and employment opportunities compared with the provisions and restrictions of the existing policy. In the meantime, GA student stipends are to be paid while the policy is being revised.

On Monday, November 13, despite the fact that the development of the new policy was still ongoing, a group of graduate students erected a protest tent near the entrance to College Hall without seeking prior approval as required by university policies. We have repeatedly assured faculty, students, staff and the community at large, that we will cherish, preserve and protect the rights of students to free speech, to independence of mind, view and persuasion, and all of our community's rights and abilities to protest peacefully. However, we are clear that illegal installation of any physical structure on campus cannot be tolerated, in line with AUB's policies.

Despite repeated verbal warnings and an email sent to the group on Monday, November 20, the protesters persistently refused to dismantle the tent. A final verbal warning was issued that afternoon, and a deadline for removal was ignored, after which individual dean's warnings were issued to 13 students whose active participation had been confirmed by the Office of Protection. The students were informed they would lose their GA status as a secondary disciplinary action. In the early hours of November 21, the tent was removed using appropriate orderly measures under the supervision of the Chief of Protection.

Following appeals and requests to review the sanctions that were handed down, the AUB leadership has recognized the unequal consequences on the students who lost their GA in comparison with others who did not have GAs. Accordingly, the dean has taken action to rescind the secondary disciplinary measures, while the dean's warnings will remain in place. This morning, the students were informed of the restoration of their GAs and that they are entitled to appeal individually against the primary disciplinary action.

Our students remain this University's top priority as we move together towards a more constructive dialogue and, with time and goodwill, better resourced, more impactful and competitive graduate and research programs.

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

Simon Kachar  
Director of News and Media Relations  
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676  
Email: [sk158@aub.edu.lb](mailto:sk158@aub.edu.lb)

**Note to Editors**

### **About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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