



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

SCOTT A. BASS
PROVOST

MEMORANDUM

March 22, 2018

TO: AU Community

FROM: Scott A. Bass, Provost
Fanta Aw, Vice President of Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence
Mary L. Clark, Dean of Academic Affairs
Beth Muha, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources

RE: Walk-Outs, Protests, and Class or Work Absences

Given recent and renewed attention to walk-outs and other forms of protest, and in light of questions we have received from students, staff, and faculty alike, we thought it important to remind the AU community of the university's policies on class attendance and employee participation in protests.

AU's Undergraduate Academic Rules and Regulations provide that "individual instructors may have different attendance requirements..." (See Section 4.1.1 of the [Undergraduate Academic Rules and Regulations](#).) Students should consult with their faculty members regarding course attendance requirements. If a faculty member excuses absences for participation in walk-outs or other forms of protest, then the faculty member should excuse participation in any type of protest (*i.e.*, not dependent on the nature of the issue being protested). Students may not be penalized for excused absences but are required to make up all work missed as a result of the excused absence by the end of the term. If the faculty member does not excuse the absence, the student may be penalized for the absence or any missed work as a result of the absence.

As for faculty and staff participation in protests, please note that the university's [Policy on Lobbying and Political Activities](#) provides that AU community members are free to make personal expressions of political views in their individual capacity and on their personal time.¹ As such, faculty members are welcome to participate in protests in a personal capacity and on their personal time, provided that this activity does not occur during a time when scheduled to teach or perform other instructional duties, such as conducting office hours. Staff should follow the university policy for requesting annual leave. Annual leave may be approved by the employee's supervisor provided that there is sufficient advance notice, the requested leave would not interfere with specific work needs for the unit, and the requesting staff member has sufficient accrued leave to cover the time away.

Please also note the university's [Guidelines on Freedom of Expression and Dissent](#).

Thank you and best wishes for an excellent remainder of the spring term.

^[1] The university's Policy on Lobbying and Political Activities provides in relevant part, "All students, staff, and faculty are strictly prohibited from engaging in lobbying and political activities on behalf of the university unless specific and prior authorization has been granted by the Office of Finance and Treasurer. This policy is not intended to hinder an AU community member's personal expression of political views made in a person's individual capacity and on his/her personal time. However, when engaged in such personal activities, AU community members must indicate by their words and actions that these activities or expressions are personal positions and are not made on behalf of American University."

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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