

Political and Religious Activity at AUA

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As an institution committed to helping build Armenia's future, AUA encourages its students, faculty, and staff to be active citizens. Moreover, the academic study of political processes is an important part of the University's scholarly mission and is protected by academic freedom. At the same time, AUA must avoid partisan political activities that would suggest the University endorses a particular political party or candidate for office; nor can the University devote a substantial portion of its resources to lobbying in either the United States or Armenia. As a tax-exempt organization, AUA cannot participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office. No political candidate should be invited to the University during an election campaign, unless all candidates on the ballot are accorded the same opportunity.

Faculty, staff and students should note that the U.S. Internal Revenue Service denies non-profit tax-exempt status to any institution that supports a candidate for public office, and that nonprofit status can be revoked if a significant fraction of the institution's activities is dedicated to political activity. Moreover, the U.S. Federal Corrupt Practices Act defines support broadly to include the donation of services such as facilities and equipment.

Similar caution should be exercised for religious activities. AUA respects and does not interfere with religious beliefs and practices. While the academic study of religion is valid scholarship that is protected by academic freedom, AUA must avoid activities that might indicate that the University endorses a particular system of religious belief or that the University allocates extensive time to religious practice.

In light of the above considerations, activities that have political or religious content or overtones require special care to assure academic and scholarly suitability for a university environment. If AUA community members have the slightest doubt about whether an activity is appropriate, they should consult with the University administration before engaging or organizing such an activity.

By working together, we can protect the academic freedom and integrity of AUA while respecting the law, civil rights and best academic traditions of both the United States and Armenia.