



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The 19th Undergraduate Senate

AUSG Statement Expressing No-Confidence in Sylvia Matthews BURWELL

May 01, 2024

Senators

Senator Kaden OUIMET, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Kris ESTRADA, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Shaazma AKBAR, *for the School of Communication*
Senator Kasey BERNAT, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Manas ATLURI, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Carly CASTALDY, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Quinn FITZPATRICK, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Hanna HAJDU, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Asher HEISTEN, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Talia KAHAN, *for the School of Education*
Senator Laina POND, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Roderick PURDY, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Achyuth SARATH, *for the Campus At-Large*
Senator Anna Rose STEINMEYER, *for the Class of 2024*
Senator Lily SWAHNBERG, *for the College of Arts and Sciences*

AUSG E-Board Signatories

Arusa ISLAM, *Student Body President*
Julia COMINO, *Student Body Vice President*
Aidan PALMER, *Student Body Secretary*
Salvatore COTTONE, *Student Body Comptroller*

WHEREAS, the role of the American University President is pivotal in upholding the values, integrity, and mission of our esteemed institution; and,

WHEREAS, President Sylvia Matthews BURWELL serves as the face and leader of our academic community, entrusted with the responsibility of fostering an environment conducive to learning, growth, and inclusivity; and,



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The 19th Undergraduate Senate

WHEREAS, recent events and decisions made by the current University President have raised significant concerns among the undergraduate student body, faculty, and staff regarding their leadership, judgment, and commitment to the well-being of the university community; such as,

- 1) The January 25th implementation of a repressive indoor protest ban and restrictive flyer policy on students to prohibit organizations from exercising their freedom of expression, such as by standing in solidarity with Palestine or declaring Black Lives Matter.
- 2) Rejecting Resolution 19-018 on April 21, 2024, within an hour of its passage without engaging in any communication or dialogue with members of AUSG as stated by her statement to the whole University.
- 3) Rejecting Resolution 19-018 on April 21, 2024, within an hour of its passage while emails addressing an incident of sexual violence in the Fall of 2022, an anti-Semitic attack on residents of Letts Hall, and an Islamophobic death threat sent to a professor in Kerwin took anywhere from one to three days to be sent to the University.
- 4) The overall weaponization of emails, and their timing, to the student body as a means of suppressing student advocacy and stifling genuine safety issues (including sexual violence, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia) while prioritizing condemnations of the Undergraduate Senate when it comes to advocacy on the University's unethical investment practices.
- 5) Failing to engage faculty prior to hiring consulting firms, such as Huron Consulting, which would make recommendations adversely affecting faculty.
- 6) Being responsible for Administrative staff increasing by fifty (50) percent over the past year, according to the Faculty Senate, while layoffs are being considered for staff and faculty.
- 7) Failure to implement the Survivor Bill of Rights within the deadline provided by AUSG.
- 8) Privately rejecting, with an AUSG Senator, the results of the Fall 2023 referendum calling for student voting members on the Board of Trustees.
- 9) Repeatedly taking action against the desires of the student body, including doubling down on the aforementioned protest policy by extending it to protests on the Quad.

WHEREAS, Sylvia Matthews BURWELL's actions have resulted in a loss of trust, transparency, and accountability within the administration, thereby compromising the integrity and reputation of our institution; and,

WHEREAS, numerous attempts have been made to address these concerns through constructive dialogue, petitions, protest, and engagement with university leadership, yet meaningful change and responsiveness have not been forthcoming; and,

WHEREAS, it is imperative for the undergraduate student body to voice their dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in the leadership of the University President in order to uphold the principles of democracy, transparency, and shared governance; and,



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT GOVERNMENT

The 19th Undergraduate Senate

WHEREAS, as the representatives of American University's undergraduate student body, the signatories are obligated to voice their concerns and rampant dissatisfaction with our spokesperson, fundraiser, and University president; and now,

THEREFORE, THE SIGNATORIES RESOLVE, to express *no confidence* on the current University President, Sylvia Matthews BURWELL,

THEREFORE, THE SIGNATORIES FURTHER RESOLVE, that they condemn current University President Sylvia Matthews BURWELL's repeated choice to ignore the will of the student body by choosing to not rescind the January 25th protest policy, further restricting student speech by implementing the April 25th memorandum, and outright refusing to consider the implementation of Resolution 19-018,

THEREFORE, THE SIGNATORIES FURTHER RESOLVE, that the American University Student Body implores President Sylvia Matthews BURWELL to resign effective immediately,

THEREFORE, THE SIGNATORIES FINALLY RESOLVE, that incoming President Jonathan Roberts ALGER work closely with the AU Student Government and overall Student Body, and to reform American University's governance structure to safeguard equitable representation in all University decisions, to ensure all stakeholders are involved in said conversations, and to assure that President BURWELL's legacy and actions that resulted in student oppression and marginalization will not be repeated at this institution. The Student Government implores incoming President ALGER and his Administration to take the following immediate measures during his first day in office:

- 1) Repeal the repressive January 25th indoor postering ban and increase postering restrictions.
 - 2) Reverse any current or future disciplinary actions taken against students or campus organizations (such as AU Students for Justice in Palestine) as a *direct* result of the January 25th policy.
 - 3) Support the Student Government's advocacy for a Universal Declaration of Student Rights and increased transparency on current student expression policies, including definitions of terms and processes as called for by Resolution 19-017.
 - 4) End the weaponization of emails and their timing as a means of suppressing student advocacy and stifling genuine safety issues while quickly addressing matters relating to University investments.
 - 5) Express a willingness to engage in dialogue with student leaders on Resolution 19-018 and any special Commission formed to research divestment from Israel's occupation of Palestine.
 - 6) Consult students, faculty, staff, and their advocacy bodies on new policies affecting them.
-