

Free tampons and sanitary napkins for American University students



Shannon Exley Washington, DC

Letter to
Office of Campus Life at American University
Gail Short Hanson

One of the primary goals of the Office of Campus Life at American University is to put the health needs of students first. However, Her Campus American University is concerned that students who menstruate are not receiving the products and services to ensure their menstrual health.

By failing to provide menstrual hygiene products, these students are forced to pay even more money out of their pocket on top of college tuition for items that are still taxed as a "luxury" in all but a few states. What is most alarming is that providing tampons and sanitary napkins to students has somehow fallen at the bottom of the list of potential expenditures for the university. We believe that our school is aware of the very real needs of students and is optimistic that administrators would highly support the provision of these products.

The Washington Post reported that students at Brown University have taken it upon themselves to kick-start efforts to have tampons and sanitary napkins provided on campus, even in men's restrooms. The Post quotes Terry O'Neill, President of the National Organization for Women, stating that 'Students' participation in school should not be hindered by insufficient access to this basic necessity.' O'Neill continues on to defend the claim that menstrual hygiene products should be viewed in the same manner as toilet paper in that the two items are both absolute necessities.

It should be just as easy to find a free tampon or sanitary napkin on campus as it is to find a free condom. While our aim is not to devalue the importance of sexual health, we believe that menstrual health should also be a priority of our university. Her Campus American University contacted the Wellness Center here at AU to discuss providing tampons and sanitary napkins in addition to the several methods of contraception (condoms, female/insertive condoms, dental dams, lubricant) already offered for free. However, we learned that many of these items are

provided for free by the District of Columbia Health Department, and the Wellness Center budget is not large enough to purchase the amount of menstrual hygiene products to accommodate for the entire university. We urge our university to re-evaluate the budget distribution to locate the necessary funds to finance this initiative, and we also recommend the administration look to fellow Patriot League institution, Bucknell University, which has just recently started providing menstrual hygiene products in all women's and gender neutral restrooms as part of the "Free the Tampon movement."

Once again, we urge the American University Office of Campus Life to listen to the voices of American University students and locate the necessary funds to finance this initiative.

Respectfully,
Her Campus American University

<https://www.change.org/p/free-tampons-and-sanitary-napkins-for-american-university-students>