

ACADEMIC PLANNING FOR AUB IN THE NEXT DECADE

Updated April 2002

Current Mission Statement

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is a private, independent non-sectarian institution of higher learning, founded in 1866, which functions under a charter from the State of New York and is administered by a private, autonomous Board of Trustees. AUB is a teaching-centered research university (convinced that excellence in teaching and research go hand-in-hand), whose purpose is to share in the education and the service of primarily the peoples of the Middle East, and in the advancement of knowledge. AUB bases its educational perspective and methods and its academic organization on the American model of higher education.

The University emphasizes scholarship that enables students to think for themselves, stresses high academic standards, and promotes high principles of character. It aims to produce men and women who not only are technically competent in their professional fields but who are life-long learners and who have breadth of vision, a sense of civic and moral responsibility, and devotion to the fundamental values of human life. The University believes in and encourages freedom of thought and expression. It expects, however, that this freedom be enjoyed in a spirit of integrity and with a full sense of responsibility.

AUB's Core Strategic Goals

Excellence in Education: *To provide excellent and fully accredited liberal arts and professional education for students from Lebanon, the Middle East, and the world.*

High-Quality Research: *To promote a high-quality faculty and student research environment, with centers of excellence in areas of comparative advantage and regional and international need.*

Leadership and Integrity: *To foster within the university community the values of strong leadership, intellectual curiosity, ethical behavior, mutual cooperation, civic responsibility, and social tolerance.*

Commitment to Service: *To offer high-quality healthcare and training, consultative, and outreach services to Lebanon, the Middle East, and the world.*

Continual Quality Improvement: *To develop within the institution efficient, effective, service-oriented, and continually improving administrative processes.*

Elaboration of the Core Strategic Goals

Excellence in Education: *To provide excellent and fully accredited liberal arts and professional education for students from Lebanon, the Middle East, and the world.*

1. To create a curriculum for all AUB undergraduates that balances broad liberal arts exposure with areas of concentration
2. To strengthen the quality and diversity of undergraduate education in the professional schools
3. To develop efficient, focused, and high-powered graduate education at the Masters level
4. To make the curriculum more flexible and integrated while reducing overlap and redundancy
5. To establish the framework for creating Ph.D. programs in specific fields, including Arabic language and literature, Middle Eastern history, the biological and bio-medical sciences, and the computational sciences
6. To provide world-class medical and clinical education through attracting and supporting excellent faculty, medical students, nurses, technicians, and medical and institutional support staff
7. To attract outstanding students and to create a diverse and well-rounded student body
8. To attract and recruit more students from the region and more international students
9. To promote a diversity of teaching methods and learning situations (lecture, laboratory, seminar, multimedia, project-based, individual and group work, research courses and projects)
10. To have faculty and students who are well-trained in modern computer technology for use in courses, and to develop technology-based teaching capability through computer-assisted and distance-learning
11. To adapt the curriculum to create a more diverse and internationally oriented selection of courses and concentrations (specifically in the fine and performing arts and aspects of international studies)
12. To improve student services, including advising, counselling, career services, and athletic facilities
13. To create sets of assessment measures and benchmarks to evaluate student learning, coursework, faculty teaching, and support staff contributions
14. To gain full accreditation from all relevant educational and professional associations
15. To enhance the physical and technological learning educational environment of the campus to a level consistent with AUB's educational mission

High-Quality Research: *To promote a high-quality faculty and student research environment, with centers of excellence in areas of comparative advantage and regional and international need.*

1. To foster a more productive and efficient research environment, through University support for faculty development and research as well as by external sponsored research through such entities as an Office of Grants and Research Contracts

2. To identify and support interdisciplinary and inter-Faculty centers of research excellence (for example, biology and biomedical sciences, environmental sciences, advanced mathematical sciences, Middle East Studies)
3. To promote dynamic faculty research groups in these and other areas and to seek outside sources of funding
4. To improve faculty mentoring
5. To attract and retain outstanding faculty
6. To advance the academic support activities of our libraries, museums, research collections, and classrooms, as well as to provide excellent physical settings for them
7. To re-evaluate and restructure the framework of faculty careers, taking into consideration such issues as length of contract, promotion policies, teaching loads, and research support
8. To create advisory committees consisting of alumni and other professionals to promote research and educational opportunities for each Faculty

Leadership and Integrity: *To foster within the university community the values of strong leadership, intellectual curiosity, ethical behavior, mutual cooperation, civic responsibility, and social tolerance.*

1. To support educational and co-curricular activities that train students to be leaders
2. To promote an educational environment that stimulates active learning and critical analysis in individual, social, and civic contexts
3. To develop and require adherence to a University code of conduct that sets clear expectations for intellectual integrity, personal honesty, and mutual tolerance for all members of the university community
4. To focus on issues of integrity, ethical behavior, civic responsibility, and social tolerance in relevant coursework
5. To support student activities that foster individual initiative and mutual cooperation for the benefit of the individual and society, including student community service

Commitment to Service: *To offer high-quality healthcare and training, consultative, and outreach services to Lebanon, the Middle East, and the world.*

1. To provide local and regional outreach and training in areas of University strength, such as education, medicine, business, health sciences, and agriculture, and engineering
2. To provide excellent primary and secondary care health services with world-class strengths in selective regionally relevant tertiary care and to expand AUBMC's presence in response to market demands and medical and technological advances
3. To offer high quality consultation services through the offices of Regional External Programs (REP)
4. To offer extension courses in targeted areas to specific groups or the general public

Continual Quality Improvement: *To develop within the institution efficient, effective, service-oriented, and continually improving processes that work toward academic and administrative excellence.*

1. To improve and make more productive the academic and institutional administrative support services
2. To achieve and sustain excellence through continuous improvement in patient care and customer service
3. To develop appropriate benchmarks of assessment for on-going improvement
4. To establish human resource development and training programs
5. To empower employees to provide services in a high-value and cost-effective manner
6. To adopt new technology as needed
7. To re-evaluate the missions and goals of offices or services that are underused or obsolete
8. To promote better communication among all sectors of the university community
9. To maintain an excellent physical campus environment in regard to its buildings and grounds
10. To maintain balanced budgets and pursue responsible fiscal policies
11. To improve fundraising and development
12. To work as a cohesive organization to achieve our goals with integrity and ethical conduct

Practical Recommendations Derived from the Strategic Goals

Undergraduate Teaching and Curriculum

In its undergraduate education, AUB seeks to:

Balance between the liberal arts and areas of specialization

Students should receive an excellent undergraduate education that offers a balance between the goals of general liberal arts education and specialization in specific fields, either in a major in Arts and Sciences or through participation in undergraduate professional programs.

Recommendation: Restructure the curriculum so that it reduces the concentration on a student's major and so that there is harmony among core liberal courses, electives, and the demands of the student's major and/or professional education.

Allow choice

Students should enjoy an educational experience in both general education and the major/professional specialization that balances between rigorous requirements and choice. In general education, the students should attain a high level of competence in verbal and written expression in Arabic and English; they should also be exposed to representative core methodologies and subject fields in the sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities or the fine and performing arts. Academic excellence in the curriculum of undergraduate majors and professional education is equally necessary. In

all of these endeavors, students should have an opportunity to balance required courses with choices among several courses. Students should also have the chance to round out their education through elective choices (18 credits) throughout their educational career, not just at the beginning or the end of it. A minor might replace some elective credits.

Recommendation: Undergraduate students in all Faculties must together complete a core liberal arts general education curriculum that consists of the following:

1. English communication courses through 204 or the equivalent	6 credits
2. One Arabic course as determined by APT	3 credits
3. Four humanities courses (at least two from CS core courses, two from approved courses from either CS or other humanities departments: such as Arabic, CS, English, History and Archeology, Philosophy, Fine or Performing Arts)	12 credits
4. One Economics course	3 credits
5. Two other social science courses (Economics, PSPA, or SBS)	6 credits
6. Two science, math, or technology courses (including a lab course)	6 credits
6. One computer skills course or equivalent placement	0 credits
Total	36 credits

Expose students to a variety of educational settings and instructional methods

Students should be exposed to a variety of educational settings and teaching methods, ranging from large lecture course to seminars, discussion classes, and individual or group research projects. In the course of their education, students must participate in a number of smaller classes and at least once be exposed to faculty research through special research courses. Students should also have the experience of engaging in independent research projects, such as junior or senior papers or projects.

Recommendations:

1. Students should take at least one laboratory course, one seminar, and one research intensive course during their three years at AUB.
2. A minimum of four courses must be designated as “writing intensive.”
3. Study abroad during the academic year or in the summer should be encouraged.
4. Students must engage in at least one significant research project during their undergraduate career.

Offer a flexible curriculum

To offer a curriculum that is flexible and that, in a time of exploding levels of knowledge and the constant development of new fields, encourages students to be active learners

who can understand and critically analyze new information rather than only demand mastery of existing knowledge.

Recommendation:

1. Examine departmental and Faculty offerings to reduce overlap of material while simultaneously creating courses that promote active learning.
2. Provide more electives in and outside of the major
3. To set benchmarks, means of assessment, and set reviews at specific intervals to ensure that goals in this area are being met.
4. Allow students to minor in a department other than the major

Conduct constant assessment of educational programs

To assess the quality of students' education through student evaluation, peer evaluation, periodic curricular review, external assessment, and through a system of setting benchmarks and reviewing results. For example, since achieving excellent competence in writing and oral expression in Arabic and English is an important educational goal of the University, AUB must provide opportunities throughout the curriculum to demonstrate and evaluate our success in achieving this goal. The same holds true for the goals of critical and analytical thinking and the mastery of specific skills and the details of areas of knowledge.

Recommendations:

1. Departments and programs must be able to demonstrate and document how successfully they achieve their educational goals.
2. Periodic internal and external reviews must occur.
3. Deans, department chairs, and faculty should be supplied with sufficient information and statistics so that they can engage in informed discussions regarding assessment results and subsequent planning.

Maintain an excellent physical instructional environment

To provide an excellent physical environment that facilitates and enhances the tasks of teaching and learning by providing appropriate classroom, laboratory, computer, library, and other spaces needed to fulfil the University's educational goals.

Recommendation: Develop a facilities maintenance plan and a campus master plan that will address present and future needs.

Improve the Freshman Year

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences has recently worked to improve the Freshman year by offering more courses and improving advising. These efforts must continue and be supported. Simultaneously, the University Orientation Program finds itself in a time of transition, with declining student interest in its purely ESL program.

Recommendations :

1. Develop a plan to increase the number of courses open to Freshmen by allowing them to take appropriate 200-09 courses.
2. Increase the number of Freshman advisors so that A&S achieves a 1 to 20 ratio.
3. Restructure the UOP program so that it falls within A&S and so that it is able to combine courses on intensive development of English skills with participation in other courses taken for credit, as judged appropriate after individual analysis of the student's language proficiency and areas of strength and weakness.
4. Develop intensive summer courses in English, Math, and Quantitative skills for new students.

Graduate Teaching

At present, excessive time is demanded from students to complete their Masters degrees, often due to an inflated idea among faculty of what a Masters thesis should entail. Also, time to completion is often expanded because students must work off-campus while they attend courses.

Recommendations:

1. Thesis and non-thesis options should be available.
2. Full-time graduate students should complete their degree within 2 years.
3. Explore the feasibility of increasing the stipends of Masters students and to use them as teaching assistants in lower level undergraduate courses.

Research

Increasing Research Time

AUB expects its faculty to develop a research profile of high academic quality. It evaluates the contribution of the faculty member through publication in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals and academic presses, participation in international and local conferences, forums, and workshops that seek to expand the methodology or

scope of knowledge in academic fields, and, if warranted, to participate in scholarly research institutes or groups. Similar participation in local and regional publications and conferences and workshops is also desirable, especially in ventures that promise to enhance and improve the local and scholarly research environment.

AUB must foster a supportive research environment for faculty and student projects activities through providing, to the extent fiscally and physically possible, excellent research workspace, equipment, library support, research assistantships, faculty development grants, and research grants that allow faculty to successfully carry out their research projects. At a time of rapidly expanding and developing research fields, it must be recognized that no single university can provide adequate research support in all fields, so choices that best reflect the priorities and strengths of the institution will have to be made.

In addition to facilities and financial support, promoting research also requires freeing faculty time, since high quality research is a time intensive endeavor that also often involves projects of a long-term nature. In recognition of this, in addition to current support and procedures, the following recommendations are made in order to promote faculty success in research:

Recommendations :

1. To restructure the undergraduate curriculum by combining introductory multi-section courses into large lecture courses, by reducing overlap and redundancy in and among courses, and to focus on quality rather than quantity of education, and in this way to reduce the course load per nine months from 6 to 5 (and where possible, to 4).
2. To develop upper-level undergraduate research courses so students can participate in faculty research projects.
3. To create 9 month contracts in the professional schools (except Medicine).
4. To develop longer-term contracts for instructors who have demonstrated excellence in their field of teaching.
5. To strive to provide one-semester of paid leave or long-term development to full-time Assistant Professors in their 4th or 5th year of cumulative service. Granting leave without pay in the 3rd year may be considered as well.
6. Normally non-clinical full-time faculty are appointed to three-year contracts upon promotion to Associate Professor or Full Professor. In exceptional cases, the University should be able to appoint Associate or Full Professors to seven year contracts, upon the recommendation of the Dean and the Board of Deans and the approval of the President.

Research, Teaching, and Service

In professional fields, theory and practice tend to be balanced more than is the case of Arts and Sciences. Examples of this are clinical practice and teaching in Medicine; in training workshops, outreach and research oriented consultation activities, and participation in projects sponsored by government, business, or non-profit foundations in the areas of Agriculture, Education, Health Sciences, and Engineering; and in practical applications in the fields of Architecture and Graphic Design. All of these are instances of professional contributions that fall outside the traditional definition of research but that may be valuable and relevant to the success and excellence in a professional field. In all Faculties, proper credit must therefore be given to both teaching and service. The University must take care to understand, further, and appropriately assess the specific goals and needs of individual fields and to evaluate research activities accordingly in the overall context of other faculty contributions.

Recommendations:

1. To work with departments and Faculties to develop mutually understood criteria of evaluation for the purposes of promotion.
2. To consider the creation of professional tracks.

VISION STATEMENT OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

The American University of Beirut will strive to be recognized as the best private university in the Middle East and will enjoy a prestigious world-wide academic reputation. All undergraduate students, including those in professional programs, will participate in a dynamic liberal arts education. Through its excellent academic programs, AUB will prepare its students for entrance into competitive academic graduate programs in research universities throughout the world. AUB's high academic standards will combine with a tradition of training for leadership and will nurture among students the qualities of intellectual curiosity, analytical capabilities, personal responsibility, high personal principles, a willingness to work with individuals of diverse religious, ethnic, national backgrounds, and a commitment to public service.

The beautiful campus will house state-of-the-art facilities for academic teaching and research and for student life. Student activities—clubs, athletics, public affairs and the arts—whether university-sponsored or student-initiated, will be well supported and promoted. A dynamic office of student recruitment and the University's reputation for academic excellence and high-quality services, as well as its relative inexpensiveness compared to private universities in Europe and North America, will continue to make it an attractive option for students and families who seek high-quality education. Resources from student tuition, hospital revenues, the university endowment, sponsored research, external contracts, and institutional fundraising will be sufficient to support high

academic quality. Resources for student financial aid will continue to grow sufficiently to allow members of diverse economic circumstances to attend AUB.

The graduate programs in Arts and Sciences, Medicine, Engineering and Architecture, Business, the Health Sciences, Agriculture and Food Sciences, and Education will enjoy outstanding academic reputations in their respective fields. Their active research programs will include areas of interdisciplinary research and regional and world-class centers of excellence. AUB faculty will communicate, collaborate, and conduct academic exchanges with colleagues from the region and throughout the world. The University's research profile will correspond to its size and its commitment to teaching, but it will also continually seek to become even more impressive in its variety, quality, and scope, as attested to by the calibre of regional and international journals in which research is published. Opportunities for independent and collaborative research will be enhanced through support systems that include a well-developed Grants and Research Office and University and Faculty-based research committees. In addition, the Regional and External Program (REP) office will facilitate faculty research and consultation and foster vital linkages with other public and private institutions. The University will also offer a variety of special programs and extension courses to external groups and sectors in Lebanon and abroad.

The faculty itself will constitute a healthy mix of individuals of Lebanese, American, Lebanese-American, Arab, and other backgrounds, all of whom seek employment with the University because of its fine academic reputation, competitive academic salaries, and because of the attractions of living in Lebanon. Faculty will be well-mentored and supported in their teaching and research activities, but they will also face clear and stringent assessment criteria for retention and promotion. Faculty will enjoy the opportunity to teach excellent students from Lebanon, the region, and abroad, and through exchange programs. They will usually teach on both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and will conduct research in Lebanon and the region and during research visits and sabbaticals in the US and Europe. The teaching and research environment will be enriched by excellent classrooms, as well as by fine libraries and well-maintained and attractively displayed museum and scientific collections that also constitute an important educational resource for the community and for scholars abroad. Faculty and students will be well-connected to the outside academic world through a network of selected institutional agreements and informal associations, as well as such standard media as the internet, select programs of distance teaching, and audio-visually facilitated collaborative research. The University community will support active programs for visiting lecturers, musical and artistic performances and exhibitions, and moderated discussions on public issues and events.

The teaching and research environment of the AUB will be supported by attractive and well-maintained physical facilities and by well-qualified academic and non-academic staff. Much thought and planning will go into the layout of the campus so that although some new buildings and an athletic center/student activities center may be built, the attractiveness of the campus will be preserved. Although central buildings of the campus

and the Medical Center are ageing and in need of constant maintenance, good planning and phased renovation will maintain their high quality.

Public service will remain central to the University's mission. The Medical Center will remain a model of this ideal in that it will promote outstanding academic research, teaching, and training while providing a crucial range of medical services to the community at large. The Faculties of Agriculture and Food Sciences—with its attached Agricultural Research and Education Center in the Beqa'a—Health Sciences, Engineering, Business, as well as the Division of Educational Programs, will all combine research and teaching with community and public service activities. In addition, the University will continue to extend its services to the region through the offices of Regional Extension Programs.

As with most universities, demands for funding will always outstrip available resources. Nonetheless, AUB will be relatively well-funded from such sources of income as tuition, endowment, the Medical Center, sponsored research, outreach, and the sustained generosity of its friends, supporters, alumni, and Trustees. The University will continue to seek to increase the scope of its funding and, at set intervals of strategic planning, will initiate capital campaigns to provide income for much-needed student scholarships, endowed chairs, new academic programs, and new buildings. It also works to increase the amount of income that stems from research, consulting, outreach, collaborative projects with private and public institutions, and special programs. The summer school, for example, can be enlarged and restructured to offer programs attractive to AUB students and to students from abroad, who potentially constitute an increasing percent of participants.

Like all institutions of higher education, AUB will still face its share of challenges and opportunities, but its present will be good and its future secure.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF AUB AS AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Strengths

Strong profile as the oldest continuing private university in the Middle East
Strength of local, regional, and international academic reputation
Certain areas of academic strength and excellence: medicine, engineering, the sciences, Middle East Studies
Tradition of producing leaders in key professional fields and in public service in the public and private sectors in Lebanon, the region, and the world
Certain areas of managerial and institutional entrepreneurship
Combination of undergraduate liberal arts, professional, and graduate training
Balance between theoretical and practical academic programs
Reputation for tolerance and respect for diversity
International perspective and sophistication of faculty, staff, and students
Multilingual graduates with competence in at least two languages, one of which is

English

Admission on the basis of academic merit only
Partnership with a 421-bed teaching and research hospital
Strong commitment to the University from the Board of Trustees
Support of alumni and other friends of AUB
Quality of academic and non-academic leadership now fully residing in Beirut
Loyalty of staff to the institution
Beauty of campus
Acceptable condition of much of the physical plant
Well-established base in the U.S
Long-term support of private foundations and private and public organizations
Widespread awareness of university weaknesses and challenges among the university community, accompanied by a strong desire to improve

Weaknesses

Unclear vision among AUB community of AUB's direction
Insufficient university-wide strategic planning in academic and non-academic areas
Insufficient communication among and within different parts of the university
High cost of educational fees relative to regional incomes
Absence of a full liberal arts curriculum since education is generally limited to three years
Heritage of two decades of communal strife and the resulting malaise in initiative, confidence, and morale
Reluctance to experiment with creating new institutional cultures and norms
Dependency mentality of some faculty and staff: an assumption that the university's provision of employment and benefits is a right, rather than a result of a mutual obligation for high professional performance
Weakened reputation as a national and regional center of academic excellence
Certain areas of faculty and academic weakness
Inefficiencies in university and academic administration
Insufficient sense of empowerment on the faculty and department levels
Unclear and inconsistent assessment of staff and management performance
Insufficient flexibility in management in the area of human resources
Insufficiently organized public relations and market planning on university-wide level directed at both the internal and external communities
Short-term and reactive micro-managing on the part of the central administration
Insufficient performance in planning and executing development and fundraising
Insufficient career mentoring and development of faculty, staff and students
Weaknesses in areas of advising, and career services and the physical aspects of student life (dorms, food, bookstore, athletics, etc.)
Insufficient public relations and marketing with regard to patients, students, and alumni
Insufficient planning for future institutional needs for hiring faculty and/or staff
Weaknesses in resource coordination among units of the University

Opportunities

Return to enunciating a strong commitment to the traditional AUB message of humanistic values and an institutional commitment to national and regional development and service

Transparency in the university's leadership message, planning, and implementation, with a resulting increase in the sense of institutional direction and vitality

Improve areas of academic strength through entrepreneurship and careful planning

Improve areas of academic weakness through clearly designating their appropriate and necessary role in the university and creating a suitable critical mass of faculty and staff support

Designate and nurture promising areas of interdisciplinary research and teaching

Consolidate and expand existing graduate programs in certain areas of opportunity (such as Business) and, when necessary, create the necessary new institutional structures

Improve faculty recruitment and mentoring

Improve student recruitment and satisfaction by enhancing student services and student life

Take advantage of real opportunities to improve most of the weaknesses in planning and coordination listed in the "weakness" section above

Develop areas of research partnerships with the private and public sectors

Establish research relationships with other universities on the national, regional, and international levels

Establish strong graduate and professional programs that attract students from the region

Establish strong programs of study-abroad for the benefit of AUB students and foreign students

Organize, direct, and significantly broaden AUB's development activities

Examine new ways of balancing the tasks of teaching and research with a view toward improving both

Develop Ph.D. programs in selected areas of research excellence

Rethink the institutional hierarchical structure and lines of communication to facilitate lateral communication among faculties, departments, and programs

Create a better system of academic and non-academic management evaluation and assessment to insure dynamic, imaginative, and responsible leadership

Find ways of better utilizing long-term academic resources, such as the museum, library, and other scientific collections through better preservation, display, and taking advantage of technological innovation

Threats

Oversupply of colleges and universities, resulting in increased competition for students from high quality and/or aggressive universities in Lebanon, the region, Europe, and the US

Post-war generation is indifferent to the glory days of AUB

High cost of tuition relative to perceived educational and career benefits

Perceptions of decline of academic standards, prestige, and institutional financial stability due to the above factors

Need to raise perceptions of standards and quality of AUB's education to rival what is offered in North America and Europe, where our main competition lies

Economic environment that may not be able to support the cost of high-quality medical and educational services

Political state of region and world not always favourable to AUB's smooth running