

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students

Of

The American University of Beirut
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By

An evaluation Team representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared after study of the institution's Self Study report and a visit by teleconference
conducted between the New York Offices of the University and the campus in Beirut,
March 7-11, 2004

The members of the team were: Earl (Tim) Sullivan, Chair, Provost, the American University in Cairo; Cheryl Beil, Executive Director of Academic Planning and Assessment, the George Washington University; Miguel Angel Centano, Professor of Sociology, Princeton University; Betty Crockett, Associate Vice President for Administration and Finance, Salisbury University; Ann H. Dodd, Senior Consultant, Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment, the Pennsylvania State University; M. Louise Fitzpatrick, Dean and Professor, College of Nursing, Villanova University; Carol A. Mandel, Dean of Libraries, New York University; F. Dennis Riegelnegg, Vice President for Student Development, Saint Francis University; D. William Schlott; Philip A. Tumulty Associate Professor Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University; Stanley M. Widrick, Professor of Marketing, Rochester Institute of Technology.

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This report represents the views of the evaluation team as interpreted by the Chair; it goes directly to the institution before being considered by the Commission. It is a confidential document prepared as an educational service for the benefit of the institution. All comments in the report are made in good faith, in an effort to assist the American University of Beirut. This report is based solely on an educational evaluation of the institution and of the manner in which it appears to be carrying out its educational objectives.

AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Date when instruction began: December 3, 1866

Year of first graduating class: 1871

President: Dr. John Waterbury

Chief Academic Officer: Dr. Peter Heath

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Dr. Richard A. Debs

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

INTRODUCTION

The American University of Beirut (AUB) was invited to submit a full application for candidacy for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) on March 1, 2001. This invitation followed a visit to the University by a representative of Middle States. On June 2, 2001, AUB was granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation by Middle States and informed that the first semi-annual interim report would be due on March 1, 2002. Following the submission of that report, on June 26, 2002, a conference call between AUB and Middle States was conducted and the University was informed that the semi-annual report was accepted, as well as the report of the MSCHE consultant. Also on June 26, 2002, the MSCHE determined that

- There would be a staff visit to assist AUB in starting a Self-Study in preparation for an evaluation visit in 2003-04.
- MSCHE noted that it might determine alternative ways to conduct the Self-Study preparation visit because of travel warnings regarding travel to Beirut.
- MSCHE advised AUB that it reserved the right to delay or terminate candidacy or the accreditation process if it determined that security considerations would affect the safety of its staff, team members, or others.

On June 25, 2003, the Executive Committee of MSCHE determined that in light of the U.S. State Department travel warning, the Commission could not send a team to the University to determine whether to grant initial accreditation to the institution. It considered advice of counsel and relevant MSA policies in addition to the dangers involved. In light of the inconvenience to the institution, the Executive Committee authorized the institution to use an updated version of its Self-Study if the visit could be made by June 2004, and agreed to reconsider the situation if a longer delay would be needed because of continued travel warnings.

On November 19, 2003, the MSCHE decided to make an exception to its policy statement entitled International Travel by MSCHE Staff and Volunteers, and to direct the institution to conduct its evaluation visit for initial accreditation in spring 2004 via video conferencing within a structure developed by the institution in consultation with Commission staff and approved by the MSCHE Executive Committee.

The MS Evaluation Team conducted the evaluation by video conferencing from the New York offices of the University from March 7-11, 2004.

The remainder of this report outlines the MSA Team's findings regarding AUB's compliance with accreditation standards.

Standard 1: Mission

The Institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The American University of Beirut has a long and distinguished history of offering high quality liberal arts and professional programs. For most of its history, the mission of AUB was essentially implicit. However, in 2000 the University adopted an official Mission Statement:

“AUB is a teaching-centered research university, convinced that excellence in teaching and research go hand in hand. Its mission is to enhance education, primarily of the peoples of the Middle East, to serve society through its educational function, and to participate 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 academic excellence, and promotes high expectations of principles of character. It aims to produce men and women who are not only technically competent in their professional fields but also life-long learners who have breadth of vision, a sense of civic and moral responsibility, and a 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 will be enjoyed in a spirit of integrity and with a full sense of responsibility.”

In the course of conducting the self-study for accreditation, a Task Force was formed and “charged with assessing the adequacy and relevance of the ...Mission Statement, especially as to how realistic its goals and objectives are in reflecting the University’s special character as a bi-cultural institution intrinsically linked to Lebanon, the region, and the United States.” In order to accomplish its work, the task force conducted surveys, employed focus groups, interviewed several people, and in general conducted a through study of key issues related to AUB’s mission.

As indicated in the Self-Study document, considerable controversy arose regarding some of the key concepts in the current Mission Statement of the University. While some people thought that the issue of service did not receive sufficient attention in the Mission Statement, most of controversy focused on two topics. One issue involved the concept of AUB as a “bridge” between East and West and specifically between the Arab world and the West. Some members of the AUB community thought that this aspect of AUB’s historic mission did not receive sufficient emphasis in the Mission Statement. However, the biggest issue centered on the opening sentence of the Mission Statement: “AUB is a teaching-centered research university, convinced that excellence in teaching and research go hand in hand.” However, the Team concluded that defining AUB as “Research University” according to the Carnegie classification may be more of a vision for the future of the institution than a description of its current operations.

Strengths and accomplishments

The current Mission Statement has the merits of clarity and brevity, and to a large degree represents the historic mission of the University. For most of AUB's history, it did not have a formal mission statement. The existing Mission Statement, dating from 2000, may need revision, but it can serve as a valuable template for any revisions that are deemed necessary.

Suggestions

The University is to be commended for its candor and honesty in addressing this issue. The Mission Statement of a university should serve as a principle guide for the development of new programs as well as for the reform and re-formulation of existing programs.

The Self-Study task force concluded its work by recommending that the existing Mission Statement "should be re-written, translated into Arabic, and made more visible on campus and the community at large." The Visiting Team suggests that the University administration and the Trustees embrace this recommendation and use it to facilitate a widespread acceptance of the Mission Statement.

Finally the Mission Statement should be "developed by broad representation from all sectors of the institution and formally ratified by its primary governing body" as stated in the document "Characteristics of Excellence" (p. 1).

Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

This standard specifies that institutional-level planning, resource allocation, and renewal be conducted on a continual basis, and that the results of institutional outcomes assessment be used to inform this process. Based on data obtained during interviews and document analysis, the MSA team has determined that AUB meets Standard 2. Further, the team supports the spirit of the recommendations of Task Team 2 listed on pages 19-20 of the Institutional Self-Study (January, 2004).

Under the leadership of President Waterbury and Provost Heath, significant progress has been made towards the goal of deploying an institutional-level process of continuous planning, resource allocation, and renewal. An effective process of this nature should be based on a shared understanding of the institution's mission, vision, and goals. As described in the section of this document referencing Standard 1, AUB is well on its way toward the establishment of this shared meaning. Although thousands of miles separated

the visiting team from most of the Self-Study team members, the energy, commitment, and momentum of the AUB Self-Study task teams was nevertheless palpable during videoconference sessions. This energy and commitment bodes well for the successful implementation of additional practices that will enhance institutional effectiveness.

An effective process that integrates planning, improvement and assessment enables an institution to answer the five questions: (a) Where are we now? (b) Where should we be in the future? (c) How will we know when we get there? (d) What gaps exist between the current situation and the desired future? and (e) What do we need to create or improve to close the gaps? AUB has extensive data that has enabled them to determine their current situation. For example, they are already using peer comparisons, internal interviews and surveys, market analysis, and academic program review. They also have made considerable progress on the third question of “How will we know when we get there?” through their use of the balanced scorecard. They recognize the need to adequately answer the second question, “Where do we want to be?” through the use of an inclusive process that will enable them to clarify their mission and vision and to establish institution-wide shared goals. They also recognize the need for more attention to identifying and closing the gaps between the current and desired states once they clarify their desired future.

It is apparent that a cycle of assessment, planning, and renewal has been ongoing for some time in the six faculties as well as many of the academic and non-academic support units. In many cases this unit-level learning and improvement cycle has also benefited from the integration of resource allocation. In its Institutional Self Study (January, 2004), AUB recommended several structural enhancements that will enable them to unify and coordinate planning and resource allocation at the institutional level. There is recognition that greater integration and linkages are needed. A report that was recently prepared for the March 2004 Board of Trustees meeting states:

“Ultimately, the strategic plan would be integrated with the University’s annual budgeting process, effectively guiding the allocation of operating and capital resources. A more formalized and transparent strategic planning framework for the University would also provide the basis for monitoring performance and results, and to evaluate planning outcomes. Planning would become the foundation of resource planning and budget decision making.” (Year to Date January 2004 Results and Projection for 2003/2004, p. vii.)

The MSA team commends AUB’s movement towards the integration of planning and resource allocation and their recognition that assessment data should be used to inform the planning process as well as subsequent improvements.

It is apparent that AUB is well positioned to strengthen its efforts at institutional-level integrated planning. As one mid-level manager said, “The Self-Study has been a very educational process and there are many things that could be launched immediately.” One trustee commended the way in which “A group of faculty is learning more about how the University is run and more about the budget.” The block budget approach they have

recently implemented in regard to capital equipment is one example of the way in which AUB has seized on suggestions and rapidly put them in place. Several Self-Study teams listed examples of improvements they have implemented in the year following the completion of their Self-Study. Once they establish the integrated planning process recommended in this section they should be able to definitively answer questions regarding the extent to which they are achieving their institutional goals.

Suggestions for Improvement

The MSA team offers four suggestions that may strengthen the integrated process of planning, improvement and assessment:

1. *Stakeholder representation.* The MSA team suggests that a mechanism be identified whereby faculty and student input to the proposed strategic planning coordinating committee can be obtained on an ongoing basis. The inclusion of faculty and students will further AUB's values of respect for all groups, and will bring additional viewpoints to the committee.
2. *Inclusion of all topics related to planning.* The deliberations of the strategic planning coordinating committee should include planning and prioritization for enrollment, space, diversity, hiring and development of personnel, capital planning, information technology, and service quality and improvement.
3. *Inclusion of OIRA and the Service Quality and Organizational Improvement units.* Formal linkages to the OIRA and the Service Quality and Organizational Improvement units should be added to the proposed "secretariat" that will coordinate the daily operational aspects of integrated strategic planning. There are implied and/or explicit linkages between the fourteen Middle States standards that form a synergistic system to assure institutional excellence. The inclusion of OIRA and Service Quality and Improvement will enable these linkages to be capitalized upon at AUB. The Middle States team supports the spirit of the Self-Study task team's recommendation to establish a strategic planning structure.
4. *Preventing "task team overload."* Attention should be paid to maintaining the momentum and energy that has surrounded the institutional Self-Study. Many task teams and advisory committees are now in place, and the AUB Self-Study recommends additional teams and committees. These efforts should be streamlined and committees should be consolidated as much as possible to enable effective coordination and prevent "task team overload."

Recommendation

While planning is occurring at all levels, it was found that a comprehensive integrated strategic planning process is not currently in existence and an institutional strategic plan has not been developed. Therefore, the team recommends that AUB develop and

implement a comprehensive institutional strategic plan that links long-range planning to decision-making and budgeting processes, and to institutional assessment data. Such a process should be established in a timely manner so that a comprehensive strategic plan can be created to guide future decision-making. It will be important for AUB to establish measurable goals that are based on the institution's mission and vision. Further, goals, objectives and action items should be prioritized so that a limited number of actions are focused on at any given time. Measuring the achievement of new goals and objectives will enable AUB to determine when it has made sufficient progress towards the creation and improvement of programs and services to enhance institutional excellence. The MSA team suggests that prioritization should take into account the needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

Standard 3: Institutional Resources

The institution meets this standard.¹

Summary of Evidence and Findings

This standard requires that, "The human, financial, technical, physical facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment."

Human Resources

The University, from all accounts provided in the report and in the interviews, survived the difficult years of war through the efforts of its exceptionally dedicated staff. More recently, however, there has been acknowledgement that service improvements are necessary. Some of the efforts initiated to improve service include:

1. An employee performance appraisal process has been established and is used for determination of merit increases and training needs.
2. Training programs oriented toward departmental responsibilities have been developed and offered. There is a 20-hour minimum annual training requirement.
3. Technology initiatives, as would be expected, have caused significant changes in business processes and retraining has been provided in response. Employees who could be retrained were and those who could not were either moved to other areas or replaced. In 2002, an early retirement incentive program was offered that resulted in the retirement of approximately 155 employees (95 from the hospital and 60 from the rest of the campus).

¹ Since adequacy of resources for Middle States accreditation purposes refers not only to financial and human resources, but also to physical facilities (buildings, labs, etc.), the assigned team member (at least this one) normally visits at least some of those facilities during the team visit. As this review has been completed from a remote site, this team member has instead relied upon the staff, in particular, the VP of Administration, for information relative to the adequacy of the University's physical facilities.

4. Certain job descriptions have been translated into Arabic. This has proven helpful to staff members not fluent in English.

Of concern, particularly given the budget constraints, is the number of task forces on which employees serve² as well as the long-term impact of system implementations on individual workloads. In addition, though much assessment has been done and improvements have resulted at various levels, the outcomes of these efforts will ultimately need to be tied to an overall institutional strategic plan.

Financial Resources

The American University of Beirut is not unlike many higher education institutions in that there often are many more financial needs than available resources. AUB, however, suffers from two major financial issues not common to other “American” universities: (a) the Lebanese economy, and (b) what was referred to in one of the team visit sessions as a “steady state of unrest.” The institution’s ability to collect from the Lebanese government those receivables related to its medical school will be an on-going challenge. The perception that AUB is unsafe, which was also mentioned several times during the visit, presents its own challenges relative to recruitment of students, something critical given its reliance upon tuition revenues.

Much to its credit, AUB has, at present, balanced its budget. Furthermore, though there is no overall “formal” institutional strategic plan, budget planning and resource allocation mechanisms are in place and are utilized for both the operating and the capital budget. It has also been very successful to date in its development efforts directed toward its \$140 million Campaign for Excellence. AUB is still recovering, however, from the recent investment portfolio fair market value loss to which it responded by diversifying asset managers and changing asset allocations. Its ability to fully fund its master plan is also uncertain.

Technical Resources

The technical resources appear to be adequate despite a Lebanese communications infrastructure that is not ideal. The interviewees and/or the Self-Study identify a need for additional research and medical equipment, greater availability for remote Internet access for students, and wider bandwidth. Again, not unusual to other higher education institutions, investment costs associated with on-going technological needs/enhancements are also a challenge.

The University has been implementing SCT Banner (Student) and Oracle Financials. The student system is, at this time, further along in that process than financials and, as such, appears to be a more stable and functional system.

² It should be noted, however, that the task forces were seen as a means by which employees could feel they were informed. They were, therefore, willing to invest the time being a part of those task forces.

Physical Facilities

Based upon interviews, the physical facilities are adequate for current enrollments and there are no safety issues identified. In addition, a preventive maintenance program has been established, an Environmental Health Safety & Risk Management Department has recently been reestablished, and an annual allocation of \$1.5 million has been set aside to reduce deferred maintenance. There are some concerns that not all facilities are accessible to those physically challenged (no elevators, for instance). The University, however, has gone so far as to move classrooms to first floors to accommodate these needs until such time as renovations/renewals can be scheduled. All new renovations and construction include facilities for those who are physically challenged.

Significant Accomplishments

The University should be commended for the volume of activities (evaluations and assessments) and resulting actions it has undertaken in a short period of time related to personnel, budget, technology, and facilities.

Suggestions

- AUB should be mindful of the number of task forces/committees it establishes and on which its employees serve so as not to negatively impact their overall ability to perform their jobs.
- Similarly, as functional users become empowered users as a result of system implementations, AUB should be careful to provide adequate staffing levels that will be able to handle the workload associated with that “empowerment.”
- AUB needs to reduce its reliance upon governmental support (hospital receivables) to whatever extent possible.
- AUB should cultivate its relationships with its alumni associations so that win-win opportunities can be achieved relative to giving.

Standard 4: Leadership and Governance

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

The American University of Beirut has done a thorough study of their structure for policy development and their structure for decision-making. The current structure has been in place for a relatively short period of time since the creation of the position of Provost. The study provided an opportunity to review the organizational chart for the University. This exercise made many of AUB’s constituencies aware of the organizational chart for the first time, leading to better dissemination of this information, its structure and the concomitant policies.

Many of the issues relevant to Governance have been mentioned in the discussion of other standards. The issue of communication, which has come up many times, applies here as well. Improvements in communication derive from two efforts. First, the use of the web to post “Policies and Procedures” is facilitating communication through the use of technology. Second, the recognition that communication is critical is being reinforced through the implementation of an awards program for Service Excellence and additional training in communication, thus creating the atmosphere for better communication.

Bureaucracy has been raised as an impediment by faculty, students and even by administrators. To their credit, administrators at AUB are implementing technology to alleviate these situations, for example, with on-line certifying of students for degrees and by computerizing purchasing. There appears to be a concerted effort to address problems, which is a further indication that leadership and governance at AUB are active and healthy.

The University Senate appears to be in a period of redefinition. While the bylaws attribute legislative powers to the Senate, in practice the Senate is an advisory body to the administration. The role of the Senate at AUB is similar to the role of faculty senates at many US universities in that it deals with academic issues relevant to faculty, such as conferring degrees and reviewing undergraduate and graduate programs. As with the Senate at other institutions, much of the work of the Senate is done in committees. It was pointed out that there is a positive trend in the productivity of the committees. The Accreditation Team agrees with the Self Study Team that the bylaws pertaining to the role and powers of the University Senate need to be updated. Clarifying the role of the Senate should aid in cementing the link between the President and the Senate.

The Self Study Team calls for more accountability through periodic review:

- That the Board of Trustees evaluates the President
- That the President evaluates the Provost and Senior Administrators
- That the Provost evaluates the Deans
- That the Deans evaluate Department Chairs
- That the Board of Trustees performs a self-review

Students participate in the University Student-Faculty Committee (USFC). Student participation in electing their representatives was high (73%). The Committee was viewed positively, but in discussion with the Self Study Team, the possibility of an autonomous student group was raised. This idea is included for future consideration.

In general, the leadership and governance of AUB is performing well and fulfilling its obligations. There is always room for improvement. Those issues that are not unique to governance, such as reducing bureaucracy and improving communication, are being fixed with technology and changing attitudes. Issues specific to governance that require changes in bylaws have been identified.

Suggestions

The Accreditation Team suggests that the revision of the bylaws be made a priority. While revising bylaws may seem to be a superficial exercise, once it is done, the ambiguity that is mentioned in several places will be resolved.

1. Revise the bylaws (corporate, senate and faculty). In particular, the bylaws need to reflect the presence of the Provost on campus and the role of the Provost in the organizational chart.
2. Consider periodic review of administrators, based on best practices at other universities, as well as a review of the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees.
3. Empower student groups in activities where students can gain leadership skills
4. Use all means available to improve communication

Chapter 5: Administration

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Findings

The University is to be commended for assembling an able group of senior administrators, Deans and various mid-level managers. The Team believes that the administration of AUB is sound both at the top and lower levels of management. Of AUB personnel, 91% agree that administrative staff have the qualifications and experience necessary for their positions. The composition of the staff at AUB includes 495 FT faculty, 232 PT faculty, 160 AUB managers, and 792 non-academic staff. There are another 1,662 managers, professionals, and other staff at the hospital. This staffing level seems adequate for a University of about 7,000 FTE students.

The information and decision support systems are perceived as very adequate and continuously improving. The Oracle ERP system is used to support decision making at AUB and is reported to be stable and working well (supported by three internal technical specialists, one subject area specialist, and the local dealer). The bandwidth for the University is improving but somewhat limited by government control. Students and faculty have access to numerous databases via electronic service. AUB is expanding systems to permit remote access to many administrative and academic systems.

The Self-Study indicated that only about 55% of the administrative staff felt their job descriptions were up to date and that employees fully understood recently added responsibilities. However, since the writing of the report, there has been significant progress in making job descriptions more widely available (in both English and Arabic where needed). All professional positions for new employees are posted on-line. The Self-Study report revealed that between 55% and 60% of administrative personnel felt

empowered. The recent publication of the Manual of Authority should go a long way toward clarifying authority issues.

The area of improved communications across the campus was cited as a reason for better understanding of the interconnectedness of roles and responsibilities. Examples of this improved communication include:

The sharing of information about the University budget, and
The president's "State of the University" address (delivered in February 2004).

Periodic assessment of effectiveness of administrative structures and services is undertaken on at least an annual basis. The balanced scorecard approach has begun to be implemented as the basis for annual review and continuous improvement. It is anticipated that the balanced scorecard approach will eventually be rolled out on the academic side.

Significant Accomplishments

Overall, the administrative successes reported include:

Ability of top and middle management to undertake self-evaluation
The greatly improved HR system
A greatly enhanced IT and decision support system
A master plan of the physical plant

Suggestions

Consider ways to increase transparency in administrative activities. The balanced scorecard system that you are creating may be a vehicle for doing this if scorecard metrics are routinely publicized.

Standard 6: Integrity

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

Based on review of the Self-Study, other institutional documents, as well as interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the Team reached the following conclusions:

- As reflected in the Self-Study, the University conducted a thorough, detailed, and candid review of the institution and its constituencies in order to identify areas where unethical behavior was or might be occurring or where a lack of integrity in any setting was evident.³

³ AUB has University policies on Fraud, Conflict of Interest, Discrimination and Harassment, a Student Code of Conduct, and a Faculty Code of Conduct. All of these are available on the AUB website. There were some issues in the standard of integrity formulated by the self-study committee that are more appropriately addressed in other sections of the team report. These issues include: (1) Formulation of an

- The institution is committed to the development, promulgation, and enforcement of a policy that expects and requires integrity in all activities of the administration, faculty, and student body.
- The University strives to achieve a diverse student body without sacrificing its standards of excellence. It works to create and maintain an environment that assures fair and equitable treatment for students of all backgrounds.
- The University is aware that the current system for handling grievances does not work well.

Suggestions

- Continue to develop and enforce a uniform University policy on cheating and plagiarism.
- Develop and publicize a statement that promotes and encourages freedom of expression and open, uninhibited discourse. Among other benefits, this will help counteract the misperception of a climate of intimidation that is extant to an uncertain degree among both students and faculty.
- Develop and disclose criteria for promotion.
- When possible, strive for transparency and openness in all administrative deliberations and decision-making.
- Continue to identify the increasing number of areas where the potential for conflicts of interest exist, and adopt regulations and a standard of ethics that will avoid such conflicts and address those violations that do occur. Because of the growing participation and influence of industry in many areas of education and research, this is especially important for the professional schools.
- Develop an efficient, consistent and equitable system for handling grievances.

Standard 7: Institutional Assessment

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of findings

AUB should be commended for its significant strides in creating a culture of evidence and providing a strong foundation of information about all aspects of the University. In a

academic strategic plan (2) A perceived lack of support for teaching (3) Role of AUB in community service (4) Faculty tenure.

mere three years the University identified 60 extant documents that provided evidence of student learning and program and institutional assessment; reviewed, summarized, and analyzed content of documents; identified gaps in the information; made recommendations on how to improve the quality of assessment measures; and instituted a timeline for distributing surveys and collecting input from a broad range of different University constituencies including students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The Middle States Accreditation Team supports the implementation of all the recommendations for Standard 7 put forth in the Self Study (see page 82). In addition, the team recommends that the institutional assessment be linked to the University's mission statement and to the development and articulation of a University-wide strategic plan.

Recommendations

1. The AUB Self Study team recommended that the mission statement be rewritten and more widely circulated. As all institutional assessment should be linked to the University's mission, the first step is to create a usable and viable mission statement. Within this broader context, departments should create objectives that are consistent with and support the University's mission, and should develop appropriate measures to assess how well these objectives are being met.
2. The Self Study generated an enormous amount of information about the University. A logical next step is to interpret the data and use it to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan. President Waterbury has taken the lead by articulating his strategic goals and asking all units to develop their plans in conjunction with the Campus Master Plan. Current assessment tools and metrics need to be reviewed in terms of how well they assess these strategic goals; new measures may need to be developed to provide a more complete assessment. Of utmost importance is creating a process whereby assessment measures are linked to the strategic goals, results of the measures are used to further inform and improve the strategic plan, and that all stakeholders are kept informed of the progress being made.

Development and implementation of a written plan for the assessment of institutional effectiveness. (Chapter 7 of the Self Study should provide the foundation for such a plan. In addition, the plan should consider the aforementioned suggestions.)

Standard 8: Student Admissions

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The American University of Beirut has generally developed and implemented policies that support and reflect the mission of the institution. The civil strife that was a part of its recent history had severely diminished its impact as a regional and international University. However, it has made purposeful strides in once again regaining its critical

position as a desirable regional institution. The percentage of undergraduate students from the Middle East but outside of Lebanon has risen five percent in two years to 17% but falls far short of the 47% recorded by the University in 1972. Diversity in the graduate program, defined as graduate students who have degrees from institutions other than AUB, has increased 157% in a five-year period. The Medical School students are almost all AUB graduates. Although progress toward undergraduate regional diversity has been slow, it is a result of instability in the region, not a result of factors that can be controlled by the University.

In the same five year period undergraduate enrollment has increased 31% and graduate enrollment has increased 42%, not including the Medical School. This increase in enrollment can be attributed to renewed confidence in the University and to improved enrollment management practices.

Undergraduate admissions policies and criteria are available in the AUB Catalogue, the web site, admissions CD and brochures. These resources are reviewed on a yearly basis. Each School develops its own admissions policies, thus creating six different policies for undergraduate admissions. Students and high school counselors suggest that these variations in policy are a source of frustration for potential students researching the University. Although varied, entering student admissions policy for the various Schools is defined in the University Catalogue and on the University Web Site. The Office of Admissions is primarily used for recruitment activities, monitoring the admissions processes of the various Schools, and processing admissions applications and data. There is some disagreement among faculty and administrators regarding the role the Office of Admissions should play in admitting students to the various Schools.

Graduate admissions policies and criteria are available in the University Catalogue and on the University web site. They are clearly presented.

Accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs including required placement and diagnostic testing is also available in the University Catalogue, University web site, admissions brochures and CD. Students report satisfaction with the admissions materials provided, particularly on the web site.

Information on student learning outcomes is generally not available in admissions materials but is available on line in course syllabi. There is not general agreement that student learning outcomes information would be a worthwhile addition to the admissions materials.

The University's financial aid practices generally support the admissions and retention efforts. The Office of Financial Aid was created in 1999 and it is charged with providing need-based aid to entering students. Eighty-two percent of those applying for financial aid in the entering class in 2002 received a need-based grant that averaged \$3518. This practice of awarding need-based aid is consistent with the student population the University serves. The University has conducted market research and has found cost to be a major factor in yielding students that are desirable. To respond to that finding, the

University is raising funds with the intent of better meeting the financial need of students that are academically able but economically disadvantaged. Adequate financial aid information regarding scholarships and grants is available in printed publications and on the University's web site. These resources are reviewed on a yearly basis. Financial aid counseling is available. Refund policies are published in the Student Handbook.

Published and implemented policies for transfer credit and extra-institutional college level learning for the Lebanese Baccalaureate are well articulated and easily available. Policies regarding freshman credit for the Higher Level Examinations of the International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement Examinations, and A-level examinations of the General Education Certificate require academic department approval. The same is true for transfer credits from other institutions. Some administrators find this to be a deterrent to recruiting transfer students.

The University conducts ongoing assessment of student success that evaluates the match between the attributes of the admitted student and the institutions mission and program. The rates for first year undergraduate retention (92%), graduate student program completion (70%), and undergraduate graduation (83%) are excellent. The results of student satisfaction surveys are generally positive and the University has used this assessment to plan and implement better methods for responding to stated student needs.

Significant Accomplishments

AUB has conducted persistent and extensive efforts to improve diversity.
AUB has planned for and achieved significant enrollment growth.
AUB has achieved outstanding retention and graduation rates.
AUB has committed to increased financial aid grants for needy students.

Suggestions

According to the Student Admissions Task Force, the decentralization of admissions policy creation and execution is a cause of confusion and frustration among the Admissions Office, the Schools, and potential students. An effort should be made to better coordinate these processes.

Standard 9: Student Services

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of evidence and findings

The American University of Beirut has a long history of providing private higher education to a regionally diverse student body made up primarily of students from the Middle East and takes great pride in its diversity. Although an extended period of civil strife in Lebanon has significantly reduced regional diversity, the University has made progress in addressing this mission critical objective. To that end the University has

evaluated the International Student Services Offices (ISSO) on a yearly basis since 1999 when they found 80% of the international students to be less than satisfied with ISSO services. This yearly review has been the impetus for improvements and additions to the programs of the ISSO. Students now report a 93% satisfaction rate with the ISSO.

The University has administered a wide variety of survey instruments to assess student needs and student satisfaction with student services. The results of these surveys and the general revitalization of the University has been the motivation for improvements in the student service departments. The University also recognizes the need for additional improvements and time must be allowed for all of the student service departments to evolve into efficient and effective units. Campus Food Services is not well regarded by some of the students. Health services are available but they appear to be understaffed. The safety of the campus has greatly improved but the Office of Protection is still in need of additional professional development activities. Counseling services are provided, but additional staff is needed to handle the caseload and to do wellness programming. Residential facilities are adequate but additional residence hall programming efforts and staff development are needed. Orientation programming is available but is somewhat underutilized by incoming students.

Some student services have evolved into more effective, efficient units. Improvements in the Registrar's Office have been well received. The addition of the SCT Banner System has greatly improved the functions of this Office, most notably registration. Career and placement services are available and have been expanded to include personnel to provide placement services in the Schools of Business and Engineering. Student activities programming is available and well received by a large number of students. Athletic programming has grown rapidly and provides for high-level competition, intramural competition, and more casual recreational programming. High-level athletic competition is seen as consistent with institutional mission.

Student advisement procedures and processes are in place. There is disagreement as to whether advisement procedures and processes are adequate. The major problem posed by the students is the number of advisees per faculty member. The University has made attempts to better train and to more evenly distribute advisors among students.

Reasonable procedures for equitably addressing students' complaints or grievances have been created. Students feel these are not widely used because there are not many complaints and/or because students do not feel personally inclined to register complaints or grievances. Records of complaints or grievances should be better maintained.

Student records are well maintained and safeguarded. There are published policies for their release.

As part of the Self-Study, there has been assessment of student support services and their utilization. This information was used in planning and implementing change in the various student service departments.

Generally, the University has created in a relatively brief period of time a program of student services appropriate to student strengths and needs, reflective of institutional mission, consistent with student learning expectations, and available regardless of place or method of delivery. The professionals that supervise and provide the student services and programs have, for the most part, learned these skills on the job. It was generally found that the University has created a positive, accepting, campus climate.

Significant accomplishments

The University should be commended for its successful evaluation and planning efforts in a mission critical component of student services, the International Student Service Office.

Suggestions

1. Conduct ongoing assessment of student services, continue to expand their scope, and ensure that a vigorous program of professional development is instituted for student service professionals.
2. Regularly assess the effectiveness of the advising program and make improvements as needed

Standard 10 – Faculty

The institution meets the standard on faculty.

The Middle States Team wishes to commend the team that prepared Chapter 10 of the Self Study for their efforts and attention to the diversity of their charge.

The team recognizes that for the most part the faculty is well credentialed, very dedicated, and highly energized to the good of the University and its students. They have established an environment conducive to learning, research and service to a level expected of a member of the collegiate academy.

There is a general consensus by the Middle States team that the faculty is sufficiently time-challenged to accomplish the associated indices of teaching, research and service. Faculty describe with considerable animation (during the open forum), the need to integrate time to teach with time to conduct research and publish scholarly refereed articles in international journals. Self-study reflections clearly denote faculty understanding on this triumvirate with equally clear vision of its near impossible, daunting charge that concludes (hopefully) with promotion.

The dichotomy between the teaching-centered and the research aspects of the faculty seem paradoxical to the Middle States team. President Waterbury's imperative of faculty refurbishing these topics from "or to and" as noted in his address to the full Middle States Team at their initial gathering for accreditation review, might be more of a strategy than a tactic. Both junior and senior faculty reflect on the essentials of good teaching noting the need to quantify student learning outcomes, modify course syllabi by adding measurable objectives, and select pedagogy that require higher-order thinking from students.

Furthermore, the faculty clearly understands the requirement to publish two or more refereed articles per annum. Both of these indices plus college service are necessary in order to progress through the professorial ranks.

Suggestions

1. Take steps to establish an atmosphere of mutual respect between senior and junior faculty.
2. Establish a reasonable balance for promotion between teaching, research and service. Give due consideration to research important to both the Middle East as well as the international community.
3. Carefully evaluate the impact of PhD programs before enacting and inform the New York State Department of Education and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in advance of implementation.
4. Establish a strategic plan for assessing student learning outcomes and faculty effectiveness. Link the plan to budgeting.
5. Create a mechanism for conducting faculty course evaluations where the results are valued and used for course improvement.

Standard 11: Educational Offerings

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

AUB's programs of study have traditionally been, and continue to be, congruent with its mission to enhance education and serve society, combining professional training in a variety of fields with a strong general education. Maintaining this balance between professional and general education creates a healthy tension, one that has required a careful allocation of course offerings to meet professional accreditations, Lebanese requirements, and the general education goals of an American university.

Two recent major initiatives have focused on the improvement of curriculum and course content: an extensive external review of academic programs conducted in 1998-99 (earlier in some departments, later in others) and a major review and restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum (AUB 2004, which took effect in fall 2001) to integrate general education more carefully and fully into the programs of all of the schools. At the same time, the professional schools have been reviewing and revising curriculum with an eye toward formal accreditation in their fields. All of this effort has resulted in appropriate course programs that foster coherent learning experience.

These recent reviews have at the same time provided the opportunity for in-depth evaluation of programs and clearer articulation of program goals. In these evaluations, departments take into account the offerings of peer institutions (both in the Middle East and the US), benchmarks based on peers, student evaluations, expressed market

expectations (students and employers), and accreditation requirements, along with internal and external review. Each department describes its program goals in the 2002-03 AUB catalog.

A concurrent initiative to foster excellence in teaching (assisted by funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation) has included a focus on learning outcomes, both in course development and in assessment. This work has been applied to the revision of curriculum. New and revised syllabi, often on the web, now include explicit learning outcomes. An increasing number of faculty members are being trained in outcomes development and assessment and are applying it.

Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are numerous, various and encouraged. These are as, or more, likely to be initiated by students than faculty. The Self-Study report and interviews evidence support for these activities and an interest in expanding them.

As documented in the Self-Study, interviews, statistics and planning documents, there have been successful efforts to bring educational support services—computing infrastructure, laboratories, classrooms and libraries—to adequate levels. The University’s support for these services has been impressive. Classrooms and laboratories are being upgraded in a necessarily phased approach, since work on physical facilities cannot all be accomplished overnight. Taking advantage of recent developments in information technology, libraries and computing have been quickly upgraded to basic current standards in a relatively short period of time.

Significant accomplishments, significant progress and exemplary practices:

The initiatives described above, including program review, curriculum redesign and teaching excellence, have been exceptional in their quality of process, thoroughness, wide adoption, and often enthusiastic acceptance. AUB is a model to others in achieving so much in such a relatively short period of time. Achievements in upgrade of facilities and information infrastructure, especially with the goal of ubiquitous online access, are impressive.

Suggestions

- Program renewal has not been completed in all parts of the curriculum and will be continued. AUB should sustain momentum in what is necessarily a demanding and time-consuming effort to update programs and expand the focus on learning outcomes. It will be important to monitor flagging attention in this work and at the appropriate time to institute structural and organizational changes that move the process from a mode of “new initiative” to one of continual assessment.
- Adding PhD programs in selected fields will have an impact on the educational offerings of a department and on the supporting resources required. Each potential PhD program will need to be evaluated not only for the resources and

faculty necessary to support it, but also for its potential to divert or dilute offerings currently available and supported in the curriculum.

- Interviews and the Self-Study noted the need to increase the number of library professionals. Accreditation criteria include collaboration between professional library staff and faculty in teaching and fostering information literacy skills. AUB will need more librarians who can partner with faculty in teaching information literacy and who can work closely with faculty as graduate programs are extended to the PhD-level and research expectations for both students and faculty are increased. Given the lack of such trained library professionals in the region, additional strategies for developing expertise, such as library internships and in-service training for masters' graduates from other disciplines, can enrich the professional staffing.
- There are many areas where the work of the libraries and academic computing begin to converge. A closer partnership between the groups, including joint planning and jointly sponsored service offerings can help to take advantage of scarce expertise and enrich possibilities for outreach.

Standard 12: General Education

The institution meets this standard.

Summary of findings

AUB has a long history as an outpost of American style liberal arts education in the region. It explicitly recognizes liberal arts education as a significant part of its educational mission and of its institutional identity. It supports this goal both through a substantive commitment to a liberal arts curriculum and through efforts to “encourage freedom of thought and expression regarding religious, social, and political matters” and in seeking to teach students “how to think for themselves”. In the conference call meeting with the working group in Beirut, AUB faculty emphasized that they wanted to produce “leaders, not technicians” and that they sought to graduate “well rounded” students.

Obstacles to this goal include:

- Regional academic culture more attuned to a European model of specialization.
- Specialization of secondary school graduates from Lebanon and elsewhere in the region.
- Parental pressure for “practical” educational outcomes.
- Economic pressure faced by graduates.
- AUB must simultaneously fulfill Lebanese, New York State, and Middle States educational standards.

According to the Self-Study, a significant number of students express reservations about the current standard number of courses required for a variety of programs with many

desiring to spend less time in non-major fields. The University has recognized the different constraints on its various faculties and has appropriately designed differing standards of “general education” from a high of 30 credits (depending on placement) in the FAS to a low of 18 credits (again, depending on placement) in the FAFS.

AUB has explored the two current strategies for achieving general education: distribution requirements or core courses. The Self-Study document indicates that AUB is well aware of the challenges and benefits associated with each model and has devoted considerable time thinking about the optimum strategy.

The current AUB recommendations feature a combination of the two strategies including 2 courses in a core “Civilization” sequence, up to 9 credits in English and Arabic (depending on placement) and up to 7 courses in a distribution of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and quantitative skills.

The Self-Study document also suggests that the University establish a number of study groups to continue looking at this issue and to further evaluate the standards for General Education. The University should also encourage more critical thinking and writing skills across its curriculum.

Significant Accomplishments

AUB is to be commended for maintaining its commitment to Liberal Arts despite significant internal and external challenges.

Suggestions

1. AUB may wish to consider an explicit writing requirement from all undergraduates or to structure part of the core course sequence as requiring intensive writing.
2. If AUB imposes the same standards on all the faculties, then it must be careful that requirements meet all regulatory guidelines and that all involved feel a sense of commitment or “ownership” with the new rules.
3. We agree with the University that all departments should be encouraged to develop new courses in their subject areas that may further encourage student participation in their liberal arts education.
4. The University may wish to take more active advantage of a multi-lingual and multi-cultural population in promoting a unique atmosphere in which to study liberal arts.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets this standard.

The American University of Beirut, although a private institution without a public mandate, has looked beyond its campus in an attempt to meet community, regional and national needs related to its educational enterprise, since the mid nineteen seventies. Its

Regional External Program is experiencing rapid growth, particularly as it relates to the needs of the private sector and business community in the region and increasingly, in Europe.

Certificate programs in a variety of areas, consultation services, continuing education programs and training programs in several fields are offered. Most clients come from the business sector, a reflection of the privatization of the education and health care industries. This endeavor has in some instances become a locus for entrepreneurial projects of mutual benefit to both the clients and the University. The Self Study and published Directory of Services for AUB's Regional External Programs list a large array of projects and offerings.

This enterprise is organized and administered under a special unit of which the Dean of the Business School is the Vice President. Offerings reflect the entire range of AUB academic areas including, agriculture and food sciences, arts and sciences, business, education, engineering and architecture, and medical and health sciences. Projects bring faculty of various disciplines together to meet client needs. Revenues come to the University through this administrative unit and are shared, on a formula basis with the involved faculty and the University. Projects emanating from specific departments or schools provide for revenue sharing with those academic units as well as the involved faculty and the larger University. Sponsored research in a number of areas also fall under this administrative unit. Faculty consultation activities are largely available through REP. Some academic remedial services for students and some training programs internal to the University also currently reside in this administrative unit but are operated by the appropriate academic unit, such as the English department.

The Self-Study suggests that this is considered an important outreach activity of the institution, and is a view that is shared by faculty and senior administrators with whom the activities were discussed. In addition to immediate revenues, the visibility of AUB and the potential to grow clientele for both REP and the academic programs are considered long term benefits. Faculty, although supportive of the activities identify areas that require greater explanation and/or clarity. Some of these areas relate to the need for greater communication with faculty specifically about:

- information about the amount of revenue generated by REP
- the need for transparency concerning selection of faculty for projects
- more information about the use of revenue that are generated
- more information about the levels of faculty compensation/ incentives for work on projects
- how, by what criteria and by whom are projects selected or approved
- more clarity about policies governing faculty involvement in these activities
- the degree to which the overhead charged by the University may deter certain clients and discourage certain projects that are of importance to the community and region

The Self Study identifies several areas that were considered areas for further exploration by members of the committee who developed that section of the Self-Study.

Suggestions

Develop and implement mechanisms that include faculty and more broadly represent the University community in planning and evaluating activities of REP

Improve communication between REP and its University constituencies, especially as it relates to policy development and financial issues

Develop criteria for selection and rejection of projects and proposals and involvement of faculty in their implementation

Implement a strategic business plan for REP based on the plan presented to the AUB Board of Trustees in November 2003.

Identify areas where the potential for conflicts of interest exist because of the growing influence of business and industry in many areas of education and research

It is suggested that the faculty and administration work simultaneously on a strategic plan that includes related educational activities of which REP is a part, while taking under consideration the issues raised and suggestions made in the Self Study. This should provide a framework for future Regional Educational Activities and clarify policies that will govern such educational ventures at AUB to everyone's satisfaction. In this way, benefits and opportunities for both community service and entrepreneurial projects of value that respond to the needs of AUB's constituencies and communities of interest can be provided.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The institution meets the standard.

Significant accomplishments

AUB is to be commended for the candor of its Self Study, the speed in which it has addressed many of the issues, and the variety of new efforts designed to improve teaching and learning.

Summary of evidence and findings

AUB has made an impressive start in assessing learning outcomes. Within a very short period of time, the University identified three strategic learning goals; reviewed student and faculty perceptions about and the degree to which these goals were emphasized at the course and program level; generated an extensive data base of assessment practices already in place; implemented an array of assessment tools including faculty, employer,

and student surveys, program reviews, and course evaluations; generated a teaching excellence initiative that included faculty training in student-centered learning pedagogy, workshops on using WebCT, course management system, and an award for teaching excellence.

Much of the evidence of learning outcomes derives from indirect measures such as course evaluations and commercially developed surveys that rely on student perceptions and self-reports rather than actual student work products. Assessment efforts across faculties vary widely, and some faculties (e.g. engineering and health sciences) are more advanced than others. Moreover, assessment has focused more on the course level than at the program level.

In addition, there are a number of obstacles that need to be overcome before the institution can confidently attest that it is successful in achieving its learning goals. The major obstacles are:

- a perception among students of wide-spread cheating
- over-reliance on objective tests that ask students to “study and spit,” as one student remarked, rather than have them perform higher order cognitive skills that ask students to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply what they have learned
- a reluctance on the part of some faculty to develop a more student-centered teaching style
- a promotion structure that gives lip service to teaching excellence.

The institution is very aware of these problems, and, over the past few years, has taken strong measures to change the institutional culture. We commend them for their efforts and strongly encourage them to continue their hard work.

Suggestions

1. The relatively recent articulation of learning goals suggests that programs and faculties have not had time to incorporate these goals into their courses and evaluate how well these goals are being achieved. We suggest that the Provost develop a process whereby academic programs undergo a Self-Study and review on a regular basis (perhaps every five years). As part of the review, programs should identify learning outcomes specific to the program, evaluate curriculum and courses with regard to the organizing principles and coherence of the curriculum, examine the teaching and learning process (e.g., incorporating formative assessment tools), and assess the achievement of University and program specific learning goals using direct measures (e.g., assignments, papers, exams, capstone courses) and indirect measures. The critical component of the assessment component is to interpret the materials and then use the evidence to improve student learning.
2. Continue the teaching excellence initiatives. This includes offering workshops on student-centered learning, providing faculty stipends to revise current or develop

- new courses that incorporate new pedagogy, provide a forum for faculty to discuss and showcase new teaching initiatives. Expand teaching awards to include an award in each faculty and to award innovative teaching, outstanding advising, etc.
3. Educate faculty about effective grading practices. This includes developing and using assignments, exams, and projects to assess learning outcomes. In addition, faculty need to employ other tools besides objective tests and final reports to assess learning. It is more difficult to plagiarize or copy a final paper if the professor has reviewed and provided the student with feedback on drafts of the paper. Tests that include essay questions that ask students to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the evidence and which do not have one right answer provide strong barriers to cheating,
 4. Once all the above pieces are in place, it will be much easier for the institution to develop its own assessment tools to supplement or replace the current reliance on commercial surveys to assess learning outcomes.
 5. Begin to incorporate the development of leadership and integrity in course and program goals and objectives and provide students with the opportunity to practice what they have learned.

Recommendation:

Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning. (Chapter 14 of the Self Study should provide the foundation for such a plan. In addition, the plan should consider the aforementioned suggestions.)