

**Monitoring Report to the  
Commission on Higher Education**

**From**

**The American University of Beirut  
Beirut, Lebanon**

**Prepared by**

**Peter Heath, Provost  
March 20, 2006**

**Subjects of the Report:**

**A. The development and implementation of a comprehensive institutional plan which links long-range planning to decision-making and budgetary processes and assessment results.**

**B. The development and implementation of a written plan for the assessment of student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels.**

**Evaluation Team visit by teleconferencing  
Earl (Tim) Sullivan, Chair  
Provost, American University of Cairo  
March, 2004**

## **I. Topics Covered**

### **A. Institutional planning linking decision-making, budgetary processes, and assessment results**

This report of institutional planning comes in response to the recommendation of the MSCHE Evaluation Team (March, 2004) 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.”

There are several elements in the development of AUB’s working plan, including:

1. Institutionalizing the planning process.
2. Articulating the planning process as an integrated strategic process.
3. Identifying the structures/units which will be the building blocks of the planning process, and will ultimately be defined by the process.
4. Creating a decision-making process for prioritizing initiatives that will enable AUB to establish institution-wide goals, and ultimately, an institutional plan.
5. Effectively linking the strategic planning process with the annual budgeting process.
6. Linking internal assessment and external (positioning) data to the planning process.

AUB has been engaged in developing both the necessary institutional structures and the internal processes required for effective strategic planning since fall 2004. It has also initiated the planning process itself. Strategic planning is now on-going throughout the institution, and it is expected that by Fall of 2008 the University will have an effective institutional, strategic plan that integrates goal-setting, targeted budgeting, improvement, external factors and assessment in an integrated cycle of planning. This report documents AUB’s progress towards the development of such a plan.

### **B. Plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes**

The report of the MSCHE evaluation Team (March, 2004), referring to the chapter on "Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes" (chapter 14 of the institution's Self Study Report), pointed out that "AUB has made an impressive start in assessing learning outcomes." (p.25). The evaluation Team commended AUB "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." (p.25) However, the evaluation Team concluded its report by recommending that AUB should "develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the assessment of student learning." (p. 27 ). Again, prior to developing such a plan, it has been necessary to create the appropriate infrastructures and assess the differing levels of progress on the ground. This has included:

1. Establishing in October, 2004, a Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The establishment of such a center was one of the recommendations that the Task Force on Teaching Excellence, funded by a Mellon foundation grant, made in its first annual report in July, 2000. The Task Team in charge of standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes) in the Self Study report also recommended the establishment of a CTL.
2. Using this Center to build on teaching and learning activities that had been taking place during the previous four years, and to organize new activities on developing and assessing student learning outcomes at the course and program levels.
3. Forming a team of resource persons from the various faculties at the University, including the co-chairs of Task Team 14 in the accreditation Self Study. This team, under the coordination of CTL, was formed in May, 2005 and charged with developing a plan for assessing student learning. The Team's proposed plan was discussed by the Board of Deans (the President's Cabinet) in November, 2005. The Board of Deans embraced the principles of the report.
4. Determining that the approach to be adopted was unified coordination of efforts under the leadership of CTL with recognition that each faculty would have to prepare implementation plans based on their needs and particular state of preparedness. The various faculties at the university are currently at different levels of developing learning outcomes. Faculties seeking accreditation from the appropriate professional accrediting bodies are ahead of other faculties. The CTL is coordinating with individual faculties and using the CTL plan as a framework that will be fitted to meet the specific needs of each faculty.

The details of the current state of planning will be provided below.

## **II. Institutional Update:**

In addition to the two main charges of the MSCHE team evaluation report, details of which will be outlined below, AUB has made good progress on other areas of implementing Self-Study recommendations and has engaged in other initiatives. These are presented briefly below:

**A. Mission:** New focus has been brought to institutional planning by a re-articulation of AUB's mission. In November, 2005, the Board of Trustees approved the following revision of AUB's mission statement:

*The American University of Beirut (AUB) is an institution of higher learning founded to provide excellence in education, to participate in the advancement of knowledge through research, and to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond. Chartered in New York State in 1863, the university bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. The university believes deeply in and encourages freedom of thought and expression and seeks to foster tolerance and respect for diversity and dialogue. Graduates will be individuals committed to creative and critical thinking, life-long learning, personal integrity and civic responsibility, and leadership.*

All faculties and administrative units are adopting mission statements that align with the University's new mission statement. Work also began in the summer of 2005 to have all departments articulate clear goals/objectives/outcomes statements. Follow-up is expected to continue on this project, with completion expected in the next two years.

**B. Institutional Goals:** In February, 2004, President Waterbury delivered a State of the University address (Appendix A) in which he reviewed the progress of the last five years and set forth principles for future planning. In this address he stated that:

*The time has come for AUB to pull all the strands of institutional improvement together in light of our mission statement. It is time to integrate our academic review, the recommendations of the accrediting task teams, the basic elements of the Campus Master Plan, the Service Quality Initiative, and multi-year budget planning into an integrated strategic plan for AUB.*

In this address the President set forth ten strategic goals for the University, which he hoped would provide a framework for all levels of planning. The ten goals are:

- Undergraduate education is and will remain the core of AUB's educational mission. It is at the undergraduate level that we can have the greatest impact on our students' values and cognitive processes. It is at this level that we can truly educate as opposed simply to train and transfer skills.
- Choice and flexibility in course work and the structure of majors must be built into the undergraduate experience. The 'liberal arts' or general education distribution requirements are a major step in this direction.
- AUB is a regional, and one day, I hope, a global university. We have a strategic goal to build a student body that reflects our regional neighborhood as well as the socio-economic conditions of the people who live in it. That kind of diversity is

critical, above all, to the undergraduate experience. Financial aid must be used in part to encourage regional and socio-economic diversity without sacrificing our high academic standards.

- For some years, enrolment should be capped at current levels at the undergraduate level and probably at the graduate level. Our physical carrying capacity is being stretched. Further increases will create demands for classrooms, laboratories, and faculty office space that our capital budget cannot accommodate.
- We cannot meet our educational goals without a world-class faculty. In turn, that faculty must be committed to the proposition that excellent research and superior teaching go hand-in-hand. The University must strive to provide the resources to make both possible, but the faculty must share in the search for outside research funding.
- While strengthening graduate education in general, AUB must re-launch a limited number of PhD programs in the next few years. We must become a university in the full sense of the word. The initial steps may be taken without increasing our graduate student numbers, but rather by shifts between the MA/MS programs and the PhD programs.
- Keeping in mind that the AUBMC exists primarily to fulfill the educational needs of our medical students, it must give equal attention to maintaining its role as the provider of the best patient care available in the Middle East. It must provide patient care at a cost that will allow it to compete effectively in a crowded market for medical services. Because AUBMC accounts for about half of AUB's operating budget, it merits a strategic objective specific to itself.
- All academic units, and some administrative units, must build into their missions a commitment to seek ways to benefit the broad communities in which we live. It is not enough to provide a good education to our students. We must in addition constantly ask ourselves how can we serve our community? The answer to that question will be easier for some units than for others, but all must ask it.
- We must strive to be a model of sustainable urban growth. This means in all aspects of managing our physical plant and protecting our unique landscape and habitat, we must demonstrate best practices in energy and water use, respect for the flora of this and similar regions, and elaborate a habitat management plan that respects natural cycles. AUB's campus is not a park. It is a dynamic, eastern Mediterranean habitat.
- AUB will continue to implement balanced operating budgets. Given the other strategic priorities, this will entail stringent cost controls, increased productivity of non-academic staff, redoubled efforts in fundraising, and continued progress in attracting outside funds for faculty research.

These ten goals have provided the context within which strategic planning has proceeded in the last year and a half.

**C. PhD programs:** AUB is currently working to renew its engagement in PhD level of education. The University had offered Programs leading to Ph.D. degrees prior to the Lebanese Civil War. It has been planning since 2001 on renewing its commitment to this level of education. In 2001-02, President Waterbury appointed a senior ad hoc committee to review departmental readiness for resuming or starting Ph.D. programs. This committee reported that it found six departments as having the quality necessary to begin programs. In the past few years these departments, two in Engineering and Architecture and four in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, have worked to develop proposals sufficient to secure internal university agreement at the level of the Faculty/School and the university-wide Board of Graduate Studies. They have also worked to fulfill the stringent requirements of the New York State Education Department (NYSED). These requirements entail having site visits for each proposed program by two external senior faculty approved by NYSED, preparing an institutional readiness report, and organizing the site visit of a senior institutional review team of individuals to assess the University's readiness to initiate such programs. In January, 2006, a "Report for New York State Education Department: Assessment of AUB's Readiness for the PhD level" (Appendix B) was distributed on campus. In early March a review team of five senior academic administrators from universities in the U.S. visited the Beirut campus to evaluate the University's institutional "readiness" for PhD programs according to the requirements of the New York State Education Department. It is expected that the recommendation of the visiting team, and the report itself will be submitted to NYSED for approval before the end of March, 2006. Should AUB's proposal be approved, and AUB considered to be ready to take this important step, another dimension will be added to the strategic planning process that will affect policy, decision-making, and budget planning.

**D. Other changes** made to date as a result of AUB's MSCHE Self Study process and evaluation are included in The Accreditation Status Report, July 2005 (Appendix D), which may be accessed at this website: <http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~webaccr/documents.htm>. These reports are annual assessments carried out by AUB's Office of institutional Research and Assessment to ensure that the University monitors its progress in implementing the Self-Study recommendations. This July 2005 report should be updated in regard to two important advances: the approval last fall of the new mission statement, and the finalization of the CTL Plan for developing and assessing learning outcomes that was completed and discussed by the BOD in November, 2005. The CTL is currently involved in further identifying the extent to which faculties seeking to be accredited by the appropriate professional accrediting associations may have already developed learning outcomes assessment plans specific to their needs but consistent with the overall plan of the institution. The

CTL is also engaged in active discussion with other faculties and schools to adapt its plan to address the learning outcomes needs of faculties and programs not already involved in professional accreditation processes.

### **III. Strategic Planning: Progress to date**

#### **A. Institutional planning linking decision-making, budgetary processes, and assessment results**

1. The Office of Institutional Planning and Process Improvement (IPPI), a new in-house unit was created in June 2004 to promote cross-dialogue among planning units at AUB and to be a coordinating unit to collect, assimilate, and reconcile planning at all levels. A full-time Director was appointed to design and facilitate the process. He has developed and distributed a strategic planning guide to all academic and administrative planning units. The Guide for Developing Academic and Administrative Strategic Plans (Appendix C) is now being used by planning units, at various stages of planning and integration, towards the development of an institutional plan.

The strategy for planning at AUB, as outlined in the guide, is to develop an institutional strategic plan that ultimately takes its shape from the University's mission, and from the ten strategic goals outlined by President Waterbury. The ten goals have been communicated to all academic and administrative planning units in the expectation that each unit will raise the issues that apply to it and recommend initiatives appropriate to its function. The process thus invites stakeholders (faculty, administrative personnel) to participate in developing initiatives of importance to them.

Once the initiatives of the basic units (planning committees, departments, faculties, administrative offices, services) have been proposed, along with prospective budgets for each initiative, they are sent to a small team of "neutral" administrators for the process of culling and prioritization. The selected initiatives are then passed to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC), a university-wide body, which recommends a final priority of initiatives. The Board of Trustees then receives the initiatives and approves/amends them.

After the strategic initiatives have been identified on the committee level, the budgeting process is applied. The institutional long-term plan can then be refined and the annual institutional plan begins to take shape. The final plans will also reflect the SPSC's and the Board of Trustees' best assessment of AUB's external positioning and the state of the University's internal functioning.

2. Decision-making is linked with budgetary processes. IPPI's formation serves to advance the university towards its strategic planning goals and the alignment of priorities. The next step, however, must directly address the funding of prioritized initiatives: resource allocation and relevant changes to the budget

process. A very large “wish list” of initiatives must be transformed into a manageable plan that can be implemented within reasonable budgetary parameters.

In the past, AUB's financial planning process was a bottoms-up approach whereby deans and heads of operating units negotiated for operational funding on the basis of historical spending rates and new proposals as they arose. The new strategic planning process at AUB will now provide a method whereby all new proposals are identified, reviewed, and prioritized in a common and transparent manner. The highest priority initiatives will receive funding first, with the cut-off occurring when resources are expended. The strategic plan will thus drive the budgetary decision-making process—not the other way around.

In the proposed process, each unit's strategic plan will have a unified template that shows prioritized initiatives with the corresponding impact in dollars per area of responsibility. This will help the university to quantify the scale of funding needed for its strategic initiatives. In addition, AUB's Office of Financial Planning and Budget has introduced, in the 2005/06 operating budget cycle, a new budgeting methodology known as Target Base Budgeting (TBB). The elements of TBB allow for greater flexibility for area managers in terms of how they are allowed to spend university funds. TBB also allows the University's Budget Committee greater influence in restricting funding for current operations. In essence, a target amount is given to individual academic and operating units that must be met for the upcoming budget period. Using this method, financial resources can be redeployed by the Budget Committee from existing programs of lesser priorities.

In its second year of implementation (2006-2007), TBB will be an integral part of the financial planning process for restricting discretionary spending across the organization as a whole. It is expected that funds can then be made available to finance key strategic initiatives, such as the proposed PhD programs.

In sum, the strategic planning process is well underway at AUB, and the necessary steps to link the financial planning process with strategic planning are also progressing. AUB's strategic plan is expected to be ready in late 2006. And so the University's budget process will be formally guided by the strategic plan in the 2007-2008 budgetary cycle. By that time the two processes—strategic planning and budgeting-- should be defined and prepared for full linkage.

**3. Institutional assessment data is important to the cycle of planning.** The University recognizes the importance of on-going assessment at all levels. However, this aspect of the strategic planning process needs to be more fully researched and developed. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) is now working closely with the IPPI and coordinating with the planning process. Assessment data is being generated systematically and professionally, as seen in OIRA's Accreditation Status Report, 2005 (Appendix C). As the

strategic plan itself takes shape and defines strategic directions, so the kind of data needed for assessment will become clearer and the standards for improving the process will be more closely defined. The linking of OIRA to planning and budgetary considerations will create a synergy for institutional excellence and a basis for the integrity of strategic planning.

**4. An integrated strategic planning structure** has been instituted, and includes the following elements at this time:

**a.** A Board of Trustees subcommittee for “Strategic Planning Oversight” was established in fall 2004 and meets at each of the Board's three annual meetings.

**b.** The *Strategic Planning Steering Committee* (SPSC) plays a primary role in the planning process. The SPSC is the senior body that decides which initiatives to fund, which initiatives to refer to the Development Office for the pursuit of funding, and which initiatives cannot be pursued at this time. There will be formal feedback to the unit-level planning teams from the SPSC regarding plan content and areas of approval. The SPSC is chaired by the President of the University and has the following membership: The provost, all deans, all vice presidents, the deputy vice president for human resources, the internal auditor, the director of Institutional Planning and Process Improvement (IPPI), the comptroller, and appointed Senate and student representatives.

**c.** A small “neutral” team, in process of taking shape, will be named to manage the first stage of culling and prioritizing initiatives. The team is expected play a key role in shaping the list of initiatives to be proposed to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

**d.** The IPPI has been created and has established links with the Office of Financial Planning and Budget, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Facilities Planning and Design Unit. The IPPI also provides for linkages with the annual operating and capital budgeting processes. Members of IPPI attend meetings of the various planning teams and act as facilitators for the development of the plans.

**e.** Four institution-wide planning committees were created to discuss and prioritize cross-functional university issues. These committees met and completed their work in AY 2004-2005. A fifth committee studied AUB's position within its regional, educational environment. This Positioning Committee will be on-going until the planning cycle comes to a close.

**f.** Seventeen Strategic Planning Teams were created for all of the academic units and the major administrative support units. In AY 2005-2006 these units have been working towards developing strategic plans and identifying initiatives

for their areas to fit within the broader university context. Seven committees have submitted final reports by March 31, and the remaining ten will submit by end of June 2006

**5. Preparation and guidelines for planning:**

- a.** A series of planning workshops, held by the IPPI in the spring of 2005, informed senior leaders and unit-level planning teams of the progress, status and direction of the University's strategic planning process. These workshops occurred during the spring of 2005 and addressed the following topics:
- A review of the process and timetable for preparing the Faculty / Functional Unit strategic plans;
  - A discussion of ways to foster full faculty and staff input into the planning process;
  - A description of the resources available to support the generation and development of promising ideas and projects;
  - A description of the process for reviewing and funding initiatives (unit specific and cross-unit) which exceed organizational units' current operational budgets;
  - A review of the linkage between the Strategic Planning and the Balanced Scorecard initiatives;
  - A review of the linkage between the Strategic Planning and the Annual Budgeting processes.

**b.** A clear system for establishing and communicating unit and university-wide objectives/targets is being instituted. Every unit at AUB has made recommendations for strategic initiatives. All units will eventually have key performance indicators (KPIs) for their objectives, which will be the measure of each unit's progress towards the achievement of its goals.

They provide a transparency to the planning process, and a means by which every unit becomes accountable to the planning process.

**6. Planning activity to date:**

**a.** Four key cross-functional or institution-wide strategic issues were identified as being central to the process of developing initiatives to achieve AUB's strategic goals and guidelines. These four are:

- Enrollment Management
- Graduate Education & Research
- General Education
- Information Technology

In AY 2004-2005 each of these cross-functional/institution-wide strategic issues was discussed and analyzed by a committee which met for the entire year. The

work of the committees has enabled the academic and administrative units, in the next step of the process, to develop plans that are aligned with each other instead of being in conflict. A summary of the four committees' final reports is appended (Appendix E). The reports have been reviewed by the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and their recommendations are available to the planning teams of all faculties/schools and key administrative units that will be completing strategic plans.

A fifth committee, "the Positioning Committee", was formed to study various issues of the external, regional environment in so far as they relate to long-range strategic planning at AUB.

**b.** In AY 2005-2006 17 planning units, including all faculties/schools and key administrative units, were mobilized to complete individual strategic plans. Their work has proceeded with guidance from the recommendations of the four strategic (cross-functional) committees which met in the previous year. The academic and administrative planning units are:

Faculty of Arts & Sciences  
Faculty of Engineering & Architecture  
Faculty of Medicine  
School of Nursing  
Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
Olayan School of Business

Finance Group  
Physical Plant  
Business Services  
Human Resources  
Office of Development  
Regional External Programs  
Student affairs  
University Libraries  
Office of Institutional Research & Assessment  
Facilities Planning and Development Unit

Strategic plans for the AUB Medical Center follow a separate but compatible process.

A common planning guide, including templates and processes for developing strategic plans (Appendix C) was distributed to the 17 units, so that uniformity of method could facilitate the analysis of related initiatives and their costs. A schedule for the completion of the various stages of the AUB's Institutional Strategic Plan is found on page 17 of the planning guide (Appendix C).

## **B. Summary of Actions Taken/Implemented in the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

In this section, reporting will follow two venues (1) Learning Outcomes Activities implemented by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and (2) learning outcomes activities taken by Faculties at AUB.

### **1. Learning outcomes activities implemented by the CTL**

#### **a. *Offering seminars on developing and assessing learning outcomes at the course and program levels***

Between the academic year 2002/2003 and 2004/2005, four seminars on developing learning outcomes at the program and course levels were offered to AUB faculty, and two seminars were given on assessing learning outcomes at the program and course levels. Each seminar was scheduled for 4 hours. In addition, a 2-hour session on these topics was included as part of the Faculty Seminar on Teaching and Learning Excellence design. The Mellon summer seminar on *Creative Use of Resources in Course Design* incorporated one-third of its components to developing course learning outcomes based on program learning outcomes and faculty mission. Participants in all the aforementioned seminars were from the different faculties at AUB (Appendix F). Facilitators of these seminars based their work on alignment between AUB mission, program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes; they demonstrated methods of generating “observable and measurable” learning outcomes and provided samples and rationale for using specific assessment tools. Participant evaluation of all the above seminars indicate a genuine need for providing faculty with further help in this area.

#### **b. Preparing a 2-year plan for developing and assessing learning outcomes at the course and program levels**

The purpose of this plan (Appendix G), as proposed by the CTL, was to provide AUB community at large with resources, seminars, individual consultations on how to develop and assess program and course learning outcomes. The plan takes into consideration where Faculties and Schools are in the process of developing their program and course learning outcomes and thus caters to their needs rather than just offer seminars that may be generic enough to fit all but not necessarily address the specific program needs. In order to achieve this objective, a committee of eight members was formed; the members are: Thuraya Arayssi, FM; Saouma Boujaoude, FAS; Amal BouZeineddine, FAS + CTL; Nisreen Ghaddar, FEA; Marjorie Henningsen, FAS; Murad Jurdak, FAS; Fadl Moukalled, FEA; Waddah Nasr ( as an observer and in his capacity of Interim Director of the CTL). The Committee was charged with

- writing a concept paper which argues for developing and assessing program and course learning outcomes; (Appendix H)
- preparing a 2-year plan for developing and assessing program and course learning outcomes;

- developing resource handbooks one on developing and assessing program learning outcomes, the other, on developing and assessing course learning outcomes. (Handbooks on developing program and course learning outcomes are available upon Request)

Faculty deans, program directors, department chairs and faculty members will be involved in this plan as the decision makers and primary beneficiaries of promoting teaching and learning excellence at AUB. It is hoped that this venue will focus on student performance and promote learning excellence at AUB.

## 2. Learning outcomes activities taken by Faculties at AUB

The CTL has been in touch with the six Faculties and the School of Nursing at AUB to learn more about their activities concerning developing program and course learning outcomes. In summary, faculties are working diligently on this matter either for faculty accreditation [Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (FEA), Faculty of Medicine (FM), Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB) and School of Nursing (SN)] and/or the pedagogical soundness of developing learning outcomes [Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), and Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS)]. It is important to note here that all Faculties have asserted that such self-study exercise should assist in assessing set expectations from a program, course, and student performance.

Faculties at AUB are at different levels of developing learning outcomes; some are at the final stages (FEA, SN), others have developed the plan and are at the onset of implementation (FHS, OSB), while others are reviewing an adapted version of the CTL plan to fit the Faculty needs (FAFS, FAS). Since faculties are currently at a different pace in generating program and course learning outcomes, their timelines vary; however, in their proposed plans, an approximate time to accomplish the task ranges from 9 months to 2 years.

The course of action which has been adopted to develop program and course learning outcomes also varies from one faculty to another. The FEA followed the ABET standards, except for two departments who have just begun the process, the Department of Architecture using NAAB standards and Graphic Design, using NASAD standards; the OSB used the AACSB guidelines; the FHS based its plan on documents prepared by the University Learning Outcomes Committee in the faculty itself; FAS is reviewing a modified version of the CTL plan (Appendix I), modified by four FAS members who worked on the CTL plan and handbooks; SN relied mostly on National League of Nursing criteria; FM is using its professional accreditation standards; the course of action in FAFS varied from initiating the process through the chair of the department who developed the program learning outcomes, circulated them to the faculty, got feedback and finalized them based on these comments; to initiating the course of action through coordinators who developed program learning outcomes as is the case

in Agriculture. All learning outcomes were approved by the FAFS Academic and Curriculum Committee.

### **3. Planned additional key actions of student learning outcomes**

At this point, CTL is planning to meet with each Faculty dean to discuss possible methods of integrating their work with the CTL proposed plan. These methods could be in the form of

- scheduling consultation sessions with committees working on program course learning outcomes and/or faculty members working on course learning outcomes;
- offering seminars that address specific needs of committees working on program course learning outcomes and/or faculty members working on course learning outcomes;
- modifying the CTL plan in such a way that it would meet department and /or faculty needs;
- reviewing already developed learning outcomes at the program and course learning outcomes;
- negotiating establishing a resource team for the tasks delineated in this section keeping in mind compensation for the work they do.

## **IV. Conclusions**

### **A. The development and implementation of a comprehensive institutional plan which links long-range planning to decision-making and budgetary processes and assessment results.**

AUB has made careful, steady progress towards its goal of developing a long-range institutional plan which links to decision-making at several levels, and to budgetary processes and assessment data. The University has shown considerable commitment to achieving this goal by creating the Office of Institutional Planning and Process Improvement, and by giving its Director full support to guide and direct a process that will bear the fruit of a fully developed strategic institutional plan in late 2006.

The strategy for developing the plan has worked well and within the expected time frame, despite the complexity of the effort. In 2004, the President's ten goals for AUB became the basic building blocks for the plan. The first planning phase (AY 2004-2005) saw four committees meeting to raise institution-wide issues. Their recommendations informed the work of the 17 planning units who then developed their individual plans and initiatives. The work of this phase will be complete in June, 2006.

The next step for AUB will be to prioritize the initiatives which will come from the 17 units. That will, perhaps, be the most challenging part of the process, which will then yield the University's full institutional strategic plan. And as the plan

becomes clearer, the role of assessment, showing how well the University is meeting its objectives, will become important.

While the planning process was being developed in AY 2005-2006, a new budgetary system was introduced that will become linked to strategic planning and will be fully functional in the cycle for AY 2007-2008. In linking the two processes, strategic planning and budget planning will become more transparent, and will be accountable to the common goals of the AUB. When this becomes evident in a working reality, the real benefits of planning strategically will be felt at all levels of the University.

**B. The development and implementation of a written plan for the assessment of student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels.**

During the initial stages of the institutional accreditation process, responding adequately to the emphasis that the accrediting association placed on assessment of outcomes was a major concern for the AUB. Since November 2000, when AUB submitted to the MSCHE materials for the pre-application review, the university has made significant progress in addressing this concern. The progress lies primarily in a clearer and more realistic understanding of what still needs to be done to firmly establish a culture of continuous assessment of learning outcomes and of using the results of this assessment for further improvement. We need to further involve faculty members and academic departments and help them assume ownership of the outcomes assessment process. This requires not only identifying measurable learning outcomes at the level of programs and the level of courses, but also developing an effective assessment loop that will continuously promote evaluation of these outcomes.

It is obvious that faculty members who are part of the process of seeking professional accreditation are, on the whole, considerably ahead of and more motivated than colleagues in programs not currently seeking accreditation. Moreover, the effort to reach faculty members and help them understand the nature of learning outcomes assessment and appreciate its benefits requires planning and commitment of resources over time. Different faculties and academic units are at different stages along the way to establish a culture of continuous assessment of learning outcomes. It is important to identify the needs of the various academic units and to address them accordingly. Academic programs not currently involved in seeking professional accreditation may need to undergo more intensive self study and review. Even so, considerable progress has been made overall and a unified approach to planning and implementation is in place.

## **Appendix**

- A. State of the University, 2004**
- B. Report for NYSED: Readiness for PhD**
- C. Guide for Developing Academic and Administrative Strategic Plans**
- D. Accreditation Status Report, July 2005**
- E. Summaries of Final Reports: Strategic Planning Committees  
2004-2005**
- F. Participants in Faculty Seminars**
- G. Learning Outcomes Implementation Plan**
- H. Concept Paper: Learning Outcomes**
- I. FAS Learning Outcomes Plan**