

American University of Beirut
Institutional Self-Study
Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and
Schools

Executive Summary

AUB's current effort to attain accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is a major step in an on-going process to improve and sustain the quality and integrity of the University's academic programs and services. The intensive process of self-study has built upon previous initiatives undertaken in the past six years and detailed in the Introduction of the report. The Commission's standards and design for self-study have provided new structure and rigor for focus, review, and evaluation. The Commission asserts that "the self-study ...is the most important and valuable aspect of the accrediting process, and the benefits it brings to the institution are proportional to the incisiveness of its inquiry." The document produced here speaks for itself as to the depth of the inquiry and the importance of the self-study for the present and future of AUB.

The completion of this Institutional Self-Study Report represents the culmination of an enormously valuable process which has involved more than 200 individuals, including trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, working on 14 Task Teams. It also reflects the views and opinions of the many other members of the AUB community who were consulted, interviewed, and/or surveyed during the course of the self-study. The self-study for accreditation was initiated by President John Waterbury and led by Provost Peter Heath, who is responsible for the preparation of this report. Dr. Heath was advised and aided by Associate Provost Waddah Nasr, Consultant Elizabeth Vermey, and the Self-Study Steering Committee representing the chairs and co-chairs of each of the 14 Task Teams. (See Appendix A for membership of the Steering Committee and Task Teams).

AUB has chosen to use the Comprehensive Model as described in the "*Designs for Excellence*" (MSCHE) in its approach to self-study. This has allowed the University to continue the process of institutional self-assessment begun in 1997 with the greatest latitude. Furthermore, because this is AUB's first application for accreditation from the Middle States Commission, it was believed that the approach to institutional assessment should be as broad and encompassing as possible. Adopting the Comprehensive Model has allowed AUB considerable scope to examine and evaluate its goals, successes, and challenges in ways that will allow the University to move forward confidently.

Goals of the Self-Study

AUB has engaged in close self-examination and analysis across a broad spectrum of university life, with the purposes of reviewing its standards, performance, and accountability and of making specific recommendations for the future. The following goals were established as being of particular concern for AUB at this point in its history. The self-study was guided by these goals:

1. The mission statement should inform the University's policies and practices, in particular its emphasis on AUB's regional role as a teaching-centered research university serving the needs of diverse learning communities.
2. The conditions and policies needed to implement the mission, goals, and objectives of the University should be addressed.
3. Outcomes assessment should be prescribed and described.
4. Allocation of resources should be applied to long-term planning.

5. Issues of intellectual climate, collegiality, and sense of community should be addressed.

Organization of the Report

AUB's self-study has been organized to follow sequentially the fourteen areas of study set forth in the *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education* (MSCHE). Each chapter of the report studies one of the fourteen areas examined, as listed below:

<u>Institutional Context</u>	<u>Educational Effectiveness</u>
I. Mission, Goals and Objectives	VIII. Student Admissions
II. Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal	IX. Student Support Services
III. Institutional Resources	X. Faculty
IV. Leadership and Governance	XI. Educational Offerings
V. Administration	XII. General Education
VI. Integrity	XIII. Related Educational Activities
VII. Institutional Assessment	XIV. Assessment of Student Learning

Conducting the Self-Study

The current self-study is the result of great effort over a period of three and a half years, beginning in the Spring of 2001 with the formation of the Self-Study Design Committee. By October of 2001 the Steering Committee had been selected. The fourteen Task Teams were formed between October, 2001 and February of 2002. By the Spring of 2002, the work of the Task Teams was well underway. The first drafts of their findings and recommendations were submitted for review to the Steering Committee in March, 2003. Report revisions and updates continued into the Spring of 2003, and by the beginning of the summer an editing team had taken over to produce the Institutional Self-Study Report. The work of each Task Team is represented by a chapter in the final report. Each chapter received careful review by Task Teams during the editing process. In the Fall of 2003 the Steering Committee reviewed the whole document, giving its approval in November, 2003. The Report was made available to the AUB community for review in December, 2003. It was then revised for a final time and sent to the Visiting Team and the Commission on Higher Education in January, 2004. The current document has been reviewed by the President, and endorsed by the Provost and the Steering Committee.

Recommendations of the Study

The recommendations of the self-study are presented as they were formulated by the individual Task Teams. They are found at the end of each chapter and will not be highlighted in this summary. Because the scope of this assessment is so broad, the Steering Committee wishes to present them in their entirety. Close examination and prioritization of the recommendations has already begun in the appropriate administrative groups and will continue into the next phase of AUB's planning process.

With this document and all that it represents, AUB has taken a significant step forward in the understanding of its present strengths and challenges. The planning process

itself is evolving rapidly to move the University closer to realizing the full potential of its educational mission.