

Report to the  
Faculty, Administration, Trustees and Students  
of

**THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**  
**Bliss Street, P.O Box 11-236**  
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**New York, NY 10017-2303**

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 to the campus on March 1-4, 2009**

**The Members of the Team:**

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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

President

Peter F. Dorman

Chief Academic Office:

Acting Provost

Waddah Nasr

Chair of the Board of Trustees:

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## **I. Context and Nature of the visit**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is the oldest American university in the Middle East. AUB began offering classes under the name of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866 and the name was changed to the American University of Beirut in 1920. Middle States accredited AUB for the first time in 2004. AUB has recently experienced a change in leadership, with a new president, a relatively new chair of the Board of Trustees and at the time of the team visit was searching for a new provost, a new dean of the AUB Medical Center/Faculty of Medicine, (AUBMC/FM) and a new dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. At the time of the visit the University had approximately 7300 students (6060 undergraduates, 1240 graduates). Middle States approved new PhD programs as a substantive change in April 2008. Most of the educational activities of the University are offered on the historic campus of the University located in Ras Beirut. A master plan for the development of the campus was completed early in this century and the university has implemented a number of the recommendations in this plan, most notably the completion of a new athletic facility on the lower campus. A new building for the Faculty of Business is nearing completion. In addition to the downtown campus, AUB has a site in the Beqaa Valley where additional classes are offered, primarily by the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences. The chair of the Middle States evaluation team visited this site during his visit to the University in October 2008 and found it to be in good operating condition. In addition to accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) have accredited AUB professional programs.

## **II. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Eligibility Requirements**

Based on a review of the self-study, interviews, the certification statement supplied by the institution and other institutional documents, the team affirms that the institution continues to meet the eligibility requirements in *Characteristics of Excellence*.

## **III. Compliance with Federal Requirements. Issues relative to State Regulatory or other accrediting Agency Requirements**

The team is not aware of any issues relative to federal or state regulatory requirements or the institution's status with other accrediting agencies.

## **IV. Evaluation Overview**

The team concluded that the American University of Beirut meets all fourteen standards for accreditation established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

The American University of Beirut is **commended** for the quality and honesty of the Self-Study; for its strategic planning framework, which has often taken place in a challenging external framework; for prudent accounting and maintaining financial health; for its commitment to a more inclusive system of governance and to the necessary transparency that this will entail to ensure the vitality of the institution for the future; for the construction of the new athletic facility; for its commitment to increased diversity in the student body and the high rate of female enrolment; for its

historic and continuing commitment to general education; for the completion and implementation of the five-year strategic plan for regional external programs, and for successfully exceeding its target levels in 2007; for the creation of a pilot Writing Center to support the academic writing skills of AUB undergraduate and graduate students; for the continuing efforts exerted to meet the recommendation of the previous self study and the suggestions of the accreditation report. The team also noted that AUB has made commendable progress since initial accreditation in assessing learning outcomes.

## **V. Compliance with accreditation Standards**

### **Chapter One: Mission, Goals, Objectives and Integrity**

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard One: Mission, Goals and Objectives

Standard Six: Integrity

The institution meets these standards.

#### **MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

##### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

In line with the recommendation of the MSCHE evaluation team in 2004, AUB revised its mission statement in 2005 and it is clearly stated and accessible in print and on line. The revised mission is inline with AUB's history and reflects greater balance between teaching and research and implies the future goals and direction for AUB. The Self-Study recommends that the current statement be further revised to include "a more emphatic reference to the development of the moral character of students in AUB's mission statement." (p. 9) Since the promulgation of the new mission statement, AUB has encouraged all six Faculties and other units to develop mission statements and to align them with the University's mission statement. There is evidence that attempts are being made to deliberately integrate the mission at the academic unit level so that it becomes operational for all of the University constituencies. As part of this process, departments that do not already have them are also working to develop "program learning outcomes." Efforts are underway to align resource allocation with mission and goals, but several deans disputed the result of this exercise "who indicated that they were not involved or consulted in the process of university-wide budget allocation and prioritization despite being the primary custodians of academic programs at their facilities." (pp. 7-8)

Evidence that there are positive outcomes in advancing the mission is demonstrated in admissions practices, scholarly production of faculty, and a commitment to quality teaching and student engagement in their own learning. Curriculum development and initiation of new programs as well as specialized accreditation activities within the professional schools (CCNE, ABET, AACSB) confirm this movement toward stated outcomes and goal attainment. Continued attention to assessment of learning outcomes and use of data yielded from Key Performance Indicators is encouraged.

Discussion with faculty and senior administrative leaders concerning the introduction of seven new doctoral programs and the reinstatement of an eighth, confirms the increased emphasis on scholarship and research across the University. There is awareness of the potential impact of these new programs on undergraduate and

existing graduate programs as well as the opportunities they present.

*Commendation:* The AUB faculty are commended for maintaining their strong commitment to general education in the liberal arts and sciences for all undergraduate students and for recognizing their importance in the education of the whole person, irrespective of disciplinary or professional major.

*Suggestion*

The team strongly encourages AUB to develop mechanisms that would assist all units of the University to continuously clarify, reinforce and monitor implementation of the revised mission and periodically and systematically assess the effectiveness of efforts to attain outcomes that meet its spirit and intention.

**INTEGRITY**

*Summary of Evidence and Findings*

The high value placed on integrity in the many aspects of university life appears to be in evidence among the various AUB constituencies and in the activities in which they engage. Perceptions differ concerning the degree of consistency with which implementation of existing policies and procedures are practiced and the degree to which decision making is influenced by faculty and some groups of staff or shared with senior administrators.

In the area of student admissions, policies and procedures demonstrate compliance with non-discrimination, especially in relation to preferential admission of students from “feeder schools”. The establishment (2004) of the UAC, an admissions policy committee with representation from major various academic programs is regarded by faculty and administrators as a successful strategy to apply a common set of admissions procedures and to coordinate the process across undergraduate programs at AUB.

Faculty confirm that measures to address academic integrity among students are being implemented and have assisted in improving and contributing to an improved culture of academic honesty. Methods used to acquaint students with policies and expected ethical behavior, as well as education concerning what constitutes violation of academic integrity continues to be a priority and area for continued effort. Methods available to faculty to detect infractions, are being applied and some faculty report that there has been less evidence of these problems since these means have been employed.

Faculty express concerns regarding the degree of transparency in decision-making their role in various aspects of academic life related to shared governance, and consequences that affect their careers, and academic programs in which they teach. Faculty selection and appointment, promotion decisions, resource allocation and input into decisions concerning initiation of new programs were identified.

Strengthening collegiality among faculty, chairs and deans emerges as a consistent and critical need. Development of chairpersons and greater involvement of them and faculty emerge as important considerations in efforts to positively and substantively expand communications and decision-making among these groups and to encourage a culture of increased, empowerment and transparency.

## **Chapter Two: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal and Resources**

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard Two: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

Standard Three: Resources

The institution meets these standards.

### **PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Based on a documentary review and through meetings with the President, the Provost, various deans, departmental chairs, and individual faculty and staff we note several key findings. Since its initial accreditation in 2004, AUB has embarked on a series of initiatives to improve the process of planning, resource allocation, and institutional renewal. Among them we cite two notable achievements: 1. Crafting of a 2004 comprehensive integrative strategic plan that utilizes key performance indicators (KPI's) to measure progress in achieving objectives relative to the overall mission of the institution; 2. Adoption of a new software program (BSC) that will enable constituent units linked to the Office of Strategy Management to generate and consume data across various institutional units to improve the level of transparency in pursuit of the AUB mission and objectives; 3. Pursuit of flexible funding alternatives in light of the recent downturn in global financial markets, in particular the mix of debt, new donor support, and possible asset conversions to maintain and meet current obligations. Currently, AUB is in the process of revising its strategic planning to incorporate revisions in its KPI's and the adoption of a balanced scorecard (BSC) methodology to better achieve its objectives.

*Commendation:* We commend AUB for its adoption of a strategic planning framework to guide the institution, in particular the issuance of an October 1, 2008 Terms of Reference document that stipulates the framework through which strategic planning is to be implemented. We note that AUB's pursuit of strategic planning often has taken place in an uncertain external environment, but has remained steadfast in its efforts to assist the institution in the process of resource allocation and institutional renewal. In particular, AUB's endowment is still relatively healthy even in the present turmoil in the global market economy. Moreover, AUB's relatively low level of debt is a notable reflection of prudential financial management practices by the institution.

#### *Suggestions*

1. AUB should consider a more rapid implementation of its budgeting and reporting processes to various stakeholders on whom the success in achieving its key performance indicators is essential. This includes not just the Board of Trustees and key administrators, but also faculty and staff. This process could be improved by posting of various documents on the AUB website in addition to hard copies and email.
2. The use of the balanced scorecard methodology in the implementation of key performance indicator reviews is an important step to improve the process of institutional renewal. However, we did not see an obvious linkage between the use

of this methodology and the preparation and implementation of annual operating and capital budgets of the institution. We cite the recent decision to recommend re-introduction of several Ph.D. programs at AUB, but for which there appears to have been inadequate budgetary consideration in the case of the need for new facilities for engineering, for example. Rather than proceed with an ad hoc funding decision regarding the Ph.D. program in engineering, it would be useful to consider how the achievement of various KPI's informs the budgetary process in a process of continuing feedback between institutional objectives and resource allocation decisions. To do so will require that the selection of KPI's involve not just a process of vertical decisions, but also lateral ones that can enable the institution to develop in a more coherent fashion and for which various stakeholders can be consulted in a timely fashion.

3. AUB has invested considerable responsibility at the Dean, Provost, and Administrative VP levels for the crafting of divisional and departmental budgets, In order to improve stakeholder ownership, AUB should consider greater decentralization and involvement of faculty and departmental chairs in the formulation of KPI's and in the preparation of budgetary proposals that constitute the basis for the annual operating and capital project budgets.
4. AUB's capital budgeting processes should consider implementation of a regular process of facilities maintenance and upgrading. To do so, some allowance should be made for the age and condition of existing facilities, consistent with given utilization rates by students, faculty, and staff, with due consideration of temporary replacement facilities as existing facilities undergo maintenance and renovation.

### **INSTITUTION RESOURCES**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Based on a documentary review and meetings with the VP for Finance and the VP for Auxiliary Facilities, we note the following findings. Despite the recent decline in global financial markets, AUB's endowment, tuition, and hospital fees appear sufficient to enable the institution to meet its current and evolving needs relative to the mission and objectives of the institution. Although endowment has declined by some twenty-one percent since June of 2008, endowment income currently funds less than ten percent of the AUB operating budget. To prevent excessive increases in tuition to offset the loss of endowment income, AUB has embarked in a process of seeking greater donor contributions, expanded grant initiatives, a modest increase in borrowing, and the conversion of property assets to generate essential funding for the University.

Apart of the US\$ 25 million term loan of FY 2003, the University entered into a credit agreement in December 2007 that allows borrowing of up to US\$ 50 million in connection with various construction and renovation projects, out of which the University has drawn down US\$ 11 million through August 2008; The credit is secured by a pledge of certain securities.

#### *Commendations*

1. We commend AUB for its maintenance of financial health in an uncertain operating environment.

2. We commend AUB for its adherence to prudent accounting standards.

### *Suggestions*

1. Adopt measures that set limits to deferred maintenance in light of future versus present costs to various facilities
2. Create greater transparency in the preparation of budgets consistent with the goal of improved stakeholder buy-in and a more inclusive governance of the institution, as cited in standard two. To do so, consider a closer linkage between the crafting of key performance indicators and the adoption of operating and capital budgeting decisions.
3. Consider the expansion of continuing education to generate additional sources of revenue for the institution, building on the strengths of existing programs begun in 1982 and which now operate through the Regional External Program framework.
4. Consider selectively expanding outsourcing of some University functions to achieve savings for the institution. To do so, consider the use of key performance indicators and survey satisfaction measures to determine initial possible outsourcing choices and then, through a broadly transparent process, utilize competitive bidding performance contracts to determine successful outsourcing contracts that are reviewed on a periodic basis.
5. Consider the creation of a capital campaign that will sustain AUB's reputation and vision of global and regional leadership in teaching and research over the next ten years. The goal of the campaign would be to guarantee the essential renewal and expansion of existing capital equipment and facilities, endow faculty chairs, reward faculty teaching, research and community service, expand the level of financial aid to broaden the diversity of the AUB student population, ensure the health of its doctoral programs, and enable the institution to ensure its leadership role in the region.
6. We recommend close monitoring of the current value of securities, and that this be done in conjunction with a continuous revision of planning priorities and the timetable for execution. We view this as an important step to avoid unnecessary taxation on future generations, particularly in light of recent declines in AUB's endowment.
7. We urge AUB to pay immediate attention to the negative cash flow registered over the past three years (2005 through 2007). The deterioration in net results carries growing risks in terms of the institution's capital budget projections.
8. We suggest a close monitoring of endowment performance and investment returns that can enable a timely adjustment to the operating and capital budgets of the institution.
9. We urge careful consideration of the number of task force and committees created to address these issues.

### **Chapter Three: Leadership, Governance and Administration**

This chapter covers the following standards:  
Standard Four: Leadership and Governance  
Standard Five: Administration

The institution meets these standards.

### **LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

It is clear that AUB has made progress in clarifying and improving governance in recent years. The University has a governance structure similar to that of many other private American colleges and universities. Overall responsibility for the University rests with an independent and very active Board of Trustees (BOT) who appoint the president and are responsible for the “University’s property, endowment and mission.” (p. 32) Key governance bodies include the Board of Deans (BOD), which includes the provost, all deans and vice presidents, and is chaired by the president. Vice Presidents do not vote on academic questions. The University Senate is also chaired by the president and includes elected members from each of the Faculties plus the vice presidents, who are non-voting.

Following the initial accreditation of the University, AUB made organizational changes that were intended to improve governance and communication. The president has a cabinet composed of the vice presidents in order to “improve administrative alignment and communication” (Self-Study, p 34) and AUB also established the Worldwide Alumni Association of the American University of Beirut (WAAAUB). Among other roles, the WAAAUB nominates three alumni to serve on the university’s BOT. The By-laws of the University have been revised three times since AUB’s initial accreditation in 2004, most notably to enlarge the BOT and to provide for representation on the BOT by the WAAAUB. The BOT also revised its orientation for new members “and implemented a stricter conflict of interest policy and code of conduct for trustees.” (p. 35) The BOT meets three times a year and its committees meet quite frequently during the year, often in Beirut. Senate by-laws, the by-laws of the six Faculties have also been revised. Revisions of the by-laws of the various bodies that deal with student representation in governance were under consideration at the time of the MSCHE evaluation team. One specific change that is related to governance is tenure. AUB stopped awarding tenure during the Civil War and the question of its reinstatement was still unresolved at the time of the visit of the MSCHE evaluation team.

As noted in the self-study, “there is still room for improvement in terms of the operational alignment between AUB’s mission and strategic goals, on the one hand, and actual procedures and decisions, on the other. The arrival of a new president (in the 20080 and other pending changes in the senior leadership (provost, VP/dean AUBMC/FM) will mean a longer transition period than originally anticipated, but will also provide a unique opportunity to address leadership and governance issues...” (p. 39)

The Self-Study and discussions with various university constituencies confirm that this is a time of critical importance, transition and opportunity for positive change in the history of AUB. In addition to a newly inaugurated president, the anticipated appointment of a new provost and medical school dean and a challenging economic

climate worldwide, concerns of faculty regarding their need to become more fully involved emerge as a high priority.

In addition to concerns for greater faculty involvement in decision-making, there appears to be a lack of clarity concerning the respective functions of the Senate and the Board of Deans, which is currently chaired by the president and functions as a recommending body to him. In addition, it was noted that no formal mechanism for staff involvement currently exists within the governance structure.

Faculty express some variation of opinion about their degree of involvement in issues and decisions at AUB. Some state that the climate has improved from that of a few years ago. However, strong expressions of dissatisfaction with lack of communication from deans and a need for empowerment is a consistent theme that transcends longevity, gender and academic rank. Faculty comment that the Board of Deans exercises interpretive prerogatives without their input and believe that their recommendations are often ignored. In their opinion, this is not necessarily true of all members of the BOD or all faculties. Lack of information at the departmental level is attributed to breakdowns in communications and a need for chairs to be developed and knowledgeable about policies within areas of their jurisdiction and accountability. Annual performance evaluation for faculty was also noted as a concern. There is currently no comprehensive system of peer evaluation of teaching. The faculty perceive service activities to be significant and expected, but undervalued. Security of employment and research productivity as the primary criterion for merit and advancement is a common perception. Additionally, faculty report morale to be low and the level of engagement of faculty on campus beyond assigned duties, to have waned.

#### *Commendations*

1. We commend AUB for its commitment to a more inclusive system of governance and to the necessary transparency that this will entail to ensure the vitality of the institution for the future.
2. We commend AUB for the adoption of strategic planning and key performance indicators as a means to ensure more transparent methods of accountability in decision-making.

#### *Suggestions*

1. Given the atmosphere of change, and the crucial importance of governance, it is suggested that immediate steps be taken to begin the process of resolving as many governance issues as possible, especially those that deal with encouraging faculty to be more meaningfully and appropriately engaged in academic governance.
2. Consider the adoption of procedural standards manuals and training of various constituent units of the university in the delivery of its mission. This includes manuals for deans and chairs as to the disposition of shared responsibilities for student recruitment and retention, faculty hiring and promotion, as well as in the participation in departmental and divisional budgets consistent with the University's strategic planning.
3. Consider ways to expand faculty engagement in the mission of the University through more explicit procedures that acknowledge and reward excellence in teaching, research, and community service. To do so, consider the adoption of an

expectations and rewards framework that articulates the various mechanisms and procedures that affect faculty performance.

4. Consider the adoption of longer-period faculty contracts that balance the need for flexibility in hiring and retention with the need for program expertise and continuity in a context of budgetary uncertainties.
5. Strengthen the role of the University Senate through a more formal assignment of responsibility regarding ongoing measures to review general education requirements, along with periodic program reviews and procedures, and post these procedures through the University website to guarantee broad-based awareness of the divisional and program responsibilities by the faculty for curriculum integrity that is consistent with the University's academic mission and objectives.
6. Consider faculty representation on the Board of Trustees, with reporting responsibilities to the faculty regarding budgetary decisions and program initiatives that reflect the institution's commitment to its strategic planning and mission."

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

##### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

The current administrative structure of the University provides for a President's Cabinet (established in 2006), which includes the provost and vice presidents who are direct reports to the President. A search for the provost position is in process and an experienced professor of humanities is filling the acting provost position. There is no longer a vice president for administration; however reorganization and reassignment of responsibilities accommodate those non-academic areas of responsibility. The provost has 20 direct reports.

Expansion of fundraising activities and staff are reported as successful and are based in both Beirut and New York. A new vice president for outreach has been appointed and a new senior staff committee for middle management that meets with the president and provost has been created.

Recent and on-going activities that have recently been accomplished include a review of staff compensation and reclassification, strengthening of IT systems such as Banner, the Moodle course management system and Oracle Library Management System. Administration and faculty concur that the IT infrastructure in the country itself is a limiting factor in expanding capabilities in technology at AUB.

Review or potential change in administrative structure was not addressed in the self-study or in discussion with university groups. The possibility of outsourcing some university services and auxiliary in under consideration but is related to determining prudent decisions which could affect vital services, such as those required by the hospital, if emergency situations arose in Beirut.

#### **Chapter Four: Student Admissions, Retention and Support Services**

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard Eight: Student Admissions and Retention

Standard Nine: Student Support Services

The institution meets these standards.

## **STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND RETENTION**

### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

The institution has clear admission goals and priorities as stated in the self-study report. Admission criteria are clearly stated in the documents presented to students including required placement or diagnostic testing. A separate graduate catalogue helps to clarify the procedures. The effort to have socio-economic diversity particularly within Lebanon is commended. The effort is evident by the dramatic increase in the number of school visits from 46 to 237, the scholarship for the best of high school graduates in different parts of Lebanon, and the tracking of the students' diversity by knowing the family incomes. The university new mission statement states "to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond". This is a wider focus than the previous mission which states "primarily the education of the people of the Middle East". AUB recruitment effort seems to reflect this change in focus by increased recruitment efforts outside Lebanon. Yet, the diversity of students within Lebanon seems to remain as the immediate concern and the number of students who are not Lebanese remains limited. The concerns about security in Lebanon might be an important contributing factor to this. The creation of the Unified Admission Committee for undergraduate students is commended as an important step to streamline undergraduate admission procedures and create equal opportunity for students. The institution has clear goals on the number of undergraduate and graduate students it intends to serve. The occasional difficulty that arises from events such as summer 2006 war has understandable effect on the ability to manage the numbers. An enrolment management committee is formed more than a year ago, however, there is no documented enrolment management plan that follow long-term strategic goals. Establishing an enrolment management unit as recommended by the ISS report should help in developing and implementing such as plan.

Lack of uniformity of criteria among different units for the transfer of students seems to be an important concern as it might be a backdoor for some students to get into some majors, particularly with the significant increase in the number of transfer students. AUB should address loopholes in the procedures to assure equal opportunity.

Various venues for scholarship and financial aid exist with over than 40% of students benefiting from the financial aid program. Effort to increase the financial aid endowment is commended. However, around half of the students are not satisfied with the availability of the information or with the award process. Discussions with students revealed mixed feeling about the equity of scholarship distribution and the clarity of the selection criteria. AUB needs to investigate the reason for such high percentage of dissatisfaction, take corrective actions, and periodically assess students' satisfaction with the scholarship and financial aid program. The institution monitors acceptance, yield, retention, and graduation of the students. The graduating rate for sophomores is high but low for graduate students and for freshmen, when compared to the sophomore graduation rate. AUB needs to provide better support for freshman students and investigate the reasons for low graduation rate for graduate students.

AUB uses faculty for student advising. Discussions with faculty, students, and staff revealed deficiency in such approach as some faculty seems to lack the time and the

knowledge to advise properly. AUB needs to find better avenues for such an important task, for example, professional advising by staff or training faculty.

#### *Suggestions*

1. Strengthen the English language enhancement program to attract highly qualified students who lack only the necessary language skills.
2. Identify the factors for the relatively low graduation rate for freshman (65%) and graduate students (50%)
3. AUB should investigate the reason for high percentage of students' dissatisfaction with the scholarship and financial aid program, take corrective actions, and periodically assess students' satisfaction.
4. Establish an independent school of graduate studies as recommended by ISS report
5. Offer off campus program outside Lebanon and have an exchange program with international partners as recommended by the ISS report.
6. Provide professional advising by staff or have formal training for faculty on the advising process. Students' satisfaction with advising needs to be regularly assessed.

### **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Based on a documentary review and meetings with student support services staff, and students, we note the following findings. AUB maintains an array of student support services that helps students to successfully complete their academic programs in a timely fashion. These services include: admissions, advisement, financial aid, food services, housing, athletic facilities, student grievance procedures, personal counselling, campus housing, and career placement services. Although some support services have experienced personnel and budgetary limitations, that AUB students have relatively high retention and graduate rates demonstrates not only the effectiveness of academic instruction, but also the necessary support services to do so. We note from self-study surveys substantial rates of satisfaction with career services, food services, health services, and with campus security measures.

#### *Commendations*

1. We commend AUB for the successful completion of its new athletic facility.
2. We commend AUB for its commitment to diversity, its efforts to sustain high rates of female student enrolment, and its ongoing efforts to strengthen its student support services, notably the creation of a WEB-CAPP course registration system, and related internet-based student information systems.

#### *Suggestions*

1. Consider the adoption of regular training sessions for users of the campus WEB-CAPP registration system.

2. Consider publication of a student grievance procedure involving grades and faculty-staff-student relations, and place operational jurisdiction under the Dean of Students with representation from faculty and staff from individual schools within the University that stipulates a schedule for dispute resolution.
3. Post on the University website a manual of procedures regarding the organization of student clubs and activities that stipulates the allocation of responsibilities consistent with AUB's liberal arts mission and considerations of campus security. Wherever possible, simplify the number of authorizations required to form clubs and gatherings on campus.
4. Consider broader student representation in various governance organizations, including a student representative to the Board of Trustees vested with reporting responsibility to the Student Government Association, along with student representation on the campus facilities committee, and other bodies whose decisions affect the level of student support services.

### **Chapter Five: Faculty**

This chapter covers the following standard:

Standard Ten: Faculty

The institution meets this standard.

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Faculty at AUB are hardworking, well-qualified academicians who maintain a strong commitment to undergraduate education and a growing involvement in research and graduate education, which includes new PhD programs in selected areas. Faculty addressed the process by which new programs and curriculum revisions are made and indicated support of new initiatives which they proposed and in which they indicated a strong investment. Those who stated that the PhD programs would contribute to AUB's advancement globally saw protection of the quality of undergraduate and existing graduate programs as very feasible. They believe they will redefine AUB's role as a leader in higher education in the region, retain gifted students who might have left the country to study and that they will cultivate opportunities to expand their own research capacity by having undergraduates work with PhD students and faculty on projects. AUB has obtained funding to support tuition and stipends for all doctoral students. Others voiced concern about the demands of new programs on their time, the pressure to be productive within the short time spans that correspond to their contracts and concern for an increasing number of undergraduate students, despite recent increases in faculty. Another concern was the time lag experienced when approvals, vouchers and PhD applications were being processed.

Issues concerning heavy teaching loads and a perceived devaluation of teaching and service activities were recurring themes in the meetings the team had at AUB. Faculty scholarly output has increased, as have opportunities for funding. However, a diminishing degree of engagement of faculty in service and student-related activities was cited by faculty due to higher expectations of faculty and more particularly, to faculty disenchantment with governance at AUB and lack of clarity concerning decision-making, the rationale for resource allocation, and communications with chairs, deans and the central administration. Differences of opinion underscore the lack of understanding of policies and guidelines that define procedures, spans of

control and degrees of empowerment within the organization. An example is the desire of many faculty for more involvement in matters that affect them and their programs, such as budget, faculty searches and employment, yet a lack of understanding why class size and low enrolment in a course taught should concern them if they are the professors of the course. Annual reviews and evaluations of all faculty was viewed as excessive by faculty who have attained the higher ranks.

Faculty concerns for job security, salary and health benefits, although noted as important did not assume the same significance as issues of shared governance and decision-making. Salary adjustments to rectify differences between women and male faculty with the same rank and years of service were made during the 2006- 2007 academic year. A policy covering maternity leaves was established. AUB provides housing subsidies for its faculty.

Faculty express their opinions freely. They admit to a lack of understanding about how policies are implemented, what policies and procedure exist, the interaction among parts of the organizational structure and absence of clear communications processes. Many believe that involvement in the Senate will help to reengage faculty.

#### *Suggestions*

1. AUB administration should respond to faculty concerns as soon as possible and, with the faculty, deans and chairs begin to resolve obvious issues.
2. Mechanisms be developed that will clarify and make available materials that will orient faculty to the organizational structure, policies, roles and responsibilities of chairs, deans, the Senate and key committees.
3. Faculty be engaged in finding solutions to issues identified by them and that senior leaders share information about the state of the university and priorities that need to be addressed, while openly listening to those of the faculty.
4. Re-establish trust and raise morale at AUB and that faculty and middle managers be afforded challenges for involvement and be held accountable for their actions.
5. Adoption of means by which faculty and others can be recognized for their teaching, scholarship, and service.

### **Chapter Six: Educational Offerings**

This chapter covers the following standard:

Standard Eleven: Educational Offerings

The institution meets this standard.

#### **EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS**

##### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

The institution offers 36 bachelor's degree, 55 master's degree, and PhDs in 8 specialties. Accreditations by relevant professional accreditation bodies are achieved or in progress. All programs were reassessed for compliance with New York state education department standards

In conformity with the American model of education, AUB emphasises education in

the liberal arts and sciences. However, one survey indicated that employers expressed dissatisfaction with the creativity, well roundedness and leadership abilities of AUB graduates. Other surveys contradicted this conclusion. The institution is encouraged to investigate the discrepancy and determine the degree of actual employer dissatisfaction with AUB graduates.

Interdisciplinary programs are encouraged at the master level (e.g. environmental sciences) as well as for concentrations (e.g. mechatronics). Research activities at the undergraduate level are also encouraged.

Faculty and administrators are enthusiastic about the new PhD programs. The programs are carefully selected to cope with resource constraints. The expectation is that these programs will improve undergraduate education and will support the image and brand of AUB. PhD students come mainly from Lebanon but some fields successfully attracted foreign students.

Documented processes exist for the establishment of new programs and the termination of existing ones. However, some faculty expressed scepticism regarding the appropriate application of the process. Library holdings of books and the numbers of professional staff have increased as well as sessions for information literacy.

### **Chapter Seven: General Education and Related Educational Activities**

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard Twelve: General Education

Standard Thirteen: Related Educational Activities

The institution meets these standards.

#### **GENERAL EDUCATION**

##### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

The revised general education program for all undergraduates consists of 9 credits in English and Arabic, 6 in natural sciences, 12 in humanities, 6 credits in social sciences, and 3 in quantitative thought for a total of 36 credits including 2 writing intensive courses. The revised program was adopted to bring it into alignment with the revised mission statement of AUB.

The revised general education program is a distribution requirement much like that found in colleges and universities throughout the United States. The intended purpose is “to provide students with essential skills in research and communication, familiarity with significant modes of thought and broad exposure to fields of learning in a diversity of areas, cultural, societal and scientific, so that they better learn to think critically and analyze intellectual and social issues in their historical and contemporary contexts from the variety of disciplinary perspectives and thereby to enrich their lives by fostering problem solving skills and promoting life-long learning in a program that embraces the principles of student choice and active learning.” (p. 93)

While assessments are provided (CAAP) in some distribution areas, there are to date no explicit learning outcomes (beyond what is cited above) and therefore no criteria for approving individual courses that fulfil these outcomes other than departmental affiliation and possibly level. There is no listing of courses approved for general

education in the catalog or in these reports. The list of criteria in the self-study is not a list of learning outcomes but rather a list of content, prerequisite, and policy. This lack of specific outcomes to be met by courses in each area of general education is supported by “analysis of 40 random syllabi from faculty (FAS) which revealed that none explicitly referred to general education objectives or assessment criteria”. (p. 95) Further, while a review committee was established to oversee inclusion of courses in general education “it has no mechanism to assess course outcomes or to make specific recommendations concerning new general education courses. New criteria and a formal process will also be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the improved GE program.” (p. 95-96)

Banner, the course management system used at AUB, will indicate which courses fulfil these requirements. This cannot be done properly until courses are designated based upon stated outcomes.

There is a broad statement of purpose in the 08-09 catalogs as to general education and the credit requirements as cited above with no indication for students as to what courses might be acceptable to meet the distribution requirements. (This is probably due to the timing of catalog production)

All in all, general education appears to vary depending on a student’s major program. Major program faculty determine which courses are best suited to meet the distribution requirements for their students. Without development of general education programmatic learning outcomes there is no institutional coherency to this requirement.

*Commendation:* The team commends AUB for its historic commitment to general education and the great thought and work that has gone into the process of establishing and defining the mission and purpose of its general education program. University support for this program is also commended. The recommendations of the self-study should be supported as AUB moves forward with this initiative.

*Recommendation*

Progress is needed regarding general education assessment. No list of specific learning outcomes for each area of the program exists. These outcomes are essential as criteria to determine which courses should be designated for each area. The committee should review course syllabi for possible inclusion in this program according to the outcomes—course syllabi should include the same outcomes. Once this process is completed, the distribution list of qualified courses should be identified in Banner and included in the college catalog.

While testing has already begun using the CAAP exam, there should first be a statement of learning outcomes and then the appropriate measurement should be aligned with those outcomes. Choosing a measurement instrument before being explicit about the outcomes is not the best process for assessing outcomes. Rather, the outcomes should be defined and then the best measurement process/instrument should be chosen to assess those outcomes. Multiple measures are encouraged, both direct and indirect. It should be stressed that these measures can be quantitative or qualitative.

The team recommends that AUB submit a follow-up report of progress which

includes:

1. Learning outcomes in each knowledge/skill area of general education requirement
2. Review process for including courses in each knowledge/skill area based upon learning outcomes
3. List of courses included in each area/method of designation/Banner designation/catalog listing
4. Assessment measurement/instrument aligned with learning outcomes to be used
5. Cycle of assessment (3 years, 5 years, etc) which is sustainable
6. Process for utilizing assessment results for program improvement

### **RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Based on a review of the self-study, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to this standard:

Consistent with its mission, AUB offers a variety of certificate programs and non-credit, non-degree programs and workshops through the Office of Regional External Programs, the Continuing Education Center, which is a division of REP and three of its faculties, including the English Department at FAS; in addition to an off campus location in the Beka'a valley, which was visited by the team chair during an earlier visit on October 2008, which as an agricultural Research and Education Center operated by the faculty of Agriculture and food services provides experiential learning, workshops and training.

The team commends the continuous efforts and improved results excerpted in the document, and accept the spirit and the recommendations identified in the self-study.

#### *Commendations:*

1. AUB is to be commended for the completion and implementation of the five-year strategic plan for regional external programs, in addition to successfully exceeding its target levels in 2007.
2. The creation of a pilot Writing Center to support the academic writing skills of AUB undergraduate and graduate students, and the continuing efforts exerted to meet the recommendation of the previous self study and the suggestions of the accreditation report.

#### *Suggestions*

1. It is noted that Key performance indicators for REP have been set on the onset of its strategic planning process in 2006, with reassessment after five years. It would be beneficial in a dynamic market and unstable economy to consider shorter periods for reassessment and/or closer periodic monitoring and updates.
2. The study points to a need for a formal market survey and other research to enhance the overall response to regional needs, as well as, a need for university

wide standard of writing excellence and a mechanism to assess the impact of its work on the academic achievement of students. A two way feedback of key performance indicators between these programs and the faculties involved would strengthen the assessment process on multiple levels.

3. Further enhancement of communication and involvement between stakeholders, through a formal mechanism, in project selection and composition could provide insights, correct perceptions, increase awareness of opportunities, identify hidden costs, and improve margins etc.

## **Chapter Eight: Institutional Assessment and Student Learning Assessment**

This chapter covers the following standards:

Standard Seven: Institutional Assessment

Standard Fourteen: Student Learning Assessment

**The institution meets these standards.**

### **INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

Since AUB established an Office of Institutional Research and Assessment significant progress has been made in assessing institutional effectiveness. The OIRA collects, analyzes and disseminates information about AUB's performance and environment. There is a periodic survey cycle that includes both standardized and benchmarked surveys, local surveys and direct assessment of student learning outcomes (CAAP). The surveys track students upon entry to graduation and as alumni.

There is evidence of survey data being used for improvement, e.g. establishment of the writing center. Data appears to be used/acknowledged by administrators and unit heads to a much greater extent than faculty/staff. Increased efforts should be encouraged to continue to make this information transparent to the university community and a routine process should be established to engage the whole campus community in examining the data and using the results for improvement. The use of short executive summaries that interpret aggregated data might prove useful as a basis of widespread discussion and to allay any fears that assessment is being used to evaluate individuals. The Kaplan-Norton Balanced Scorecard (BSC) methodology was adopted as a performance management system. The president and his Cabinet conduct an annual review of the key performance indicators but results are not communicated to the broader AUB community as KPIs, although some results are communicated to all stakeholders as OIRA reports. The University is working to index all of the KPI data, which will enable the administration to share information without concern of repercussions from the external environment. This effort is applauded as it will allow open discussions within the AUB community and widen the process of improvement.

Each administrative and academic unit developed KPIs as part of the strategic planning process. The KPIs are aligned with the strategic plan and the mission of the university. This process should result in institutional assessment being used for future

strategic and operational planning. The recommendations of the self-study committee should be followed, foremost being development of a comprehensive university assessment plan aligned with the strategic plan.

### **ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**

#### *Summary of Evidence and Findings*

There needs to be more coherency in programmatic assessment. Some programs with professional accreditation are fully engaged in the assessment process and others, e.g. arts and humanities appear to be lagging behind. All programs that foster student learning and development should have a documented, organized and sustained assessment process that uses multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that provide evidence that students are achieving program outcomes and is shared with appropriate constituents and used for improvement.

While it is recognized that programs with disciplinary accreditation comply with the guidelines of those bodies it is also important that the campus community be able to have conversations and understand student-learning outcomes in programs and courses. To this end, AUB appears to not have common language to foster a culture of assessment. Please see page 111 of the self-study, which references PEOs, PLOs, LGs, GLOs, CLOs, etc. Some of these are equivalents but the acronyms are specific to programs. AUB should be encouraged to adopt a common language when discussing student learning outcome assessment so that faculty/staff/administration can easily converse across disciplines. This “official” AUB language can be translated to specific disciplines. The “Concept Paper on Educational Goals and Objectives and learning Outcomes” began this process by “defining” learning objectives and outcomes. Adoption of their hard work would solve this dilemma. Until the campus community can understand and use a common language for assessment of learning outcomes there cannot be a “culture of assessment”.

*Commendations:* AUB has made commendable progress in assessing learning outcomes. It is not unusual but typical that some programs lag behind others.

#### *Recommendation*

Programmatic assessment plans were not evident. There were indications of direct and indirect assessment of learning outcomes but they were varied and specific to programs. It was not possible to align these measures with specific learning outcomes. Therefore the team recommends a follow-up report that includes a comprehensive assessment plan that identifies programmatic learning outcomes mapped to specific required courses, assessment measures/instruments that align with the outcomes and are administered in a sustainable cycle is needed. These plans should include systematic, sustained and multiple measures that include direct evidence of student learning. Policies and mechanisms should be developed to share outcomes assessment data and to use it for improvement of teaching and learning. All programs could use an assessment plan template whether separately accredited or not.

### **VI. Summary of Recommendations for Continuing Compliance**

The American University of Beirut has made considerable progress in a number of areas since initial accreditation in 2004. The team felt that further progress should be reported to Middle States in two areas. The topics of greatest concern pertain to

assessment of student learning. In both cases, the most relevant standard is standard 14, although Standard 12 is also relevant.

#### Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

#### Standard 12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

#### *Recommendation regarding assessment of General Education*

That AUB submit a report of progress which includes:

1. Learning outcomes in each knowledge/skill area of general education requirement
2. A review process for including courses in each knowledge/skill area based upon learning outcomes.
3. A list of courses included in each area/method of designation/Banner designation/catalog listing.
4. An assessment measurement/instrument aligned with learning outcomes to be used.
5. A sustainable cycle of assessment (3 years, 5 years, etc) coupled with a process for utilizing assessment results for program improvement

#### *Recommendation regarding assessment of student learning outcomes*

Programmatic assessment plans were not evident. There were indications of direct and indirect assessment of learning outcomes but they were varied and specific to programs. It was not possible to align these measures with specific learning outcomes.

Therefore the team recommends that AUB submit a report of progress that includes a comprehensive assessment plan that identifies programmatic learning outcomes mapped to specific required courses, assessment measures/instruments that align with the outcomes and are administered in a sustainable cycle is needed. These plans should include systematic, sustained and multiple measures that include direct evidence of student learning. Policies and mechanisms should be developed to share outcomes assessment data and to use it for improvement of teaching and learning. All programs could use an assessment plan template whether separately accredited or not.