American University of Beirut

Integrating Faculty Development with Curricular Innovation in Humanistic Disciplines

Summary of Proposal Approved by Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Trustees on March 15, 2012

Contents

I. Introduction 2
II. AUB Faculty Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities 2
III. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities 4
IV. Program of Activities 5
I. Introduction

In March 2012, AUB received a three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to integrate faculty development with curricular innovation in the arts and humanities (including the humanistic social sciences). We proposed a dynamic initiative that incorporates fellowships and programmatic activities to nurture the development of a core group of arts and humanities faculty and provide them with opportunities for personal and professional development.

In the first year of the grant (2012-13), the core group will be composed of five AUB faculty fellows and two Mellon postdoctoral fellows, as well as interested faculty of all ranks from humanistic disciplines. They will participate in a regular program of activities (luncheons, seminars, workshops, and an annual conference) that will give equal emphasis to research, teaching, and curricular renewal. During the second and third years of the grant, the number of participants is expected to rise as former fellows continue taking part in selected activities. Other potential participants include senior faculty serving as mentors to Mellon postdoctoral fellows; visiting professors with one- or two-year appointments; and promising students working with current or former AUB faculty fellows.

The core group’s activities will be organized under the overarching theme of Cultural Encounters, a natural choice for AUB and for Lebanon, which is an historic crossroads of cultural and civilizational interaction. Each year, a separate motif falling under the theme will be selected to focus discussions and debates on campus.

Throughout this initiative, the provost, the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the chairs of the relevant departments will work together to ensure the maximum possible coordination and integration among departmental priorities, the two fellowship programs, and associated activities. The provost and dean will also conduct an annual assessment of the initiative’s effectiveness, particularly to fine-tune programmatic activities. At the conclusion of the grant, the University will continue developing and expanding this initiative through its planned Center for Arts and Humanities. Our long-term objectives are to nurture a sustained community capable of strengthening the environment for humanistic inquiry at AUB; and to promote the arts and humanities as viable areas of inquiry among our students.

II. AUB Faculty Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities

AUB Faculty Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities (including the humanistic social sciences) will be open to assistant and associate professors in the departments of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages, English, Fine Arts and Art History, History and Archaeology, Philosophy, Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Political Studies and Public Administration; as well as to faculty of the same ranks appointed to the University’s Civilization Sequence Program. Preference may be given to selected disciplines or clusters of disciplines in any given year to ensure maximum integration of the AUB Faculty and Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships and the program of activities that round out this initiative.

Five AUB faculty fellows will be selected annually in a competitive process: two will be appointed for each of the Fall and Spring semesters; and one will be appointed for the regular (nine-month) academic year. Faculty awarded nine-month fellowships will generally take the entire period as one continuous teaching leave, although two single-semester leaves in consecutive years may be permitted if requested and justified at the time of application.
The fellowships are intended to encourage junior and mid-career faculty to actively reimagine their disciplines, conduct innovative research, and develop new courses and programs that explore humanistic study from dual Western/Middle Eastern perspectives. Applicants will be asked to submit individual research proposals congruent with these objectives, for example, the critical examination of an aspect of modern Arab art or literature, two fields which have attracted minimal scholarly study to date. The selection process will also favor interdisciplinary research that may lead to the further integration of the arts and humanities into the curricula of AUB’s professional programs.

Applicants will also be asked to provide a brief statement of their teaching philosophies and goals, as well as course files demonstrating their philosophies in action. Many young faculty have shown strong interest in designing courses that integrate technology and high-impact teaching practices for active learning; however, they often tell us that the process is very labor intensive and takes away from time needed to conduct research and prepare promotion portfolios. The AUB Faculty Fellowships will support them in the achievement of both goals by encouraging research proposals that explore new ways of conducting, presenting, and disseminating research, and of bringing it into the classroom. An important part of the core group program will involve familiarizing faculty with new research methodologies, such as the digital humanities, which can translate into new teaching tools and the development of technological skills among students.

Faculty fellows will be excused from teaching and some non-essential administrative responsibilities, but will continue to serve on standing faculty committees, and will participate in departmental gatherings for strategic planning; periodic program reviews; discipline-specific seminars and workshops; and votes on appointments, reappointments, and promotions. Fellows will be expected to draw on their experiences and insights as participants in core group activities in order to assist departmental colleagues making decisions on these and related issues.

All fellows will be paid their usual salaries and benefits by the University. Mellon funding associated with the fellowships will support payments to instructors/lecturers covering courses/sections normally taught by faculty appointed as fellows. To the extent possible, AUB will coordinate the selection of nine-month fellows with the appointment of postdoctoral fellows and visiting professors; in such cases, the University will share the cost of salary and benefits for visiting faculty.

Fellowship applicants will not be barred from seeking external or internal research grants payable in the same academic year as the fellowship. Internal funding includes the short- and long-term faculty development grants administered by the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the faculty research grants awarded by the provost and the University Research Board. Fellows wishing to apply for internal funding must submit separate grant applications within the usual deadlines and according to published procedures.

While fellows may spend a few days of their fellowships engaging in relevant research activities abroad, they are expected to be otherwise present on campus in order to participate fully in the curricular development activities of their departments and the programmatic activities of the core group. Written feedback on the effectiveness of the fellowships and associated activities will be solicited from each fellow at the conclusion of his or her term.
III. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities

The Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Arts and Humanities will be open to recent recipients of the PhD whose research and teaching interests involve one or more of the following disciplines: Arabic language; Arabic literature; archaeology; art history; English language; English literature; fine arts (visual arts, theatre, and music); history; and philosophy. AUB is particularly interested in innovative work that pushes disciplinary boundaries. The normal term of appointment will be one year, although some fellows may be considered for a second year at the conclusion of their first semester. Appointees will be attached to the relevant department and will be expected to remain in residence for the duration of the academic year.

Mellon fellows will be expected to teach one course or section per semester chosen in conjunction with the departmental chair. They will be encouraged to bring a fresh approach to existing general education courses and to design electives that draw on their own areas of expertise. The course design will preferably involve a high-impact educational practice, such as a writing-intensive format, collaborative assignments/projects, undergraduate research, and/or the integration of digital tools and methodologies in teaching and learning. Thus, recent PhDs who already have exposure to or experience in such practices, as well as new methods of conducting research or representing or disseminating research findings, will be strongly urged to apply.

Research will be an important component of the program as fellows prepare themselves and their portfolios for academic careers. Each applicant will be required to submit a dissertation abstract or summary, samples of publications (or writing), a statement of research interests, and details of a research project which will be undertaken during the fellowship.

AUB recognizes that young PhDs are transitioning from roles as highly specialized doctoral students to the professoriate, and that good mentoring and professional interactions with a community of scholars help to orient them as they establish their own paths as educators and researchers. Each new postdoc will be matched with an established faculty member in the same department who will serve as a mentor throughout the fellowship. Additional input and support for teaching and research will be provided by the curricular revision and state-of-the-field seminars and workshops organized as part of this initiative; by the program of activities established by and for the arts and humanities core group; and by interactions with AUB faculty fellows involved in major research projects. As Dr Robert L. Hampel of the University of Delaware has noted, young scholars’ ideas for future research often take shape during postdoctoral fellowships since graduate school seldom provides opportunities to “see how senior scholars generate and manage their ideas.”

Other forms of professional development ranging from the pedagogical to the technological will be provided by specialized AUB units, such as the Center for Teaching and Learning (student learning assessment; faculty portfolios); the Office of Grants and Contracts (grant proposals); the University Writing Center (writing-intensive courses); and Academic Core Processes and Systems (scholarly technologies).

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Postdoctoral fellows will also gain valuable international experience through their association with an American-style university located in the Middle East. Moreover, private, non-profit institutions like AUB combine strong liberal arts missions with the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programs popular among regional students. This is a model that has become increasingly popular in the United States. As members of the University’s arts and humanities core group, postdoctoral fellows will work with established scholars intent on raising the profile of the arts and humanities in a STEM environment.

Written feedback on the effectiveness of the fellowships and the year’s activities will be solicited from each fellow at the conclusion of his or her term.

IV. Program of Activities

All AUB faculty fellows and Mellon postdoctoral fellows will be expected to participate in a flexible, wide-ranging, yet cohesive, program of professional development activities. Most of these activities will also be open to other members of the AUB community, and are expected to attract larger groups of participants as the initiative enters its second and third years.

The proposed list of core group activities include:

- **Weekly structured lunches**: These lunches will bring together faculty and postdoctoral fellows each week to discuss their individual goals for research and teaching, and how this initiative can support them in meeting their objectives. The lunches are the only activity open solely to current and past fellows.

- **Bi-weekly research seminars**: Fellows will present their work, discuss the research challenges that they face, and solicit suggestions from members of the core group and other interested participants.

- **Course and program design workshops**: AUB will organize monthly workshops on topics related to high-impact teaching practices, curricular revision, and new program development at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Faculty from all of the University’s humanistic departments will be urged to participate in this activity. Depending on the availability of places, the workshops may also be open to humanistic faculty at other Lebanese universities.

- **Lectures and workshops by visiting scholars, writers, artists**: These workshops will expose fellows and interested faculty to new methodologies, emerging interdisciplinary fields, and various aspects of creative output. Short-term visiting scholars (supported by a fund in the Provost’s Office) may be especially useful in addressing AUB’s immediate needs in specific areas of study. Short-term visiting artists/writers/performers (funding being sought elsewhere) will share their creative skills and production through exhibitions, performances, faculty and student workshops, and in-class discussions.

- **State-of-the-field seminars**: Each semester, one humanistic department will be encouraged to organize a week-long state-of-the-field seminar to explore recent theoretical and methodological directions and changes in particular humanistic disciplines. Preference will be given to departments with current or former AUB faculty fellows, as well as Mellon postdoctoral fellows, who will be expected to play active roles.
• **Annual conference:** The program includes one annual international conference under the Cultural Encounters motif that is intended to help integrate the other programmatic elements. Each conference will include keynote addresses delivered by eminent scholars; presentations of research papers; and special workshops and panels on teaching the arts and humanities.

An important part of the core group program involves familiarizing faculty with new research methodologies, such as the digital humanities, which can translate into new teaching tools and the development of the skills needed by students in the twenty-first century.

**Digital humanities training:** While AUB has made progress in digitizing humanistic data, including library and museum holdings, much work remains to familiarize faculty with the technological tools and methods appropriate for research and teaching in humanistic fields. Alongside course and program design workshops introducing the digital humanities and other new tools, AUB proposes offering faculty basic training in digital mapping, data mining, and the use of online networks of digital maps and texts.