

## Faculty of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, 2012

### Introduction

The second cycle of the University's strategic planning process was initiated at the beginning of 2011. Dean Patrick McGreevy chaired a committee of faculty members, representing disciplines in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences, charged with the task of developing a strategic plan for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The committee held about fifteen meetings during the period from March, 2011 to July, 2011. Mr. Andre Nahas and Mr. Sami Gheriafi of the University's Office of Strategy Management also attended the meetings and provided critical feedback and direction regarding the planning process. The committee had at its disposal a number of documents that proved helpful in starting the planning process: the Faculty's Strategic Planning Report prepared in May, 2006, the University's Accreditation Self Study undertaken in 2008, the University's Strategic Planning Overview of 2009, as well as the Faculty's Key Performance Indicators that had been prepared for the first planning cycle.

The committee met usually in two-hour sessions on a weekly basis to discuss and formulate the constituent elements of the plan. Work began with a discussion of the faculty's mission statement, resulting in the drafting of new versions, and agreement on a new statement. The faculty's accomplishments of the last five years were reviewed and discussed, resulting in a list of major achievements. Members of the committee discussed external trends and influences which have an impact of the Faculty. The team invested considerable effort in analyzing the faculty's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. On the basis of all these activities, the dean drafted a vision statement which was discussed in detail by committee members and modified accordingly. The committee then moved on to the task of identifying strategic goals and objectives, which were correlated with initiatives and key performance indicators. The last major stage was the preparation of planning templates for specific initiatives.

The members of the committee included:

Patrick McGreevy, Chair, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Abdel Fattah Abdel Rahman, Department of Geology

Lara Halaoui, Department of Chemistry

Inanna Hamati-Ataya, Department of Political Studies and Public Administration

Rima Karami Akkary, Department of Education

Sawsan Kuraydiyyah, Department of Biology

Jad Melki, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences

John Meloy, Department of History and Archaeology

Najat Saliba, Department of Chemistry

Rabih Talhouk, Department of Biology

David Wrisley, Department of English

## Mission Statement

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences embodies AUB's core commitment to the liberal arts and sciences. It offers undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts, humanities, and social, natural, and mathematical sciences, and is dedicated to advanced research in all of these domains. Through its freshmen and general education programs, it is the University's principal gateway to higher studies and professional education. The faculty, through its teaching and research, promotes free inquiry, critical thinking, academic integrity, and respect for diversity and equality.

## Major Accomplishments, 2006-2011

### *Faculty*

- Decreasing number vacant faculty lines
- Increased compensation
- Lower student-faculty ratio
- On-going reduction of teaching loads
- Long-term contracts initiated
- Faculty mentoring program

### *Research and Graduate Education*

- New PhD programs launched
- New Master's programs approved
- Increased number of research grants
- Increased number of publications
- Summer preparatory program in English for graduate students

### *Undergraduate Program and Curricula*

- Implementation of writing across curriculum
- Course and program learning outcomes initiated across FAS
- New minors approved
- New diploma program approved
- Increased foreign language offerings
- Increased size of freshmen class
- Higher admission standards for freshmen

### *Facilities*

- Renovation of the Science Lecture Hall
- Renovation of some science labs
- Renovation of some Nicely Hall classrooms
- New Fisk Hall faculty lounge
- New Education lab

## *Other*

Appointment of additional associate dean

## External Trends and Influences

The demand for high-quality English language higher education continues in the region. The establishment of university programs, often restricted to particular fields, by well-known US institutions in the last few years still poses potential competition. The demand for high quality university education highlights the need for AUB to continue offering and to expand its liberal arts program, a hallmark of the University since its founding. However, in the region there continues to be a lack of appreciation of fields other than the traditional professions, an attitude that continues to restrict the choices of undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. An increasingly competitive, globalized marketplace requires that we increase foreign language offerings and provide better career counseling for students in liberal arts majors.

The need for graduate and research programs in all fields also continues unabated which highlights the need for AUB to continue to strengthen graduate programs and to support the research activities of the faculty. The changing needs of our students require that we enhance the flexibility, efficiency, and focus of all programs in order to serve them better.

The global financial crisis and technological developments have brought about radical changes in the environment in which global universities do business (publishing of university presses, class sizes, e-learning, proliferation of publishing venues and online journals) and to which we must adapt. The crisis has also strengthened, at least in relative terms, the position of AUB, affording a number of promising opportunities. The tight academic job market in North America and Europe has broadened the potential for faculty recruiting at AUB. Reduced funding of students at universities abroad affords AUB an opportunity to diversify its student body through the recruitment of foreign graduate and undergraduate students. The relative strength of the Lebanese banking industry has increased the availability of low-interest educational loans to our students. It is still too early to assess the impact of recent political events in the region; however, early indications are that some programs have benefited from an increase in the number of applications.

## SWOT Analysis

### *Strengths*

1. Competitively selected, diverse student body.
2. Strong tradition of liberal arts education.
3. Strengthened General Education based curriculum.
4. Graduate programs and research infrastructure.
5. Research productive faculty.

6. Writing intensive program.
7. Broad range of academic minors.
8. Intellectual freedom.
9. Well-equipped Central Research Laboratory.
10. Relatively high percentage of full-time and professorial instructors.
11. PhD programs.
12. Interdisciplinary Master's programs.
13. Successful undergraduate exchange programs.

#### *Weaknesses*

1. Lack of discipline-specific departments in certain majors.
2. Some weakly populated majors.
3. Inconsistent quality of student advising and faculty mentoring.
4. Restricted space availability for growing academic and research programs.
5. High teaching load.
6. Lack of clarity regarding by-laws and processes of governance procedure.
8. Lack of tenure-track appointment and tenure.
9. Insufficient resources and efforts to secure research funding.
10. Insufficient and inadequately trained staff.
11. Excessive internet security/limited use of live broadcasting and other connectivity.
12. Difficulty in attracting good students to some fields.
13. Difficulty of recruiting diverse faculty members.
14. Some internal problems within and between departments, reducing cooperation.
15. Excessively large class sizes in some areas, reducing the quality of learning.
16. Limited extramural research funds in basic sciences.
17. Limited intramural research funds.
18. Limited budget, compared to the number of faculty and size of student body.
19. Limited size of endowment.
20. Limited disciplinary scope of some departments.
21. Excessive PhD coursework requirements.
22. Insufficient support for experimental research (for chemicals, parts, instrument repair).
23. Inadequate laboratory facilities.

#### *Opportunities*

1. Large pool of foreign applicants.
2. Need for centers of excellence.
3. Potentially large pool of graduate students.
4. Emerging interdisciplinary fields.
5. Many universities wish to establish relations with AUB.
6. AUB's location with regard to programs in Middle Eastern Studies.
7. Strong alumni base.
8. Cosmopolitan environment.
9. Environment with relative freedom of expression.

### *Threats*

1. Unstable political situation.
2. Perception that AUB is related to US government and its policies.
3. Programs implanted by international universities in the region.
4. Relative scarcity of research funds and funding agencies at the local and regional level.
5. Relatively high, and rising, cost of living in Beirut
6. Widespread (and anachronistic) perception that Lebanon is dangerous.
7. Growing number of public and private Middle Eastern universities.

### Vision Statement

Building upon its rich tradition, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is determined to position itself at the heart of free inquiry in the Middle East. Free and critical thinking is central to the faculty's teaching, its research, its engagements with the wider community, and its commitment to the thoughtful transformation of all of its activities and structures. The faculty's enhanced undergraduate programs will graduate innovators with a breadth of vision who can be agents of positive change wherever they live and work. The faculty will strategically expand its graduate offerings, especially in areas where it can make a distinctive contribution, and it will educate graduate students who are themselves producers of knowledge. The faculty will be recognized internationally for the quality of its research and creative activities in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, mathematical sciences, and interdisciplinary areas, whether undertaken in response to regional and global needs or to human curiosity and imagination. The faculty will provide a vital forum for open discussion and engage contemporary issues in ways that resonate far beyond our campus walls.

### Strategic Goals, Objectives, Initiatives, and KPIs

The committee identified six major areas of concern to the faculty: graduate programs; undergraduate programs; research; faculty and staff; processes and governance; and outreach. Within these six general goals, objectives and initiatives were identified, and discussed at great length over the course of several meetings. Members prepared planning templates for proposed initiatives in consultation with the Office of Strategy Management. KPIs were determined, many drawn from those developed during the first planning cycle while new ones were identified, and these associated with the objectives. The dean selected four objectives, associated with thirteen initiatives, to receive the faculty's priority attention. These are: enhancement and expansion of doctoral and master's programs, improvement of laboratory and office space, increase in research funds, enhancement of undergraduate programs and services. A number of objectives were identified as areas of concern to be placed within an additional category and these were not assigned particular initiatives and KPIs.

### Strategic Goals

1. *Strengthen and Expand Graduate Programs.* This goal addresses the University’s aim to “become an acknowledged leader in graduate education” (SPO 2009, p. 9). It builds on AUB’s current and potential resources and responds to developments in the region and beyond.
2. *Strengthen Undergraduate Programs.* The University has recognized that undergraduate and liberal education “lies at the heart of [our] mission” (SPO 2009, p. 6). In FAS in particular, we are concerned that increased emphasis on research and graduate education not come at the expense of the University’s traditional strength in undergraduate education. We believe that improving undergraduate education must be a central goal.
3. *Strengthen Research.* AUB is uniquely positioned to contribute to the creation of knowledge. It is a key strategic decision to do so, as stated in the 2009 planning overview. Given the University’s limited resources, this must be approached carefully—identifying areas in which AUB can make significant contributions.
4. *Improve Faculty and Staff.* All other goals depend on our crucial human resources that must be enhanced through development and intelligent recruiting.
5. *Improve Processes and Governance.* FAS must examine its internal processes, its communication mechanisms, and its institutional structures, and identify ways to improve. It is crucial that these be coordinated carefully with similar university-wide efforts.
6. *Enhance Outreach.* FAS has neglected some important aspects of outreach in the past. This needs to be redressed.

### Objectives and Initiatives

1. *Strengthen and Expand Graduate Programs*
  - a. Establish new disciplinary and inter-disciplinary PhD programs (Initiatives: chemistry and materials science and engineering will submit proposals; explore other possible PhD programs).
  - b. Establish new professional, disciplinary, and inter-disciplinary MA programs (Initiatives: Islamic studies; American studies; rhetoric and composition; translation; education, materials science and possibly other fields. Inter-Faculty programs: in public policy, and materials science).
  - c. Expand the pool of high quality graduate students (Initiatives: Increase size and flexibility of financial support; improve recruiting through pro-active methods; expand means to improve English proficiency for graduate students [enhance remedial and supplementary English courses]).
  - d. Review existing graduate programs (Initiative: will be accomplished as part of periodic departmental reviews).
  - e. Coordinate and align resources and program offerings across departments and faculties (initiative: better coordination by improving communication among department chairs within FAS and with relevant leaders in other faculties).

## 2. *Strengthen Undergraduate Programs*

- a. Strengthen General Education program (Initiative: FAS assume greater participation).
- b. Improve advising (Initiative: Ad hoc committee on advising; coordinate with Enrollment management Task Force).
- c. Increase diversity (Initiative: strengthen UPP; intensive English for graduate students; increase number of non-degree students; expand pool of high quality freshmen candidates).
- d. Encourage undergraduate research (Initiative: expand summer research program for undergraduates; increase opportunities to present and publish their work).
- e. Strengthen under-enrolled majors (Initiative: Establish scholarships for under-enrolled majors; create communication strategy to demonstrate career paths from under-enrolled majors by profiling successful graduates).
- f. Increase and improve classrooms (Initiative: continue renovations, work with Development Office to raise needed funds).

## 3. *Strengthen Research*

- a. Improve research space (Initiative: expand lab space in biology, psychology, SBS, and archaeology; complete CRSL expansion).
- b. Increase funding (Initiative: work through Development Office; encourage grant writing).
- c. Establish centers of excellence (Initiative: solicit proposals and seek endowed funding).
- d. Promote student research and conferences (Initiative: initiate additional research conferences for graduate students such as the one begun by CSRL or initiate a Faculty-wide research day).
- e. Enhance AUB as a forum for discussion and dissemination of research (Initiatives: sponsoring conferences, inviting scholars for visits, etc.)

## 4. *Improve Faculty and Staff*

- a. Decrease teaching load (Initiative: fellowships for release from teaching).
- b. Increase and improve office space (initiative: identify space to be gained from dividing offices and other minor renovations; seek more substantial new space for FAS programs via transfer of other operations and by working with the Development Office to seek funding for major renovations and capital projects).
- c. Improve recruiting (Initiative: reinstate tenure; improve procurement of housing; coordinate with schools).
- d. Improve retention (Initiative: reinstate tenure; improve procurement of housing).
- e. Improve faculty profile (Initiative: improve research opportunities and support).
- f. Establish endowed chairs (Initiative: work through Development Office).
- g. Improve effectiveness of staff (Initiatives: allocate additional funds for training and advancement; careful recruiting).

- h. Establish review and advancement system for non-professorial teaching staff (Initiative: Ad hoc committee on advancement and training).

5. *Improve Processes and Governance*

- a. Clarify by-laws (Initiative: since completed).
- b. Establish mandate of committees (Initiative: already completed).
- c. Clarify procedures (Initiative: explain and post on website; train new faculty and staff members on procedures).
- d. Appoint additional Associate Dean (this was a recommendation of the 2006 Strategic Planning Report; it remains under consideration).
- e. Strengthen public image of FAS (Initiative: improve communication with constituencies on website and other means).

6. *Enhance Outreach*

- a. Encourage civic engagement among students, faculty and staff (initiatives: work with AUB-wide efforts; monitor protection of individuals who do undertake such engagements; continue to support conferences, lectures, and other intellectual engagements with the community of Beirut and beyond).
- b. Increase effective partnerships (Initiative: work with the Office of International Programs and the Provost's Office to pursue and enhance the most fruitful of these partnerships).
- c. Increase contact with alumni (Initiative: surveying alumni of departments through periodic reviews).

Mechanisms and Activities to Secure Input in the Planning Process

The project to produce a strategic plan for the second planning cycle began in January, 2011 with a meeting to introduce the committee members to the strategic planning process, convened by the Office of Strategy Management. The plan of the first cycle was monitored by the Management Review Team (the FAS Advisory Committee and associate deans). A second meeting, held in March, 2011 was devoted to introducing members of the committee and the Advisory Committee to the plan of the first cycle and its results. This session was followed by weekly meetings of the Faculty's Strategic Planning Committee. The committee directed most of its effort to detailed discussion and debate on the elements of the plan, communicating also through a website, using online discussion forums and wikis, to share data and gather feedback. Unlike the plan developed in the first cycle, the committee did not call upon units within the faculty to develop their own plans. Rather, during the process, after drawing up components of the plan, the committee solicited and received feedback on the plan and initiatives from the faculty through department chairs. The draft document will be shared with faculty members and senior staff after the review teams have made comments.

### Schedule of Strategic Performance Reviews

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences will form a permanent committee to be responsible for implementation of the plan. The committee will meet on an annual basis to monitor the various initiatives as they are implemented and to ensure that support is given to faculty and students to achieve the faculty's objectives.