

AUB promotes technology in the classroom

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Those who experiment with technology in teaching “are all pioneers,” Provost Ahmad Dallal told participants at the Academic Computing Center’s Eighth Faculty Seminar on Teaching and Learning with Technology. “You are leading us,” he added, thanking all those going out of their way to put knowledge of technology into teaching and learning. In the future, he said, increased emphasis will be placed on essential classroom technologies. “All universities,” Dallal said, “are moving in this direction.”



Provost Dallal’s remarks came at the beginning of the ACC seminar in College Hall held recently. AUB is ready, he insisted, to determine some mechanism for rewarding technology users for the demanding work involved in inaugurating technologies in the classroom.

ACC Director Rosangela Silva provided a timeline of the center’s accomplishments since the last seminar in 2009: a new web site with a virtual faculty lounge, a jump in course/section use of Moodle (AUB’s learning management system) from 3 to 70 percent, a Moodle server for individuals outside the University (courses offered to National Bank of Kuwait and Nissan Gulf), introduction of Lime Survey, a free, user-friendly methodology for students, staff, and faculty to create surveys on-line; a paper-saving campaign to decrease unnecessary downloading and printing, and *Mahara* (expertise in Arabic), an on-line personal portfolio to be available at the end of summer.

Several AUB teachers from different disciplines described their experiences with blended learning, a combination of face to face (F2F) and on-line teaching: Faculty of Health Sciences Professor May Massoud, Sara Khaddaj of Electrical and Computer Engineering, the English Department’s Zane Sinno, clinical bioethicist Thalia Arawi of the Faculty of Medicine, and Professor Salma Talhouk of Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management. ACC’s Hossein Hamam described the first 100 percent on-line course offered at AUB in spring 2009-10 by engineering management Professor Walid Nasrallah in conjunction with the ACC.

The teachers shared similar experiences and highlighted advantages and disadvantages of blended learning in courses in environmental health, engineering lab, English for international business, medical ethics, and plant biology. Almost all found flexibility in time constraints beneficial but emphasized the enormous amount of time necessary for vital course redesign. All praised the independence, self-confidence, and critical thinking generated in students. One even suggested that the student produced in a blended learning course resembles the ideal student described in the University’s mission statement. Zane Sinno said, “Blended learning enhances the venues and possibilities for a collaborative learning environment both between students and

between teacher and student,” creating a “‘work-in-progress’ atmosphere in and outside the classroom, making the course more vibrant and the material more interesting.”