

American University of Beirut
Minutes of the University Senate
Special Meeting of Friday, January 23, 2015

Present: H. Abu Khuzam, M. Al-Ghoul, G. Araj , B. Bashour, S. Chahine, M. Clinton, A. Chalak, A. Dallal, Z. Dawy, A. Dietrich, P. Dorman (chairing), I. El Hajj, N. Farajallah, N. Hwalla, S. Jabbour-Khoury, D. Jamali, S. Harb, A. Kayssi, V. Khamis, F. Maalouf, P. McGreevy, H. Muller, L. Nasreddine, M. Salameh, S. Saleh, M. Sayegh, E. Shamma, M. Suidan, A.Taher

Absent: T. Amin*, J. DeJong*, H. Diab, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer*, D. Jaalouk*, I. Nuwayhid, S. Kanj-Sharara, W. Nasr*, S. Zeineddine

(*= regrets notified before meeting or on leave)

The meeting came to order at 2:06pm.

1) Proposal for Tenure

The president started by declaring that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the latest update on the proposal for tenure along with how things stand with the Board of Trustees. The provost then gave a history of the proposal and told the senate that the current proposal was the last of many different drafts that were changed on the basis of comments and suggestions from the faculty, board of deans and board of trustees. The proposal to be discussed was one that took several years in the making.

Following this, Zaher Dawy gave a presentation (powerpoint is in the appendix of these minutes) highlighting the current proposal along with its history and supporting research. The presentation explained the various stages of the proposal along with answers to several questions and problems that had arisen. The presentation addressed concerns about the financial cost of reinstating tenure, the level of faculty productivity in a tenure system and the transition from the current system to this new one. The proposed tenure system suggests that: 1. Tenure be granted upon promotion to associate professor, 2. The evaluation follow current procedure, 3. The process of application be rigorous, and 4. There be a post-tenure review. He gave an in-depth explanation of the transition period in which current associate and full professors are to apply for tenure, but that the granting of tenure be contingent on the result of the review process. The duration of this period was projected to be around 7 years. Finally, he ended the presentation with a discussion of the retirement incentive plan.

Following the presentation, Dr. Dawy made a motion to vote on the main features of the tenure system (found on slide 22). The motion was seconded.

The discussion then ensued and one of the main issues raised, first by Dean Hwalla and then by others, was that the board of trustees had certain reservations about tenure and that the senate should address these reservations before voting on any proposal. The president was then asked about the details of these concerns, to which he answered that there were two main worries, the first of which had to do with the rate of promotions and second with the process of implementation. The first concern was that under the current system, the promotion rate at the university was quite high in comparison with other institutions with tenure. So some worry that if tenure is reinstated, then many of the current faculty will not be able to get tenure and this may have some grave consequences. The second practical concern was concerning the feasibility of implementation, since

this will allow all current senior faculty members to apply, making it extremely difficult for the administration to handle the volume of applications. Another worry was raised concerning having two tracks in the professorial ranks (tenured and non-tenured) and whether this will effect faculty interactions. Finally, the president mentioned an additional concern about the possibility of slowed productivity of tenured faculty.

The provost agreed with the president that the concerns should be addressed but emphasized that there are some convincing arguments that may help ease them, and that they should not be a reason to stop the proposal but to continue to improve it. The provost also emphasized how having a tenured system will make the university more competitive in attracting international scholars.

Dean Hwalla then asked a few questions concerning the status of associate professors who are not granted tenure and the consequences of post-tenure review. Dr. Dawy answered both questions, first by pointing out that full professors that decide not to apply or that are denied tenure will stay on the current contract based system. As for associate professors, they will be required to apply for tenure with the outcome either tenured associate professor, tenured full professor, or given a terminal year; this is in line with the existing “up-or-out” promotion guidelines for associate professors. and second by bringing up the post-tenure review practices from other peer institutions (e.g. the University of Texas system). A discussion of the two tracks for faculty member went on for a while, with some raising concerns and others arguing that there are none.

Another issue that was discussed at this time was the level of involvement of the Board of Trustees in decisions made in the Senate. It seemed that there was a constant worry in the Senate about the vote at the level of the Board of Trustees. Some argued that there was no point in voting in support of tenure only to be later blocked by the Board of Trustees, while others maintained that the Senate should be an independent body making its own decisions.

After a long discussion of the impressions of the Board of Trustees and specifically the Academic Affairs Committee, the senate decided that if any motion was adopted, it will be one that needs to answer any legitimate worries presented by all other bodies. The following **motion** was put to a vote: **That the principles that are laid out in the projected slide (slide 22 of powerpoint in appendix) be adopted on the understanding that they will be elaborated in due time.**

Slide 22:

- Reinstatement of a formal system of tenure at AUB
- Tenure conferred upon promotion to associate professor
- Evaluation process to follow current procedure for promotion in rank with rigorous implementation of criteria
- Effective post-tenure reviews conducted every five years
- Conferral of tenure to in-post associate professors and full professors contingent on formal review
- Existing non-tenure system maintained for in-post full professors who decide not to apply or are denied tenure
- Tenure system accompanied by phased retirement incentive plan

Vote 2015-18: 22 voted in favor, 1 against, and there were no abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 pm.

Minutes recorded by B. Bashour

Appendix:

1. Powerpoint Presentation by Dr. Zaher Dawy
2. Report of the Second Tenure Task Force