

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, January 25, 2019

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abou Araj, E. Al-Chaer, T. Bazi, A. Chalak, L. Daouk, J. DeJong (replacing I. Nuwayhid), N. Dumit, S. El Fakhani, H. El Rassy, N. El-Cheikh, W. El-Hajj, C. Fugate, N. Ghanem, M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer, S. Isber, K. Kabalan, S. Kanj-Sharara, F. Khuri, N. Melhem, H. Muller, A. Olabi (replacing R. Mohtar), S. Sadek, N. Saliba, M. Sayegh, E. Shamma, A. Shihadeh, F. Talih, C. Tarraf (replacing T. Nizameddin)

Absent: A. Abu-Alfa, I. Baalbaki, J. Chaaban*, H. Diab, M. Farah, A. Harutyunyan*, M. Jurdi *, R. Mohtar* (replaced by A. Olabi), T. Nizameddin* (replaced by C. Tarraf), I. Nuwayhid* (replaced by J. DeJong), G. Saad, R. Sharara*

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

1) Approval of Senate minutes of December 19, 2018

The minutes were approved unanimously.

2) Report on the BoT meetings of January 2019

The president noted that 24 trustees and trustee emeriti attended the January 2019 visit. They took a tour of FAS, were present when trustee emerita Myrna El Boustani was awarded the University Medal, discussed the AUBMC 2020 vision implementation and Epic deployment, highlighted possible opportunities for the administration to consider focusing on student housing, discussed the possibility of reconfiguring the board meetings to make them four meetings per year instead of five and reorganize the board committees to make them functional rather than strategic, went over the recent results in Alumni Affairs and passed the amended WAAUB alumni charter, and participated in the president's review.

3) Presentation on MSCHE Self-Study Process and Outcomes

The provost presented an overview of the University's self-study process which has been going on for the past two years, in preparation for reaccreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). The provost noted that AUB was accredited by MSCHE in 2004, reaccredited in 2009, a periodic review report was submitted in 2014, and the next evaluation visit is scheduled for March 2019 (through a Self-Study that started in 2017). The Self-Study main deliverables are:

1. Self-Study Design: A document which guides the preparation of the Self-Study Report.
2. Self-Study Report: Which addresses each of the following eight standards and verifies that the University meets them: I) Mission and Goals, II) Ethics and Integrity, III) Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience, IV) Support of the Student Experience, V) Educational Effectiveness & Assessment, VI) Planning Resources & Institutional Improvement, VII) Governance, Leadership & Administration, and VIII) Verification of Compliance and Requirements of Affiliation.
3. Documentation Roadmap (Documents, Processes, and Procedures)
4. Report on Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations.

The provost presented the objective of each standard and noted that around 150 members participated in preparing the Self-Study report, each standard having two co-chairs and 15 members on average. The Chair of the MSCHE evaluation committee, Dr. John DiNardo, visited AUB on October

10-12, 2018, met with the university stakeholders, reviewed the preliminary report draft, and gave feedback. The feedback was addressed and incorporated in the Self-Study report. The Self-Study report concluded with 13 recommendations across all standards, which should be addressed during the coming two years and prove to MSCHE that the recommendations have been addressed. In mid-January, the Self-Study Report, Appendices and References, Documentation Roadmap, and Compliance Report were submitted to MSCHE. The MSCHE evaluation team will be visiting AUB March 3-6. The provost thanked all individuals that were involved in the process.

A senator asked whether all suggested recommendations by every working group will be addressed. The provost answered that all the recommendations were documented in the report, but MSCHE allows AUB to select part of these recommendations and address them in the coming two years; hence, this does not prevent the administration from tackling all recommendations.

A senator congratulated AUB under the leadership of President Khuri for pledging to continue educating, free of charge, the Palestinian students who recently lost their US-Middle East Partnership Initiative-Tomorrow's Leaders (MEPI-TL) scholarships up until their graduation.

4) University Strategic Plan

The president presented AUB's strategic plan which was presented to the board in November 2018, and discussed in faculty-staff town hall meetings in December 2018. The strategic plan will be further discussed with the BoT in subsequent board meetings. The president started by stating the hardships Lebanon and the region are facing in terms of the low investment in research, the weak infrastructure, the massive displacement and growth of populations, the failing states and health systems, and the environmental unsustainability. The president then moved to articulate the strategic vision called, VITAL 2030, which addresses the challenges just mentioned and ensures AUB's future success. VITAL 2030 presents five priorities:

1. V – Valuing our community and validating our values

This priority is about translating the university's mission statement and the university's core values into measurable reality. Values such as integrity, accountability, diversity, transparency, and fairness must be validated and shared internally and externally by building partnerships, assessing our programs critically, seeking alignments, and avoiding duplication. AUB must continue to expand scholarships and diversify revenue streams in order to remain economically affordable and academically elite.

2. I – Innovating and integrating humanities, technology and purpose-based education

This priority is about ensuring that AUB is able to provide its students with knowledge that is as deep as it is wide. This requires real innovation in teaching and developing the best possible curriculum that creates additional opportunities to our students. The strategic plan envisions thematic cross-disciplinary courses all over campus; computer coding and technological literacy as part of the learning experience; theater to enhance communication skills, cultural exchange and self-confidence; cross-disciplinary team-based entrepreneurship; promoting healthy lifestyles; and creating adaptive learning spaces for multimodal learning. The ongoing process of changing the general education requirements (new core curriculum) is one step towards achieving these goals, and more initiative are underway.

3. T – Transforming the university experience for all

This priority is about providing an innovative and progressive campus-wide experience for students, building more fulfilling lives for faculty, and creating a happy and productive culture among AUB staff. Many steps have been achieved already towards these goals including the restructuring of the alumni association (WAAAUB) to better tap into AUB's alumni, encouraging more sports for all while banning smoking on campus, and renovating some of

the student dorms. Planned activities include the construction of a student center, upgrades for faculty and postgraduate housing, and recreating transformative teaching opportunities outside the classroom.

4. A – Advancing a world-class research agenda

This priority is about strengthening AUB’s research profile and enhancing its global reputation even more with impactful research in all the possible domains. To this end, AUB is planning to create an Office of Research whose role will be wholly devoted to advancing AUB’s research agenda, ensuring world-class results and empowering researchers and disseminating their output. The president asserted the world-class research AUB already produces and noted that we will build on this by prioritizing the upgrade of our research infrastructure and administration, establishing consistent models of impact through centers of research excellence, setting university-level interdisciplinary research themes, finding new ways to make research accessible to a wider audience, and providing more human and financial resources for research. Also several strategic Ph.D. and Masters programs will be introduced to serve the strategic vision, and more research funding opportunities will be sought.

5. L – Lifting the quality of health and medicine across our region (or Life)

This priority is about lifting the quality of health and medicine in Lebanon and the region, and transforming AUB to become a leading hub for both clinical and population health in the MENA region and the Global South. To this end, the strategic vision proposes building capacity for health professionals in all disciplines, developing innovative business models for expanding healthcare delivery and research, foster internal partnerships for collaboration and build local, regional, and international ties.

A senator raised a concern about the coherence of the various vision details and the way the details are expected to come together; the senator added that the senate should have received more details about the vision than the ones presented in the town hall meetings. The president respectfully disagreed and continued taking questions. A senator noted that it might be challenging to bring people together and there is a need to talk about cultural change and a change in academic setting to highlight such collaboration. The president acknowledged that these challenges exist, but eventually people will realize that working in groups is better but requires individuals to be excellent first. The president added that team projects should be better acknowledged. A senator asked whether there are plans to start fund raising for functional activities mainly for research and not for buildings. The president noted that since they started fundraising three years ago, the AUB endowment has increased by \$200M. Part of the endowment will be managed by the respective Deans for research or other purposes. Endowments can also be used to fund interdisciplinary projects. There is also a plan to create a central endowment for research not affiliated with any particular faculty. A senator asked about the current status of the health sciences composed of this vision and how is it considering the faculty inputs. Also why are the social sciences not presented in this vision. The president answered that social sciences have been supported before and will continue to be supported, but there are budget limitations and normally needs are prioritized by Deans in a bottom up fashion. The president added that this strategic plan is still in evolution and can be updated as time passes, similar to the Master Plan which allows for flexibility. Regarding the first question, the president noted that he met with the leaders in the three faculties (Medicine, FHS, and Nursing) and the other four faculties (FAS, MSFEA, OSB and FAFS) and they are collecting data and discussing how much their plans align. Once mature, more details will be continuously shared with the faculty.

5) Sharing of Information

The president started by noting that a very good discussion happened in the Senate Steering Committee (SSC) meeting about the sharing of information. The issue was mainly related to sharing

of information that was not transcribed or edited or reviewed with a news agency even when the president indicated that he was speaking in confidence. This request however was not honored. In a previous senate meeting, a resolution was made not to broadcast senate meetings or share information until the minutes are approved. The president added that he received multiple requests from faculty members to open an investigation, but he is not yet convinced that an investigation should be launched. Having said this, we should respect the senate rules and not interpret them individually. He is bringing this issue to the group in order to have common understanding about information sharing and to achieve mutual respect.

A senator said that now is the time to work together and promote AUB in Lebanon and beyond. We should deal with our problems internally and not contribute to AUB's detriment, but its success. A senator asked what can we share and what not. The president replied that any senator can share information unless the topic was stated to be confidential. Also the minutes need to be easily accessible for everyone to access. Another senator added that certain university sensitive issues cannot be shared, mainly: HR personnel and Budget Issues. With the exception of these two items, senate discussions should not be confidential. The senator added that senate minutes should be published online in timely manner. Also, it is very hard to control what senators say and how the conversations evolve and get transmitted.

Several senators commented on the negative impact such leaks have on AUB and on the targeted individuals. The negative publicity is affecting donors and causing misperception amongst alumni and community. Hence, detailed discussions that happen in the senate should not be shared, specifically confidential information such as budget. EVP Sayegh stressed on the negative impact of the leaks and expressed his concern of sharing AUBMC confidential details with the senate.

A senator indicated that the perception of control or policing is an illusion, and there is no effective actionable item in response to this leak. The senator added that the AUB administration should also take caution when expressing their opinions or thoughts outside the borders of AUB, which can also cause harm to AUB. The president indicated that this is not an administration accountability issue, it is specific to the senate and we need to find ways to enhance trust in the senate.

A senator mentioned that senators are delegates of their faculties and the senate is a forum of public deliberation. The university should have responded to the negative claims. A senator replied by saying that senators and any AUB employee have responsibility and accountability to this institution, and should strike a balance between freedom of speech and liability. Dean Harvey added that shared governance is based on trust; shared governance means increased trust and also means more accountability, respect, and responsibility. A senator added that the negative effect is not only external, but it is also internal.

The president closed by saying that the senate is the highest academic body in AUB, and mutual trust is a must between its members. Hence, once a topic is discussed in confidence, all senate members have the responsibility to respect its confidentiality.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

(Minutes recorded by W. El-Hajj, Secretary of the Senate)