

**American University of Beirut
Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, November 25, 2016**

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abu Khuzam, M. Al-Ghoul, G. Araj, I. Baalbaki, B. Bashour, A. Chalak, M. Clinton, S. El Fakhani, I. El Hajj, Z. Ghazzal (for M. Sayegh), M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, E. Hitti, N. Hwalla, M. Jurdi, G. Kanazi, R. Karami, A. Kayssi, F. Khuri (chairing), T. Mehmood Ali, S. Mejcher-Atassi, H. Muhtasib (by invitation), H. Muller, W. Nasr, T. Nizameddin, I. Nuwayhid, M. Salameh, S. Saleh, I. Saoud, R. Sedehi, A. Shihadeh

Absent: J. Chaaban, H. Diab, N. El Cheikh, H. Huijer*, D. Jamali, S. Kanj-Shararah, F. Maalouf, S. Sadek*, M. Sayegh*, E. Shamma, A. Taher, S. Zeineldine*

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting came to order at 2:05 p.m.

1) Approval of minutes of October 21 & 26, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of October 21 were approved as circulated. The minutes of the meeting of October 26 were approved with minor amendments.

2) Voting on degrees for two FEA Summer graduates

A motion was made to approve the following two degrees:

Mohamad Annan (201301673) Bachelor of Engineering – Major: Computer and Communications Engineering.

Mohamed Khalifeh (201300977) Bachelor of Engineering – Major: Mechanical Engineering

Vote 2017-05. The motion was passed unanimously.

3) Grading Equivalency Proposal

The President brought up an item that was not on the agenda but that needed to be addressed before discussing the grading equivalency proposal. The President emphasized the need for clarity about the status of works-in-progress by senate committees, vis-à-vis confidentiality. There was a lengthy and engaged discussion about how to best balance the following two competing interests: (a) the importance of getting input from our constituents on issues being deliberated by the senate, and, (b) the ability of committees to focus on, and continually revise, works in progress with the confidence that they have the authority to decide when said work is in a form that is appropriate for distribution outside of the committee. **A three-part motion was made to establish a policy according to which: (1) all works in progress will remain confidential until the committee charged with working on it determines that their work shall be shared with our constituents, (2) the senate will set the timetable for when that public sharing shall occur, and (3) the senate and the relevant committee will coordinate to ensure that the public sharing occurs before the senate votes on the matter at hand. Vote 2017-06. The motion was passed unanimously.**

During the senate meeting of 21 October 2016, a motion was passed calling for the President to appoint a committee to study the registrar's grading equivalence proposal and to bring a revised proposal back to the senate. The members of that committee reported that they had identified two goals in this process that need to be met in tandem. The first goal is addressing grade deflation at AUB. The second goal is to replace AUB's idiosyncratic method of computing grade point averages with a system that conforms to internationally recognized standards. Given that AUB is an American institution, the committee felt the internationally recognized standard that was most appropriate is

the one that is used by the vast majority of American colleges and universities: the College Board. Among senators, there was a general consensus that using the College Board's method of calculating GPAs was a good idea, and there was a significant amount of discussion about how best to achieve the goal pertaining to grade deflation. The Provost urged that we move as quickly as possible to a letter grade system and said that we should trust our faculty to make this adjustment in a way that will facilitate meeting the two goals stated above. Several senators, the Interim Dean of FEA, and the President concurred. **A motion was made to convert the ad hoc committee working on this issue into a task force to come up with a plan to implement the conversion to a letter grading system.** In the discussion of this motion, the Dean of Students emphasized that the senate should bear in mind that there is a cultural element to grade deflation at AUB that has been very resistant to change. He noted that there are particular courses that have class averages in the 50s or 60s every year and have had those low averages consistently over many years. That concern was acknowledged, but no motions for specific remedies were made; though the President did suggest that faculty members could be required to provide justifications for class averages that deviated significantly from institutional norms. Some senators expressed concern over this suggestion, citing anecdotal evidence of significantly divergent class averages in two sections of the same course, taught by the same instructor, in the same semester. These senators said that, especially in relatively small classes, you do get these statistical anomalies. **Vote 2017-07. The motion was passed unanimously.**

4) Report of the chair on November BoT meetings

The President was happy to note that there are four (two permanent and two alumni elected) new female trustees on the board, which is progress, though the gender ratio is still not what it ought to be. The President reported that the BoT voted to approve a senate-elected representative to the board's Academic Affairs Committee. This representative will be a non-voting member, but will be involved in all activities except tenure and promotion related personnel matters because of issues with conflict of interest. Many senators noted that this was real progress and would be seen as an act of good faith on the part of the board. The President also reported that the BoT approved some funds to purchase lands adjacent to AUB's campus and approved the naming of a number of buildings on campus. The Provost reported that the BoT approved the Tenure Design Committee's report with a few very minor comments and modifications. A senator asked if that revised document would be shared with the senate and our constituents, and the Provost replied that, yes, it would be shared.

In light of the late hour and the attrition of numerous senators, it was decided that the remaining four items on the agenda would be postponed until the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm.

(Minutes recorded by H. Muller, Secretary of the Senate)