

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abou Araj, A. Abu-Alfa, F. Abu Salem, E. Al-Chaer, I. Baalbaki, B. Bashour, S. BouJaoude (by invitation), A. Chalak, A. Chehab, L. Daouk-Oyry, N. Dumit (for H. Huijer and as Senator), N. El-Cheikh, W. El-Hajj, D. Gubara, M. Harajli, E. Hitti, D. Jamali (for S. Harvey), M. Jurdi, A. Kayssi, F. Khuri (chairing), P. McGreevy, H. Muller, R. Nakkash (by invitation), W. Nasr, A. Olabi, S. Ramia (for I. Nuwayhid), S. Sadek, E. Shammass, A. Shihadeh, A. Tahir (by invitation), G. Zaatari (for M. Sayegh)

Absent: J. Chaaban*, S. El Fakhani, C. Harb, A. Harutyunyan*, S. Harvey*, H. Huijer*, G. Kanazi*, S. Kanj-Shararah*, R. Karami, N. Melhem*, T. Nizameddin, I. Nuwayhid*, M. Sayegh*, R. Sharara-Chami*, S. Zeineldine*, H. Diab

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting came to order at 2:00 p.m.

1) Obituary for Dr. Lutfi Diab

Dean El-Cheikh read a memorial statement for Professor Lutfi Diab (see appendix I) after which the Senate observed a moment of silence.

2) Approval of the minutes of September 29, 2017

The minutes were approved with minor amendments.

3) Election of an FAS Representative on the Senate Committee for Faculty Affairs (SCFA)

The resignation of Dr. Bana Bashour from SCFA left a vacancy for the position representing FAS. Dr. Wissam El-Hajj was nominated and elected by acclamation.

4) Voting of degrees for MSFEA graduates

Interim Registrar H. Abou Araj presented a list of degree candidates in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA). Dean Shihadeh recommended awarding the indicated degrees to the indicated students. **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in MSFEA. Vote 2018-09. The motion was approved unanimously.**

5) Change of degree name from “BS in Petroleum Studies” to “BS in Petroleum Geosciences”

Dr. Saouma BouJaoude presented this proposal in his capacity as chair of the FAS Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC). Dr. BouJaoude explained that the rationale for this name change is that the word “studies” is very broad and reflects a wide domain that could include such issues as management, marketing, and legal and political affairs related to petroleum exploration and extraction. However, the name Petroleum Geosciences reflects and emphasizes the nature of the program currently being offered, which focuses on the geological aspects, including origin, formation, migration, and trapping of hydrocarbon materials, rock formations, basins and reservoir characterization, tectonic and structural aspects, field, mineralogical, petrographic and stratigraphic aspects of rock formations, etc. Dr. BouJaoude affirmed that the request for this name change was approved by FAS UCC on December 16, 2016 and by FAS on September 28, 2017. He also noted that this change in the name of the program does not include any changes in the curriculum, and emphasized that the real goal is to have a name that better reflects the actual content of the

program to appropriately shape the expectations of prospective students. In the course of the discussion, Senators asked if this had been cleared by either the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education or the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. After stating that those bodies are to be consulted after it has been approved by appropriate entities at AUB, Dr. BouJaoude made a request that a formal written document explaining exactly what boards, committees, ministries, etc. need to be consulted, and in what order they need to be consulted, should be generated by the Office of the Provost and approved by the Senate because the current practice of relying on institutional memory is problematic and exposes the institution to too great a possibility of procedural error. Both the Provost and the President concurred. **A motion was made to approve the proposed name change. Vote 2018-10. The motion was approved unanimously.**

6) Update on progress of preparations for the letter grading trial year

The Provost gave a brief update on the preparations so far. Starting with the current semester, all AUB instructors will enter both a number and a letter grade so that his office can begin assembling data to measure how moving to letter grades might impact our students' GPAs with the goal of better facilitating their admission into appropriate graduate programs, obtaining scholarships, etc. He said that after meeting with members of various faculties, his general sense is that most instructors are receptive to the idea of moving to letter grades but that there is some apprehension about the suggested or "target" grade distribution. He went on to say that in upcoming town-hall meetings he will try to address these concerns by emphasizing that those percentages refer to averages distributed over the whole university in a given semester, so instructors will definitely still have the flexibility in assigning grades if, for instance, they have one course section with students who performed particularly strongly or particularly weakly. The Provost concluded his update by noting that this is a one-year trial and the issue will be brought back to the Senate after data has been collected. During discussion, a Senator suggested that we discuss the data from the fall semester as soon as it is ready, because there will probably be only one Senate meeting after grades are assigned for the spring semester.

7) Report of the ad-hoc committee on electronic voting

The report was distributed for Senators' reference a week before this meeting as an email attachment (**see appendix II**). The chair of the ad-hoc committee, Dr. Ghazi Zaatari, summarized the report, emphasizing the three concrete recommendations made by the committee, which are: (1) Faculties/schools should have the option to adopt electronic voting for elections; however, it cannot mix between the two systems for voting on one motion, electronic and nonelectronic. (2) A standardized procedure for implementation should be followed. (3) Electronic voting for any motion requires assembly of faculty for prior discussion and approval. **A motion was made to approve the report.** During discussion a Senator noted both that this issue was not put on the meeting agenda as a voting item and that, at this point, it was ambiguous what "approving the report" amounted to. Does it mean that the three recommendations are henceforth university policy, and, if not, then what does it mean? **A substitute motion was made to accept the report.** In discussion it became clear that the substitute motion was also ambiguous. **A second substitute motion was made to approve the recommendations, with a change made to the third one, pending further information on implementation. Vote 2018-11. The motion was passed by a vote of 22-1-4.** (N.B.: the change referred to in the second substitute motion is reflected in the way the third recommendation is written in these minutes.)

8) Compliance updates

Dr. Adnan Tahir gave an update on the work being done to ensure compliance with the relevant laws and regulations of Lebanon, the United States, and any other governments with jurisdiction over agencies that provide funding for various projects. (**See Appendix III**)

9) Update on the President’s initiative on a tobacco-free AUB

Dr. Rima Nakkash gave an update on the initiative. One particular point of emphasis was that this is not an initiative with the goal either of limiting or removing smoking from AUB, but an attempt to remove tobacco in all its physical and representational forms from campus life. So this includes e-cigarettes as well forms of tobacco consumption in which no smoke is produced, but also commercial and cultural manifestations of tobacco such as advertisements and other media presentations. During discussion some Senators expressed unequivocal and enthusiastic support for the initiative. Other Senators were more skeptical. The concerns of the second group included safety issues related to female students and faculty exiting campus at night to smoke in dark spaces such as parking lots, the problem of paternalism especially in the case of the ban on tobacco being extended to faculty housing, and worries about potential effects on community cohesion if a minority group is marginalized while a majority group is encouraged to monitor the minority group for infractions of university policy. The advocates of the initiative responded to these concerns by saying that measures will be taken to ensure safety at nocturnal smoking enclaves outside of the campus walls, while autonomy and self-determination may be good there is a higher good to be found in encouraging healthy behavior, and that alongside fines and other punishments, people violating the no tobacco policy will be encouraged to join a fully subsidized smoking cessation program so perhaps it will not seem so harsh after all.

10) Appointments and term of chairpersons

In light of the late hour and significant attrition of Senators, the chair of the SSC (who was chairing the Senate meeting by this point) announced that this item would not be addressed today but would be put on the agenda for the next Senate meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm.

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

Appendix I: Obituary for Dr. Lutfi Diab



Lutfi Diab.
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Appendix II: Report of the ad-hoc committee on electronic voting



Electronic Voting
Report-September 5

Appendix III: Compliance Program

