

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, January 27, 2017

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abu Khuzam, M. Al-Ghoul, I. Baalbaki, B. Bashour, J. Chaaban, A. Chalak, M. Clinton, H. Diab, N. El Cheikh, S. El Fakhani, I. Elhadj, M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer, N. Hwalla, M. Jurdi, G. Kanazi, S. Kanj-Shararah, R. Karami, A. Kayssi, F. Khuri (chairing), F. Maalouf, T. Mehmood Ali, S. Mejcher-Atassi, H. Muller, W. Nasr, I. Nuwayhid, S. Sadek, M. Salameh, S. Saleh, I. Saoud, M. Sayegh, R. Sedehi, E. Shammass, A. Shihadeh

Absent: G. Araj*, D. Jamali*, T. Nizameddin, A. Taher, S. Zeineldine*

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting came to order at 2:06 p.m.

1) Approval of minutes of December 16, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of December 16 were approved as amended.

2) Changes to Faculty and Senate bylaws related to the Faculty of Medicine (FM)

A motion was made to approve the proposed amendments to the FM bylaws (see Appendix I)

In the discussion of this proposal, some Senators expressed concern that the vote in FM was conducted by email and the question arose as to whether it might be a violation of the university's bylaws for a faculty to vote to change its bylaws in a context other than a meeting where the voting members are physically together in the same room at the same time. The relevant section of the bylaws were read aloud and the chair of the meeting ruled the motion out of order on the basis that the usual understanding of the term "present" in the salient section of the bylaws connotes physical presence. The EVP/Dean of FM explained that the reason his faculty decided to conduct these votes by email is that it is difficult to get a quorum at traditional meetings because of the nature and unpredictability of the schedules of the members of FM, and pointed to the high participation rate in this vote (191-6-6 with only 50 not voting) as evidence that voting by email is preferable. **A substitute motion was made to make a one-time exception to the bylaws to allow this proposal to amend the FM bylaws by being brought forward for a vote, with the understanding that the Senate will return to the issue of such email votes in order to establish a settled policy. Vote 2017-14. The substitute motion was approved by a vote of 31-1-2.**

A new motion was made to approve the proposed amendments to the FM bylaws (see Appendix I). **Vote 2017-15. The motion was approved unanimously.**

A motion was made to approve the proposed amendments to the Senate bylaws (see Appendix II). **Vote 2017-16. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3) Voting on the degree of an FEA PhD student

A motion was made to approve the following degree:

Ramy Baly (200911399) – PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering

Vote 2017-17. The motion was passed unanimously.

4) Obituaries for Sadiq Al Azm and Larry Afifi

Bana Bashour, chair of the Philosophy Department, read an obituary for Sadiq Al Azm (see Appendix III). Iman Nuwayid, Dean of FHS, read an obituary for Larry Afifi (see Appendix IV). The Senate held moments of silence for each.

5) Chair's report on the January meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT)

The President reported to the Senate on the January meeting of the BoT by relating some of what was discussed and decided in various committees. The Finance Committee (FC) worked on giving structure to the university's budget and plans to have a preliminary budget by March. The FC released funds to allow important infrastructure projects in AUBMC, FAS, and Student Housing to go forward. The President updated the Committee on Medicine and Health on the progress being made upgrading the Ambulatory Care Center and constructing the new Medical Center. The President happily reported that both the Finance Committee and the Academic Affairs Committee unanimously approved the report of the Tenure Design Committee. The IT Committee affirmed its commitment to enhancing security, increasing internet bandwidth, and working with the new government to increase connectivity. The Alumni Affairs Committee discussed ways of collecting input from the Beirut chapter of the alumni association. The discussions of the Audit Committee cannot be shared with the Senate for legal reasons. The President closed his report by noting that the recent FAS symposium made a very positive impression on the members of the BoT who attended and thanked those in the room who were involved in its planning and execution. The floor was then opened for questions. Senators had several questions about whether individual issues besides those specifically mentioned in the chair's report were discussed at the BoT meeting, including the workspace crisis in FAS – both office space and classroom space – and the decision to, and the upcoming process for, converting the Interim Provost's current two-year appointment to an appointment to the post of Provost. The President said that the BoT is very aware of the workspace issues faced by FAS and that some of the capital projects mentioned in his report are specifically aimed at addressing those. With regard to the process of the Interim Provost becoming the Provost, the President said he made it clear to the BoT that he did not think it would be in the best interests of the university to have an open, international search. He noted that a Consultation Committee on the appointment of the Provost had been formed and that there will be a series of town-hall meetings and other forums for faculty members to give their input to the process but that, barring any unexpected and surprising news, the President fully expects to recommend that the current Interim Provost be appointed to the post of Provost. In response to a question from another Senator, the President confirmed that a presentation was made to the BoT on the report of the external reviewers on faculty status for the Hariri School of Nursing. The EVP for Medical Affairs stated that the report of the external reviewers was positive and that the reviewers recommended transition of the school to faculty status over a period of three years. The President stated that a three-year transition period was too long and that the parties concerned should try for a two-year transition.

6) Election of a faculty representative to the BoT Academic Affairs Committee

The President explained that the person chosen will be oriented by the BoT, as all new representatives are, they will attend the meetings of the Academic Affairs Committee, in which they will have a chance to give their input but will not have a vote. The floor was opened for nominations. Salah Sadek and May Jurdi were nominated. **A motion was made to invite the candidates to make a few remarks about their relevant experience and how they planned to approach the position. Vote 2017-18. The motion was passed unanimously.** Both candidates emphasized the importance of speaking truth to power. There was some discussion before the vote. One Senator asked if there would be a gag order on this person or if they would be free to share the deliberations of the BoT Academic Affairs Committee with other Senators and our constituents. The President said, as far as he knew, there would be no standing gag order but that sometimes

individual issues might be deemed to be confidential, and gave the analogy of when issues that arise in the Senate are not entered into the minutes for legal reasons. The President complimented the nominators on their prudence in selecting these two Senators and expressed confidence that either one would meet the dual standards of transparency and confidentiality while carrying out the responsibilities of the position. The chair of the Senate Steering Committee emphasized that today's vote comes after long efforts both by the Senate and Faculty United (the faculty association which is the AUB chapter of AAUP), noting that both bodies have been calling for faculty representation on the BoT since at least 2013. He went on to say that while this is indeed real progress, it should be seen as a first step, because this really should be a voting position. The Senate then voted. **Salah Sadek was elected to the post of faculty representative to the BoT Academic Affairs Committee** with a total of 56% of the 34 votes cast.

7) Proposal to amend course withdrawal deadline

Due to the increase in the number of student petitions to withdraw from courses after the last day of withdrawal from classes, Registrar Moueen Salameh proposes, and the Board of Deans has approved, a plan to extend the withdrawal period from classes from 10 weeks to 12 weeks for regular semesters and from 5 weeks to 6 weeks for summer terms. In order to adequately inform students about how they are faring in their course, the Registrar asks that the following policy be instituted: "At least 50% of the overall course assessment should be issued by the instructor before that last day of withdrawal." **A motion was made to approve the proposal.** In the course of discussion, it was made clear that this change, if approved, would be made effective this semester. One Senator asked why the proposal was not simply to move the deadline to the last day of the semester. The Registrar replied that this suggestion is contraindicated by benchmarking. Several Senators from FAS said that the 50% requirement was problematic, given the ways their courses are organized: e.g., end-of-semester seminar papers in the humanities and lab reports cover a full semester of work in Biology. **A substitute motion was made to approve the proposal on the condition that the wording of the new policy be changed to: "At least 40% of the overall assessment is expected to be issued by the instructor before the last day of withdrawal."** In the course of discussing the first substitute motion, the issue of moving the deadline to the last day of the semester came up again. **A second substitute motion to keep the "40%" and "is expected to" changes but to change the deadline to the last day of the semester. Vote 2017-19. The second substitute motion was defeated by a vote of 8-22-4.** There was some more discussion of the first substitute motion. **Vote 2017-20. The first substitute motion was approved by a vote of 29-2-3.**

8) Potential Issues for the Senate to discuss or follow-up on during 2017

The chair of the Senate Steering Committee asked for input from Senators on what topics should be added to agenda for Senate meetings during the remainder of the 2016-2017 academic year. The list he compiled is as follows:

- Follow up on the formation of a faculty grievance committee
- Discuss the processes related to academic administrative appointments
- Discuss the propriety of voting by email vis-à-vis the current university bylaws
- Retirement options and early retirement packages
- HIP coverage (medications, dental, etc.)
- Follow up on the formation a task force to establish criteria for measuring teaching effectiveness
- Follow up on equity of workload across faculties
- Discuss competing visions on tuition for the coming years
- Follow up on establishing a means of sharing Senate minutes with our constituents

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

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

Appendix I: Amendment of Faculties bylaws related to FM



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Appendix II: Amendment of Senate bylaws related to FM



Appendix II.pdf

Appendix III: Obituary for Sadiq Al Azm



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Appendix IV: Obituary for Larry Afifi



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