

**American University of Beirut  
Minutes of the University Senate  
Meeting of Friday, March 27, 2015**

**Present:** H. Abu Khuzam, G. Araj , V. Araman, J. Chaaban, S. Chahine, M. Clinton, A. Dallal (Chairing), J. DeJong, A. Dietrich, N. Ghaddar (on invitation), C. Harb, S. Harb, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer, S. Jabbour-Khoury, D. Jaalouk, A. Jaffa (representing M. Sayegh), D. Jamali, V. Khamis, P. McGreevy, H. Muller, L. Nasreddine, I. Nuwayhid, I. Osman (on invitation), M. Salameh, S. Saleh, M. Suidan, S. Talhouk (representing N. Hwalla), C. Tarraf (on behalf of T. Nizameddin), S. Zeineldine, R. Zurayk (on invitation)

**Absent:** T. Amin\* ,A. Chalak, Z. Dawy\*, P. Dorman\*, I. Elhajj\*, M. Al-Ghoul, H. Diab, N. Farajalla\* , N. Hwalla\* , A. Kayssi\* , S. Kanj, F. Maalouf, W. Nasr, E. Shammass\* , A. Taher

(\*= regrets notified before meeting or on leave)

The meeting came to order at 2pm.

**1) Approval of the minutes of January 23, 2015 and February 27, 2015.** The minutes of Jan 23 were approved with amendments sent by a senator via email. The minutes of February 27 were approved with a minor amendment.

**2) BoT Chair's report a. Report on the March BOT meeting**

Provost Dallal reported on behalf of the President regarding decisions made at the recent BoT meeting, including: appointment of the new President Dr. Fadlo Khuri; approval of the donor scholarship policy which will be implemented once the implications are understood; approval of a new initiative for 150 endowed scholarships on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary; amendment to WAAAUB by-laws to include medical residents and fellows who spent at least one year at AUB; UCSA by-laws approved; and, approval of two new departments in FEA. In discussion a senator asked whether the faculty contract had been discussed, as had been promised by the President. The Provost replied that he was not aware of any discussion. In response to a question about the budget, the Provost explained that the budget was discussed extensively but many issues still need discussion. He confirmed that benefits were not changed. When questions were asked about the level of the budget deficit, the Provost stated that the one-time measures that had been introduced last year to balance the budget had expired, and the financial year had started with the budget in deficit. In addition, a number of BoT mandated measures to insulate against risk had to be implemented through the creation of provisions and reserve funds. The issue of allocations between AUB-campus/AUBMC is still not resolved. The BoT needs to approve a final balanced budget by May. Questions were asked if there would be austerity measures or alternative financing would be sought. The Provost enumerated 5 measures that are not different from standard measures taken at other universities undergoing budget constraints, including limited tuition increase, controlling the financial aid budget, freezing non-academic hires, limits to executive hires and work on allocations and provisions. If these measures are exhausted, the administration would need to resort to freezing academic lines. He noted that work was ongoing on discretionary expenditures. A senator asked if faculty had been asked for suggestions regarding areas of discretionary expenditure that could be cut. Dean Suidan mentioned that making economies in two areas – acquisition and construction – could save a great deal of funds.

### 3) Proposal for MS Food Security program

R. Zurayk (FAFS) presented the proposal on behalf of Dean Hwalla, explaining that food security is a major challenge for the region, as the biggest net food importer in the world. FAFS proposes the program because of the lack of qualified specialists and programs in the region. A market survey among local NGOs and food security experts indicated overwhelming interest. The credit load for the thesis/non-thesis options would be 24/18 for core credits (including 9 for the thesis and 3 for a project in the non-thesis option), and 6/12 for electives, for a total of 30 credits. I. Osman, chair of BoGS, stated that the program had been thoroughly reviewed by BoGS and **made a motion to approve the program**. In discussion questions were raised about the title of the program, electives, whether conflict is addressed and whether the program would be open to students from any discipline. R. Zurayk replied that the title 'food security' is a universally used term including by FAO. The field is inherently multidisciplinary so students from any disciplinary background could be accepted. Conflict would be covered in terms of the conceptual framework for food security. Concern was expressed about faculty resources given new courses needed. There are 7-8 existing faculty members and another recruit would be needed to dynamize the program. M. Suidan expressed concern about the dual track and that the thesis is equivalent to more than one course. R. Zurayk responded that this is a university-wide regulation and the program opted for the minimum because of issues of cost. I. Nuwayhid asked why a course on research methods, not only statistics, was not included and who is currently doing this work given the absence of such programs. Colleagues from FAFS explained that expertise tends to be in disciplinary silos, such as nutrition or agriculture, not in food security broadly. Research methods would be taught – the course is inappropriately labeled. A question was raised about working with corporations. R. Zurayk responded that there are many perspectives and the program should be seen as a ground for critical analysis of the field. **The motion passed unanimously.**

### 4) Proposed non-thesis option for MS Energy Studies program

I. Osman as Chair of BoGS, reported that the program was already approved but this is a small change. N. Ghaddar explained that currently there are 18 graduate students in the program and because they are working professionals, they have asked for this option. She stated that students do projects in many of the courses and these are time-consuming for faculty to organize. She noted that in the US, master's programs are typically one year with the maximum number of credits being 27 for non-thesis options and therefore this is beyond that number. The proposal was approved by DUIP and BoGS. **A motion was made to approve the non-thesis option.** I. Nuwayhid pointed out an inconsistency with the previous food security proposal whereby 6 credits for the thesis was seen as equivalent to a 3-credit course + 3-credit project whereas in this case two courses are seen as equivalent to a thesis. Concern was expressed by other senators about incentives to enter the thesis option, and that feasibility or resources should not be an argument. Others argued that such decisions should be specific to disciplines, and that university-wide regulations are not appropriate. P. McGreevy commented that external reviewers have asked why AUB does not offer course-only master's degrees. M. Suidan noted that many universities do not allow transfers from the thesis to non-thesis option. The Provost stated that historically when AUB only offered master's degrees, the non-thesis option was less important but now that it offers doctoral programs, it is important to have two tracks at the graduate level. *An action item was proposed for the Provost's office to analyze the number of* An action item was proposed for the Provost's office to analyze the number of students who chose non-thesis options where they exist in master's programs at AUB

over the last two years. The Provost stated that his office could provide statistics on the number of master's programs with non-thesis options, as well as the number of credits assigned for the thesis.

**The motion was approved by a majority with one opposed and one abstention.**

## **5. Update from Task Force on Faculty Compensation**

The Provost reported on the work of this Task Force which was formed by the President in March 2014. A number of activities have been completed or are almost completed, including review of current compensation practices, comparative analysis across faculties, comparison against cost of living increases, benchmarking by discipline locally, regionally and internationally; and a proposal for a faculty salary scale. Once the full document of the Task Force is finished, it will be sent to the President and a version will be made available. The recommendations of the Task Force concern: a) addressing gender inequities (information will be given on salaries by gender to Deans); b) making cost-of-living adjustments as warranted – this will affect some assistant and associate professors in FAS; c) developing a proposed salary scale; d) adjust the scale to the median of the scale used by CUPA (College and University Professional Association for Human Resources); e) that the annual salary adjustment be divided into two components – for cost of living and merit respectively; f) developing tools by each faculty for calculating merit increases. In discussion, questions were asked whether there was a cap on salary increases at AUB based on length of service given that there is no retirement age, and concern was expressed over the choice of the consumer price index. One senator raised the issue that in the US many agricultural programs are in rural areas, and therefore AUB should be compared to urban programs. J. Chaaban stated that on average AUB is comparative at initial hire with the US job market; that nursing faculty earn less than the median; and that in the rank of associate professor/early professor the annual increase is not sufficient for a decent retirement. He asked who would be committed to reviewing the situation every 5 years. I. Nuwayhid confirmed that faculty can afford expenses while at the university, but once they leave or retire from the university there is financial uncertainty. Another senator reported that many universities allow faculty to adjust their own benefit package according to changes over time. The Provost committed to finishing the report soon.

Item 6 was not addressed due to lack of time.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Minutes recorded by J. DeJong, Secretary of the Senate