

**American University of Beirut**  
**Final Minutes of the University Senate**  
**Meeting of Friday, April 28, 2017**

**Present:** M. Abiad, H. Abu Khuzam, M. Al-Ghoul, I. Baalbaki, B. Bashour, S. Boujaoude (for N. El Cheikh), J. Chaaban, A. Chalak, M. Clinton, H. Diab, I. Elhaji, T. Ghaddar (by invitation), Z. Ghazzal (for M. Sayegh), M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer, N. Hwalla, D. Jamali, M. Jurdi, S. Kanj-Shararah, R. Karami, A. Kayssi, F. Khuri (chairing), T. Mehmood Ali, S. Mejcher-Atassi, H. Muller, W. Nasr, T. Nizameddin, I. Nuwayhid, S. Sadek, M. Salameh, I. Saoud, R. Sedehi, E. Shamma, A. Shihadeh

**Absent:** G. Araj, S. El Fakhani, G. Kanazi, F. Maalouf, S. Saleh\*, A. Taher, S. Zeineldine

(\* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting came to order at 2:10 p.m.

**1) Obituary for Professor Landry Slade**

Tarek Ghaddar, chair of the Department of Chemistry, read an obituary for Landry Slade (see Appendix I) and the Senate observed a moment of silence in his honor.

**2) Approval of the minutes of March 31, 2017**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**3) Proposal for a PhD program in Chemistry**

Dr. Tarek Ghaddar gave a presentation on a proposal for a new PhD program in Chemistry (see Appendix II). **A motion was made to approve the proposal.** In the discussion the issue arose of whether applicants from for-profit universities would be considered for admission into the new PhD program. The President urged caution in such cases because admitting students with undergraduate degrees from such institutions could cause problems with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education as that body might object to the category of a person with a PhD from an accredited institution, but with a BS from an unaccredited one. Dr. Ghaddar said he understood the issue and that the Chemistry Department would take that into consideration in any future admissions decisions. **Vote 2017-32. The motion was passed unanimously.**

**4) Posting of syllabi**

Dean Nizameddin explained that this is a request that comes from the USFC and emphasized that posting syllabi online at the beginning of the summer will help students prepare for summer and fall courses and that having this additional information out there might help streamline the registration process during the drop-and-add period since students would know more about the structure and format of the courses before the first meeting of the class. **A motion was made to request that syllabi for all courses be posted online.** A Senator asked if "syllabi" in this context refers to sample syllabi or the specific syllabus for each section of each course being taught in any given semester. Dean Nizameddin said that the members of the USFC understand that it may not always be possible to have the exact syllabus for each and every particular section in advance and that sometimes there may be changes before the start of the semester. The goal of the proposal is simply to increase the amount of information available to students in a manner that is consistent with the current practices

of many of our peer institutions. **A substitute motion was made to request that each department posts online the last syllabus used for each course listed in the catalog. Vote 2017-33. The substitute motion was passed unanimously.**

**5) Provost's update on newly formed taskforces**

The Provost updated the Senate on four new taskforces. (1) The Faculty Grievance Committee is being co-chaired by Dr. Nuhad Dumit and Dr. Syrine Hout. The committee has begun to review guidelines at US peer institutions regarding standing grievance committees for faculty issues. So far, the committee has had one meeting (Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>). (2) The Electronic Voting Committee is being co-chaired by Dr. Ghazi Zaatari and Dr. Rima Habib. The committee has begun discussing ways to implement new technologies and tools to enhance voter participation while maintaining conformity to the rules and regulations of the respective program, department, faculty or other institutional body. The committee has had one meeting (Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>). (3) The Committee on Teaching Effectiveness is being co-chaired by Dr. Saouma Boujaoude and Dr. Nahla Hwalla and its function is to discuss and develop criteria and mechanisms to measure teaching effectiveness. It has met once (Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>). (4) The Committee on Student Complaints is being co-chaired by Dr. Hala Muhtasib and Dr. Talal Nizameddin. The functions of this committee will be four-fold: (i) categorize the types of student complaints; (ii) describe the policies and procedures currently being used to handle student grievances and complaints; (iii) identify where these policies and procedures are published, and who keeps track of them and how they do so; and (iv) recommend modifications based on the information obtained in (i)-(iii).

**6) Policy on hiring consultants**

The Director of Procurement and Contracts Administration (PCA), Mrs. Hanan Ramadan, addressed the Senate on the issue of hiring consultants. Mrs. Ramadan emphasized that PCA knows that hiring consultants is different in kind, and not just degree, from purchasing commodities and that her office strives to have a flexible process. She continued by saying that PCA realizes that the academic researchers are the experts in this context and that if one has a legitimate explanation for why hiring one person in particular is the best way to go then PCA will do their best to accommodate such a request, but that all concerned need to make sure that there is compliance with AUB policy and all applicable laws, whether Lebanese, American or those of the home nation of any grant issuing institution. In order to give a sense of the sort of issues that are relevant here, the President highlighted two sorts of common problems. The first is the conflict of interest that is inherent in hiring members of one's own family to work as a consultant. The second is when an EU or US-based funding organization assumes that collaborating with Israeli universities is a matter of course for a regional study: this would of course be viewed differently by the Lebanese government. Several Senators expressed frustration at how long the screening process has taken in the past and how this has hurt research outcomes. One Senator made a suggestion for streamlining the process: in the case when the person applying for the grant knows the names of everyone they want to bring on board to the project at the outset, let us make it the case that the screening process happens at the granting level and not at a later stage. The President, the COO and the Director of PCA all agreed that this was a good idea and said they would work toward implementing that change. The President closed the discussion by asking for patience and reminding Senators that while the principle investigator (PI) is responsible to the grant, AUB is responsible to all the PIs, all the granting agencies with which they work and multiple governments.

**7) HIP strategy update**

The COO and the President gave the Senate an update on their efforts to address several outstanding concerns with AUB's Health Insurance Program (HIP). The first issue the COO addressed is the question of what is covered vs. what is not covered and he discussed the example of a heart procedure being covered but a stint that is implanted during the surgery not being covered. He

informed the Senate that a taskforce has been formed with the following three goals: identifying cases in which essential items are not covered, initiating a process to locate vendors with the most competitive prices for those items, and looking into the feasibility of covering those items. The COO went on to emphasize that while healthcare costs have been going up worldwide, HIP premiums have not gone up at all and that, unlike most plans, there is not a significant increase in premiums as the insured person ages. Another part of the HIP strategy will be to create a medical committee to give input into such decisions as to whether to continue annual PET scans for a given patient or if changing to an annual physical exam is more properly indicated by the patient's current condition. Several senators raised concerns and made suggestions. Examples of concerns were unexpected payroll deductions being assessed two months after a procedure, the inconvenience and discomfort of needing to walk from the ER to HIP with a broken hand in order to get a form signed before the relevant medical treatment is initiated, and the fact that female faculty cannot enroll their children in HIP unless the father is also enrolled. The COO and the President said they agreed that non-announced post-procedure charges need to stop, that procedures for streamlining HIP clearance for acute procedures need to be put in place, and that moving from a family-plan model to an employee-plan model should be used to help address those types of gender equity issues. After several Senators expressed skepticism about the claim that HIP premiums have not gone up and that there are not significant rate increases as the insured person ages, one Senator suggested hiring a consultant for an external review of current HIP management practices. The President said that he is reluctant to hire such a consultant without the confidence that relevant institutions could give them the sort of good data that could inform a proposal for improved management. So the first step in this lengthy process should be improved data collection.

**8) Proposed new grading system at AUB**

The Provost gave the Senate a presentation explaining a pilot proposal drawn up by the task force on grading at AUB. During the 2017-2018 academic year, faculty will continue to assign a number grade for each student as we have been doing but they will also be asked to assign a letter grade for each student as well. During the upcoming year, those letter grades will not go onto the students' transcript but will instead be kept in a record so that data can be gathered to make a more informed assessment about what switching to a letter-based grading system and getting rid of the GPA conversion metric that is currently listed on the back of AUB transcripts would result in. Once that data has been collected the issue will come back before the Senate to make a final decision about changing the grading system at AUB. **A motion was made to require AUB instructors to record both a numerical and a letter grade for each student in the class during the upcoming academic year. Vote 2017-34. The motion was passed unanimously.**

**9) Election of a Senate representative to deliver a statement at the May 2017 BoT meeting**

Dr. Souha Kanj-Shararah was elected by acclamation.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm.

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

## **Appendix I: Obituary for Professor Landry Slade**



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## **Appendix II: Proposal for a PhD program in Chemistry**



chemistry PhD  
Proposal March 2011