

**American University of Beirut**  
**Final Minutes of the University Senate**  
**Meeting of Friday, March 31, 2017**

**Present:** M. Abiad, H. Abu Khuzam, G. Araj, 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, N. Hwalla, D. Jamali, M. Jurdi, G. Kanazi, S. Kanj-Shararah, A. Kayssi, F. Khuri (chairing), F. Maalouf, T. Mehmood Ali, S. Mejcher-Atassi, H. Muller, W. Nasr, T. Nizameddin, I. Nuwayhid, S. Sadek, M. Salameh, I. Saoud, M. Sayegh, R. Sedehi, E. Shamma, A. Shihadeh

**Absent:** M. Al-Ghoul, H. Huijer\*, R. Karami\*, S. Saleh, A. Taher, S. Zeineldine

(\* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting came to order at 2:08 p.m.

**1) Announcement of the timing of special Senate meeting on the budget**

The President informed the Senate that there will be a special Senate meeting on the university budget on Friday, April 21. This will be in addition to the regular monthly Senate meeting, which will be held one week later. In light of the fact there will be this special meeting dedicated solely to the budget, the President asked Senators to remember that today's presentation will be focused only on budget assumptions (agenda item 4) and so to please hold any questions about the details until the special meeting.

**2) Approval of the minutes of February 17, 2017**

The minutes were approved with minor amendments.

**3) Chair's report on the March meeting of the Board of Trustees**

The President presented the Senate with a report on the most recent meeting of the Board of Trustees, which was held on March 17, 2017 in New York City. What follows is not an exhaustive list of the decisions made at that meeting, but rather a list focused on those decisions that bear directly on previous and ongoing Senate business and those that are most relevant to the interests of our constituents. The Board of Trustees (BoT) voted to approve the appointment of Mohammad Harajli as Provost of the university. The BoT voted to approve the Tenure Design Report and the resolution on tenure. The BoT voted to approve three new graduate programs: the PhD in Nursing Sciences, the Master's of Architecture, and the PhD in Architecture. The BoT voted to approve Professor Saleh Sadek as a non-voting guest advisor to the Academic Affairs Committee for a three-year term. The BoT voted to approve the amendment in the Faculty and Senate Bylaws and the establishment of the Policy on the Development and Revision of the Bylaws, Policies, Procedures and Manuals. The BoT voted to approve the Associate Alumni status category as well as the resolution to appoint a task force to review the governance structure of WAAAUB and recommend changes including providing that WAAAUB will report to the President and suspend WAAAUB elections until the new structure is in place. The BoT voted to approve the resolution to name FEA, to authorize the President to negotiate and Deed of Grant, to appoint three individuals to the Semaan Foundation Trust and to authorize the creation of an International Advisory Board. The BoT voted to approve Etel Adnan and Huguette Caland as recipients of the University Medal in 2017.

**4) Budget assumptions**

The President, EVP, and COO gave a presentation on some of the assumptions that the budget planning team have as they attempt to craft a balanced budget for the upcoming year as well as

longer-term plans for a sustainable budgetary process moving forward. There was a lengthy discussion during which some Senators expressed concerns over the fees being charged for various services needed by faculty. Other Senators asked the President and COO for an estimate of when the budget situation would start to improve and the university community could move away from the ongoing sense of financial pressure. The President responded that improving the budgetary situation is not something that can be done in one year and that it is a multi-step process. The COO asked Senators to remember that progress has already been made in several important areas, including a substantial increase in research funding and the beginning of long-overdue renovations to on-campus student housing. The lengthy discussion drew to a close with the recognition that a more informed and thus hopefully more productive conversation might be possible at the upcoming special Senate meeting which will have the budget as the sole item on the agenda.

#### **5) Proposed new grading system at AUB**

The President prefaced this discussion by announcing that Moueen Salameh will soon be retiring from his long-time post as Registrar and expressed warm thanks for his distinguished service in that capacity. The Registrar gave a presentation on a proposal to move to a letter-based grading system (see Appendix I). The President emphasized that the Senate needs to act on this agenda item soon as it should have this body's approval before the end of the current academic year if it is to be implemented for 2017-2018. The Provost asked, if moving on this quickly is a priority, then why was it listed on the agenda as "discussion only"? Several Senators noted that the reason we cannot vote before getting input from our constituents is that in the November 25, 2016 meeting the Senate voted unanimously in support of the following three-part motion to be applied to this grading proposal: (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 time-table 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. With regard to the second part of that motion, Senators noted both that the Senate had not yet set the time-table for public sharing and that such sharing was essential to get buy-in from our constituents for this sort of substantial change. The Registrar noted that there is a precedent for the Senate changing grading systems without first consulting the faculty or students. There was a substantial amount of discussion during which many issues were raised and debated but no decisions were made. The discussion came to an end when several Senators noted that in a previous meeting the Senate passed a motion to assign a task force to propose a solution to the twin problems of grade inflation at AUB and the fact that we use a non-standard method for calculating GPAs.

#### **6) Proposal for modifying the Master's program in Mathematics**

Dr. Wissam Raji gave a presentation on a proposal to modify the Master's program in Mathematics by adding a track in Applied Mathematics (see Appendix II). **The Dean of FAS made a motion to approve the proposal.** In the course of discussing the proposal Dr. Raji noted that the job market is strong for holders of a Masters in Applied Math and that currently many students with undergraduate degrees in Math are going to France to get applied graduate degrees. A Senator asked if the department had done a formal market study. Dr. Raji replied that they would have done so if the proposal was to initiate a new Masters program, but since the proposal is to run a pilot by modifying the existing program by adding a track, a market study was not called for at this point. **Vote 2017-31. The motion was approved unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.

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

**Appendix I: Proposed new grading system at AUB**



Letter Grading Feb  
17 Senate.pptx

**Appendix II: Proposal for modifying the Master's program in Mathematics**



MS Applied Math  
track Revised Febru: