

**American University of Beirut**  
**Final Minutes of the University Senate**  
**Meeting of Friday, February 24, 2023**

**Present:** A. Abu-Alfa, I. Abou Faycal, H. Abu-Khuzam, F. Afiouni, A. Al-Hroub, N. Al-Akl, S. Altug, I. Baalbaki, P. M. Chaaya (for A. Sibai), F. Dahdah, A. Daou, Z. Dawy, J. Doumar, N. Dumit, T. Ghaddar, A. Ghauch, G. Honein, M. Jaber, S. Karaki, M. Khraiche, S. Kharroubi, F. Khuri, M. Massoud, N. Melhem, L. Musfi, M. Nasrallah, S. Nouredine, A. Olabi, A. Sabra, R. Sawaya, Y. Shaib, A. Shihadeh, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, B. Tucker, R. Zurayk.

**Absent:** R. Boustany\*, P. Bou Khalil, S. Elbassuoni, N. Hwalla, S. Mallat, K. Scheid, A. Sibai\*, S. Zein-el-dine

(\*= regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

**1- Approval of Senate meeting minutes of January 27, 2023**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the January 27, 2023, Senate meeting minutes as amended. The motion carried **(30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**.

President Khuri agreed with the Senate to move up item 6 of the agenda.

**2- Voting of degrees: Fall 2022-2023**

Registrar Tucker presented to the senate the lists of the students graduating in Fall 2022-23. Dean Dahdah recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in FAS indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-12: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Dean Sawaya recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in FM indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-13: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Dean Nouredine recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in RHSON indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-14: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Dean Shihadeh recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in MSFEA indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-15: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Interim Dean Olabi recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in FAFS indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-16: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Prof. Chaaya (for Dean Sibai) recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in FHS indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-17: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**. Dean Sidani recommended awarding the degrees to the students graduating from programs in OSB indicated in the circulated list. **Vote 2022-18: A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously (30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**.

**3- Discussion: AUB Emergency Preparedness Plan on Natural Disasters**

VP Jaber presented to the Senate the University's preparedness plan that was presented to the BOT in 2018. The plan is based on the idea that crises can strike any institution at any time; however, it is important to consider how they would affect the community - including students, patients, alumni,

etc. She added that AUB has a crisis response team chaired by the President and deals with major disasters and meets regularly to make urgent decisions and prepares for crises by identifying different scenarios. In addition, AUB has an emergency response team (ERT) who attends to fires, toxic material releases, and other dangerous occurrences on campus. VP Jaber added that AUB has a crisis response handbook that outlines all of the procedures and plans in case of an emergency and covers crisis management, business continuity, emergency response, and disaster recovery. The handbook includes details of crisis scenarios and risk management, and it's regularly updated. Currently, the facilities team is inspecting buildings on campus and the medical center, and investing in safety infrastructure where necessary. Additionally, the handbook is being revised, and plans to communicate, advise, and train AUB's community on emergency preparedness are underway.

Upon a comment by a Senate member concerning Lebanon's lack preparedness for crises, President Khuri informed the Senate that AUB will help lead the national earthquake committee and continue to serve Lebanon's community. A Senate member inquired about the present assessment of AUB's facilities. VP Jaber replied that the facility assessment exercise was initiated for a new budgetary exercise before the last earthquake and involved working with the Provost on specific buildings that require attention. The assessment exercise has helped to identify the areas of need, and work to address them has been initiated. A Senate member commended the emergency preparedness plan, and added that it is crucial to not only assess the effectiveness of emergency response teams but also to prioritize the education part. The same Senate member inquired about the work that was done in 2014 by an earthquake preparedness taskforce. A Senate member, who was a member of the mentioned taskforce, clarified that the taskforce was for preparing for tsunami and not an earthquake preparedness plan. A Senate member inquired if there are any inspections in progress for buildings' integrity or their electrical wiring. VP Jaber reiterated that such inspections are in progress and they were initiated before the last earthquake. A Senate member asked that the AUBMC should be integrated within the preparedness plan, and highlighted as a major center of preparedness, since it is one of the main entities, which responds during any crisis that involves injuries. Dean Sawaya commended the work on the preparedness plan and suggested to prioritize tasks due to the immense work they require. A Senate member inquired if the Green Oval has the capacity to accommodate our AUB's students and staff in addition to that of IC and ACS during an earthquake, and whether the Green Field can be accessed with the present fence found near OSB. VP Jaber responded that she will communicate with IC and ACS to make sure guidelines and plans are aligned for the 3 institutions in case of an emergency. A Senate member suggested providing straightforward instructions and easy-to-follow videos in English with captions, to help people understand what actions to take during an emergency and which practices are most effective. The same Senate member asked to provide a clear evacuation plan for people with disabilities and ensure that any emergency procedures are effectively communicated. VP Jaber replied that they are currently working on assigning new wardens for every building on campus, and as such during any emergency, the warden would have a list of the individuals who are on each floor of a building including anyone with a disability. A Senate member asked President Khuri for an update on the work of the earthquake relief task force that was recently established. President Khuri commented that the taskforce is doing a remarkable job and its chair, Dr. Abu-Alfa, can update the Senate on the work. Dr. Abu-Alfa informed the Senate that an email was sent to the AUB community regarding the earthquake relief taskforce and that a website for donations went live yesterday. He added that the focus of the taskforce is on Syria, where the monetary support will be channeled through international organizations in compliance with regulations. He added that the organization, Doctors without Borders, was selected to receive the donations, but other entities might be partnered with also, and urged the Senate to share and amplify the message to encourage support for this cause. A Senate member suggested stocking fuel, antibiotics, mattresses and canned food as an item in the emergency preparedness plan, and VP Jaber noted that this is in the plans and was all done in 2006 as part of the emergency response.

#### **4- Update on student enrollment**

Mr. Sabbagh and Registrar Tucker presented the admissions' process for the upcoming academic year. They noted that this year there has been an increase in early admission applications, and attributed this to the 30% merit scholarship that is offered to students who are admitted early. They mentioned that some people might argue that this scholarship is unnecessary for students who are already well off, but explained that they are trying to compete with other universities who are also offering incentives for early admission. They added that early admissions are important because they tend to attract the best-prepared students; however, the offers are conditional, where students who receive them are guaranteed a seat in a particular major, but can opt to wait for regular admissions if they want to switch to a different major. Mr. Sabbagh informed the Senate that they are in the process of finalizing regular admissions, and the issuance of admission letters is expected to be in the second half of March. He added that it was decided to accept late applications for two weeks, despite having previously set a hard deadline, due to government closures and the current situation in Lebanon. Mr. Tucker informed the Senate about the upcoming open house event where the university will highlight its offerings to prospective students, particularly grade 10 and grade 11 students. Finally, Mr. Tucker mentioned that upon issuing the letter of acceptance with financial aid, there would be a major confirmation drive on a first-come, first-serve basis in order for a student to secure a spot in a preferred program.

President Khuri commended the work of the office of admissions, and informed the Senate that the university is committed to students with financial aid, however if they renegotiate their aid package without valid documentations, they will lose their financial aid. A Senate member wondered on how the early admissions' numbers compare to previous years. Mr. Sabbagh explained that since the dollar value, security situation and financial aid packages have differed a lot in the past four years, the expected yield number can't be compared to that of the previous years; however, the number of joining students last year was on the rise, contrary to what was expected after going to the 60% tuition in fresh dollars. Mr. Tucker added that there has been a constant increase in early admission applications over the years, where this year it almost doubled compared to the previous year. He added that yields are taken into account when setting cut-offs for each discipline, and the Registrar is working on creating a model to know how many additional students can be accepted into a certain major after getting some numbers from the various deans. A Senate member asked about the diversity of the accepted students whether they are mostly Lebanese or not. Mr. Sabbagh replied that most of the admitted students come from Lebanese universities; however, the number of students coming from abroad is on the rise. A Senate member wondered if there are any current incentives for Master's students. Provost Dawy explained that graduate assistantships, that Master's students get, offer more financial support than financial aid, where the graduate financial support system is a well-established and generous one, and students can always apply for additional financial aid if needed. He added that PhD programs are typically fully funded in addition to students' stipends, and there is no need for additional financial support for these students.

#### **5- Approval of Master of Science in Nursing: Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist Track**

Dr. L. Bader presented a proposal for a new track (Pediatric Clinical Nurse Specialist) in the current Master's program at the School of Nursing. Dr. Bader explained the rationale behind the need for the program, where the large number of Lebanese children and Syrian refugees under the age of 18 who require healthcare, including premature babies who need intensive care has been on the rise. She added that after performing a market study, it was obvious that there is interest in the program from nurses and students. Dr. Bader informed the Senate that the mission and program outcomes of the

new track would be similar to the other tracks, with a focus on advanced nursing practice and research-based knowledge. In addition, the curriculum is similar to programs in the United States, with only three new theory courses and three new clinical courses need to be developed. She added that the program would not require additional resources. Dean Nouredine presented two budgeting scenarios for the new track, and concluded that there are no financial burdens that would arise by approving the new track.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the pediatric clinical nurse specialist track in the Nursing Master of Science program, and the floor was opened for discussion. Dean Sawaya commended the work and added that nurse practitioners add tremendously to the healthcare system and such a track would allow AUB's nurses to grow and advance in their jobs. Dean Shihadeh asked Dr. Bader whether the program is a one-year full-time or a part-time one. Dr. Bader answered that it is a 2-year full-time program; however, the courses' timings are flexible to accommodate nurses who work outside. A Senate member commented that the nursing practice law has been updated recently and there are new policies in place for specialized nurses. She added that the Order of Nurses, supported by the Ministry of Health, has issued an order that sets a salary scale that differentiates between nurses with a Master's degree in Nursing and those with a Bachelor's degree. The same Senate member commended the proposal and added that the country is in urgent need of neonatal nurses due to the increasing number of sick babies being born, and it is expected that they will receive better pay due to the high demand. Dean Shihadeh wondered about the number of current physicians and why only 6 to 10 prospective students were mentioned in the proposal while there is a high need for such specialized nurses. Dr. Bader replied that the current number of physicians is 4 and an additional 4 openings are currently being filled. She added that the small number of prospective students presented in the proposal was used as a conservative approach, while keeping in mind the financial obligations. Provost Dawy reminded the Senate that this is a 39 credit program that has a higher cost than other Master's programs at AUB. A Senate member suggested attracting students from Africa to the Nursing program. The same Senate member added that many of the students in the nursing program are already working nurses and have modest income, and the recent crisis has not improved their financial situation, therefore an additional support would be beneficial in increasing enrollment in the program. Provost Dawy responded that recently AUB received a MasterCard Foundation grant that offers over 400 scholarships for Master's students and especially to ones applying from Africa. He added that the program is open to all fields and we are reaching out to colleagues, universities, and other venues to advertise the opportunity and recruit the first cohort in the coming four terms. Provost Dawy informed the Senate that the scholarships are fully funded, including stipends, to attract students from the region and beyond.

**Vote 2022-19:** The motion carried **(30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**.

#### **6- Approval of English entry requirements for the *AUB-Mediterraneo***

Provost Dawy informed the Senate that the proposal presented, English entry requirements *AUB-Mediterraneo*, originated from the English department and has gone through the faculty and the Academic Development Committee before coming to the Senate for approval, and once it is approved, implementation can proceed. Dr. Currell, Chair of the English department, presented a proposal to adjust the English placement threshold for students admitted to *AUB-Mediterraneo*. Dr. Currell informed the Senate that at AUB, students who meet the basic academic requirements are placed in a number of English courses, including remedial English, English 100, English 102, and English 203. He added that the goal is to simplify the complex and labor-intensive registration process by

having a single entry point for all students at AUB-Mediterraneo, which would be English 203; however, the threshold for qualifying to enter English 203 needs to be set at a level that is realistic given the timeline for recruitment. Dr. Currell added that after extensive internal discussions, it was agreed to propose setting the threshold for the AUB-Mediterraneo at the level of English 102 currently used at the AUB campus. He added although there may be a higher failure rate of English 203 at AUB-Mediterraneo, the advantages of having a single entry point outweighs the potential downside, and it would provide an opportunity to learn more about the curriculum and language context. Dr. Currell concluded the presentation by saying that the proposal is a compromise that balances the need to recruit the initial cohort while preserving the strengths of both the current and evolving curriculum for AUB-Mediterraneo.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the English entry requirements' proposal for AUB-Mediterraneo. A Senate member suggested opening a university English preparatory program at AUB-Mediterraneo for prospective students as a money generating step. Dr. Currell acknowledged the comment and added that this would be a good option after testing the grounds during the first year. A Senate member inquired about the threshold number and Dr. Currell explained that this number has nothing to do with admission requirements but rather as an English level placement. Dr. Currell added that in a year or two this pilot approach would be re-visited and re-assessed accordingly. A Senate member inquired whether there are any recruitment hurdles with having English clinics. Dr. Currell replied that this would be approached in a pragmatic way. He added that the plan is to introduce communication skills clinics as a way to help struggling students which are based on a model similar to that of the math department. The university aims to follow the standard of 6 credits in communication skills and more intensive writing in the disciplines. The clinics will be evolving and may change over time. The university will evaluate the effectiveness of the clinics and consider simplifying them further if necessary. A Senate member inquired on whether English 203 and 102 could be combined to create a new entry-level English course. Dr. Currell replied that the coherence of the English 203 course is more academically valuable than trying to teach some conceptual architecture as in English 102. He added that this decision was made in consideration of being able to complete the 15-week course for writing research projects, and while this might result in a tradeoff, the benefit is bringing students to think about writing and researching in an English language context. A Senate member expressed a concern that there might be a higher number of English 203 failures, and this is especially worrying for first-year students who are new to a campus and the whole experience. Dr. Currell explained that a particular academic structure is more advantageous than the structure in place, where the current structure might result in students having negative experiences such as finding it unengaging.

**Vote 2022-20:** The motion carried **(28 with: 1 against: 1 abstain)**.

## **6- Other Business**

- President Khuri informed the Senate that AUB and 18 other universities and the major professional orders filed a court objection for the new taxation law amendments; however, the court refused to register it. He added that this refusal does not discourage them and they plan to meet with the Minister of Finance soon and bring up this matter with him again.
- President Khuri informed the Senate that he would update them soon regarding the upcoming BOT meeting, during which the institution's modified strategic plan would be discussed and approved and the budget would be approved in June.

- Provost Dawy informed the Senate about the open house that was rescheduled three times due to the recent university closures. He added that despite this, around 1000 potential students registered and 500 participated, with 100 online and 400 on campus, where this has been a record high for the open house in the last decade. Provost Dawy noted that this positive turnout is a good sign for recruitment and admissions, and efforts should be made to maintain the momentum and enroll as many qualified students as possible for the next fall.
- A Senate member suggested having a common policy for AUB concerning ChatGPT and how to best make use of it by embracing it while putting some rules around it. Provost Dawy replied that this issue is under discussion but needs to be given some time to see how things would evolve over the course of the constant usage and the various concerns, before coming up with a unified policy.
- A Senate member inquired about the current currency of the collective life insurance at AUB (fresh vs local dollars). Another Senate member replied that Mr. Walid Naja handles this at AUB, however, Mrs. H. Bikhazi stated that the currency used currently for the life insurance is fresh dollars.
- A Senate member inquired about the special education workshops intended for faculty to better handle requests of students with special needs. Dean Akl noted the point and replied that the accessible education office and the counseling center are often confused as the same entity, but they serve different purposes. The counseling center focuses on mental health and support students, while the accessible education office is responsible for providing special accommodations for students. She added that there is a plan in place to grow the accessible education office and provide training for faculty members to address the mentioned concerns. Another Senate member asked that these workshops also include trainings on mental-health support.
- A Senate member inquired about when would the new taxations be implemented and mirrored in the payroll. President Khuri replied that the matter of withholding taxes is still under discussions. He added that more information would be shared at the next Senate meeting, regarding when the new taxes could be implemented based on a new model.
- A Senate member commented on the request for special education workshops, where he stated that it is not just about providing training and workshops but a cultural change that needs to be implemented. He added that there should be more physical changes to make the university more inclusive and accessible, since some buildings are not modifiable in that regard. President Khuri replied that the university has a master plan in place that addresses the accessibility issues, and it should be revisited soon.

*There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.*

(Minutes recorded by T. Ghaddar, Secretary of the Senate)