

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, February 26, 2021

Present: M. Abiad, A. Abu-Alfa, F. Afiouni, E. Al-Chaer, A. Al-Hroub, T. Amin, H. Auji, I. Baalbaki, T. Bazi, G. Burris, S. Bou Jaoude, A. Chalak, R. Chedid, L. Choueiri, H. Darwish, Z. Dawy, N. Dumit, H. El Rassy, M. Farah, L. Farhoud, A. Harutyunyan, S. Isber, H. Jaafar, K. Kabalan, F. Khuri, S. Mallat, N. Melhem, R. Mohtar, L. Musfy, M. Nachar, R. Nakkash, M. Nasrallah, T. Nezameddin, G. Saad, N. Saliba, A. Shihadeh, A. Sibai, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, F. Talih, B. Tucker, G. Zaatari, S. Zein-el-dine

Absent: A. Daou*, N. El-Cheikh*

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. The meeting was held virtually using “Zoom”.

1) Approval of January 29, 2021 Senate meeting minutes

The minutes of January 29, 2021 were unanimously approved as presented.

2) Voting of degrees for fall 2020-2021

A list of the expected graduates for the Fall 2020-2021 semester was circulated via email before the meeting. Acting Dean Bou Jaoude recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in FAS. Vote 2020-28. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean G. Zaatari recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Faculty of Medicine (FM). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in FM. Vote 2020-29. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean Farhoud recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing. **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in Rafic Hariri School of Nursing. Vote 2020-29. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Shihadeh recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in MSFEA. Vote 2020-30. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Mohtar, recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in FAFS. Vote 2020-31. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean Sibai recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in FHS. Vote 2020-32. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean Sidani recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Olayan School of Business (OSB). **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in OSB. Vote 2020-33. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3) Approval of amendments to the USFC bylaws

Dean Nezameddin presented the proposed amendments to the USFC bylaws. The changes pertain to article 3 of the USFC bylaws pertaining to the composition. The amendments are made to recognize the HSON as an independent school. **A motion was made to approve the proposed amendments to the USFC bylaws. Vote 2020-34. The motion was approved unanimously.**

4) Discussion of the “Report of the UCSA Committee on Academic Integrity and Cheating at AUB

Prof. Knio presented the findings of the UCSA committee on Academic Integrity and Cheating at AUB. Knio started by stating the mandate of the committee. She then discussed the problems associated with contract cheating and plagiarism. Current accountability measures were highlighted, and the

Consequences of cheating and other forms of academic integrity following the Student Code of Conduct were summarized.

Knio then presented a six-step plan of action and suggestions to prevent cheating, contract cheating and plagiarism at AUB. The steps are:

- 1) Educate AUB students by making them aware of their rights and responsibilities and increasing the visibility of student resources on the AUB website and other media platforms.
- 2) Involve students by having regular discussions with student representatives and societies through general assemblies about ethics and the impact of cheating on the reputation of the student body and the credibility of their diploma if academic integrity is jeopardized.
- 3) Involve Faculty and encourage them to:
 - a. Include separate sections in the course syllabi, in which they clearly state their expectations, class regulations, and academic integrity requirements
 - b. Make students sign an honor pledge before their projects/assignments/exams
 - c. Build trust and good communications with students, in addition to showing some flexibility
- 4) Develop a required zero credit plagiarism seminar to educate students
- 5) A separate and clear section on contract cheating was added to the Student Code of Conduct; in addition, the whole section on Academic Misconduct was revised.
- 6) Launch campaigns across campus promoting and educating students about academic integrity and AUB values at the beginning of every semester or academic year

One senator commended the efforts of the UCSA but highlighted that there is a need to follow up on all the ongoing contract cheating instances, identify the responsible entities, and punish them to deter other students from cheating in the future. The senator added that the commercialization of the contract cheating process will harm the AUB reputation.

Another senator commented that the recommended flexibility on behalf of the faculty might lead to students taking advantage of the situation and abusing the system.

Other Senators stated that as indicated in the outcome of a small survey prepared by UCSA, many students are aware of the harms of cheating and give clear reasons for their actions. The solution should therefore attempt to treat the root cause of the cheating rather than increase awareness.

A senator recommended that students caught for cheating should not be allowed to fill the ICE at the end of the semester. They might intentionally give the faculty member who caught them cheating low scores.

5) Update on the post tenure review policy and procedure

Associate Provost, Dawy, presented the post tenure review policy and procedure. He emphasized that the purpose of the presentation is to update the Senate on the status of the policy and solicit feedback only. There will be no voting on the policy at this stage. Dawy stated that the post tenure review policy is one of the required tenure related policies as per the 2017 TDC report.

The policy states that the Post Tenure Review (PTR) is conducted every five years for the purpose of continued professional development of tenured faculty members and to ensure that faculty members are meeting their responsibilities to the university. The review will form a basis for merit raises, honors, resource allocation, teaching and service loads.

The procedure for the post tenure review is as follows:

1. Tenured faculty member submits CV and personal statements on research, teaching and service (after five years – evaluation takes place during sixth year post tenure)
2. Post Tenure Review Committee: The dean, in consultation with the department chair, should appoint a Post Tenure Review Committee (PTRC) consisting of at least three (3) tenured faculty members of equal or higher rank than that of the faculty member subject to review. In their report, the PTRC shall assess the faculty member's research, teaching and service. The review process should take into consideration transitions in the faculty member's

workload responsibilities over career stages. The PTRC report should conclude with one of the following recommended outcomes: demonstrates a sustained trajectory or does not demonstrate sustained trajectory:

3. Department Chair: If the department chair is tenured with equal or higher rank than that of the faculty member, then she/he should write a letter consisting of a candid review of the faculty member's trajectory including research or creative work in the arts and contributions to teaching and service in the department. In the letter, the chair should either endorse the PTRC's conclusion or provide additional evidence/justification if recommending a different conclusion. The chair then adds the letter to the faculty member's dossier and submits the full dossier to the dean.

If the department chair is non-tenured or of lower rank than that of the faculty member, she/he should write a letter on contributions to research, teaching and service in the department, without making any concluding recommendation on the outcome of the review and without having access to the PTRC report.

A senator commented that this would create a two class system – tenured versus non tenured faculty members. The senator suggested that the professorial rank and years in rank of the chairperson should be considered in lieu of his/her tenure status.

4. Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC): The dean should subsequently convene the FAC to vote on the PTR conclusion (“Demonstrates a sustained trajectory” or “Does not demonstrate a sustained trajectory”). Senators commented that the FAC should not consist of tenured professors only to avoid creating a two tier faculty system.
5. Dean: The dean reviews the dossier including the PTRC report, the department chair's letter, and the minutes of the FAC meeting, and writes a summary letter on the PTR with any additional evidence/justification. The dean's letter should conclude with a recommendation statement whether the outcome is “Demonstrates a sustained trajectory” or “Does not demonstrate a sustained trajectory”.
6. Provost: The provost should review the dossier of the faculty member and make a final decision on the outcome of the review, and inform the president and the dean. For cases where the recommendation/voting on the outcome is not consistent across the different levels, the provost may seek formal documented advice from external experts. If the provost's decision is not consistent with the dean's recommendation, then the provost should provide written justification. Senators commented that seeking external expert's opinion might be too late at this stage of the evaluation process.

If the final evaluation outcome is that the candidate “Does not demonstrate a sustained trajectory”, the faculty member should develop a Development Action Plan (DAP) in consultation with the dean. A negative outcome will trigger a post tenure review during the third year post the original review. The triggered review will have one of two outcomes: meets or does not meet expectations. If the outcome of the triggered review process is “does not meet expectations”, then appropriate measures will be taken. Possible measures may include: Reassignment of workload duties; participation in mandated professional development programs; set up of a second triggered review process; reallocation of resources including activities such as research funding, sabbatical leaves, external consulting, etc. In the event where a faculty member fails to adequately address the major concerns on performance based on the DAP, a process for termination may be initiated with proceedings following the Policy and Procedures for the Termination of a Tenure Appointment.

SCFA chairperson, H. Darwish, stated that SCFA reviewed the policy, solicited feedback from faculty members and presented their comments in a meeting with the Provost. Most of the concerns raised by SCFA were incorporated in the version of the Policy presented to the Senate.

A senator suggested that the PTR policy will subject tenured faculty members to shorter review periods than non-tenured full professors whose contract are renewed every 7 years. Associate

Provost, Dawy, stated that the files of both tenured faculty members and non-tenured professors will be subject to a full review during the 6th year after tenure appointment or contract renewal respectively. Another senator commented that the PTR involves more review layers than those required for an associate professor or full professor applying to tenure only. Dawy explained that while the tenure only applications apply for the transitional stage only, the PTR is continuing process that should involve as many constituents as possible for normalizing the evaluation process.

A senator questioned the necessity of the PTR in the absence of an approved tenure appointment letter. Another senator questioned the need for annual reviews for tenured faculty members. Dawy explained that the tenure appointment letter is a mere contractual issue that does not define tenure, and that annual reviews are important as they are often used to trigger merit salary increases.

6) Update on Spring 2021 enrollment

Vice Provost and Registrar, B. Tucker, presented the student enrollment numbers for the Spring 2020-21 semester. The number of students this semester remained almost the same as the Fall 2020-21 semester. While the total number of students at AUB was 9,019 in the Spring 2019-20 semester, the current number of students is 8,285. To date, around 87% of the students paid their tuition fees for this semester as compared to 90% (during the same time frame) for the Spring 2019-20 semester. The cutoff date for payment of fees is March 3, 2021. Tucker concluded that the numbers for the Spring semester are somewhat encouraging and indicate that the enrollment figures were not significantly affected by the change in the USD exchange rate.

A senator brought up the issue of the students who paid their tuition fees at the 1500LBP/\$ exchange rate at the Notary public and the law cases raised by the students in the Lebanese courts. Provost Choueiri stated that no formal ruling in the cases has been reached, AUB is following up on the situation and will wait for the official decisions to act on them.

7) Salaries of full time professorial rank faculty members for academic year 2021-2022

President Khuri gave an update on the salaries for academic year 2021-2022. The President stated that the administration is working on a multi-year plan for financial support packages that will include both faculty and staff members of AUB. There is no one size fits all solution, but AUB is planning for a broad support package; the details of which are not ironed out yet. The final budget for the upcoming year will be approved by the BOT in the June 2021 meeting. BOT discussions on salary increases/ support packages will probably commence in the March 2021 meeting. The input of SCFA, faculty representatives, and various University constituents will be solicited in April 2021.

A senator asked whether the AUB administration wants to take a look at the Faculty United proposal for support packages. President Khuri said that this is a faculty affair, and SCFA is the right channel if Faculty United wants to share their proposal.

8) Other business

FM senator Ali Abu-Alfa read a statement about the COVID-19 vaccination campaign at AUBMC (see appendix). **A motion was made to adopt the statement as a Senate statement and include in the records.**

Some senators claimed the no motions can be made under other business as this constitutes a violation to Robert's Rule. Others argued that since the Senate is not voting on policy changes, this does not constitute a violation of the rules. Moreover, there is precedent to such occurrence in past Senate meetings.

A substitute motion was made to delay action on this vote until the next Senate meeting to give the Senators time to review the statement and provide comments. The motion did not pass. Vote 2020-35 (4-26-0).

The original motion was voted on. The motion passed. Vote 2020-36 (28-0-2).

Interim FM Dean, Zaatari, thanked the Senate for supporting AUBMC in its vaccination campaign, and he said that AUBMC is working on a plan to vaccinate all AUB citizens.

President Khuri added that to-date less than 700,000 people registered to take the vaccine in Lebanon. This is a relatively small number. He urges senators to not play anything but a positive role in this uphill battle for the country. AUB citizens should support AUBMC's efforts in vaccinating as many people as possible.

A senator inquired whether AUB is considering getting vaccines for its faculty and staff members. President Khuri stated that no major pharmaceutical company is allowing vaccine sales for individual entities. However, there is a possibility for Universities to buy vaccines in bulk as long as they do not charge people for vaccination. AUB is waiting on this until the vaccination process run by MoPH is smoothly functioning not to undermine the MoPH efforts at this stage. Moreover, there is a legal aspect to this, as AUB will have to assume liability if they purchase the vaccines directly from source without coordinating with the MoPH.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.

(Minutes recorded by G. Saad, Secretary of the Senate)

Appendix

Statement about COVID-19 vaccination campaign at AUBMC

The AUB senate recognizes the now one-year-old formidable, responsible, progressive, and increasingly complex response of AUB and AUBMC to the COVID-19 pandemic, culminating most recently with the vaccination campaign.

This response needed leadership, tremendous efforts, high level coordination and above all much sacrifice by all the healthcare team members and especially frontline staff at AUBMC. They have been providing first-rate, up-to-date medical care to COVID-19 patients, while continuing usual day-to-day activities tending to all patients.

The high death rate among patients and happening mostly in imposed physical isolation, has devastated families losing loved ones, and caused much stress and anguish among the healthcare providers witnessing the brutality of COVID-19 while having to deal with their own risks, fears, and concerns. This is all happening amidst other major crisis around us but nothing has deterred AUBMC and its people from stepping up to the call and duty. For that, the AUB Senate salute them and AUBMC.

Vaccination is undoubtedly changing the course of pandemic but is also opening a discourse on prioritization and safety. The public has been generally wary of vaccination, with positions mostly fueled by unfounded claims, rumors and unscientific statements by scientists and non-scientists alike. AUB and AUBMC stand as beacons of knowledge and have a moral obligation to provide the latest accurate information to its community and people of Lebanon. AUBMC has fully engaged in the nascent national vaccination campaign, executing to the best of its ability given the imperfections in the Ministry of Public Health vaccination platform, and doing so transparently, efficiently, and safely while complying with national and international guidelines. Any act or word that results in the spread of unsubstantiated facts will only fuel the negative perceptions and detract from trust in AUB/AUBMC as institution at a time such trust is critical for literally surviving this pandemic on all fronts. The University senate pleads for a high level of responsibility from each member of the AUB faculty and community to highlight AUB and AUBMC efforts, to acknowledge the sacrifices and devotions and to only share validated information. AUBMC remains committed to implement needed actions whenever deemed necessary to continue providing and improving services. It needs all of AUB to succeed in its mission serving all.

February 26th, 2021