

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, March 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, A. Daou, H. Darwish, Z. Dawy, N. Dumit, N. El-Cheikh, H. El Rassy, M. Farah, L. Farhoud, A. Harutyunyan, S. Isber, H. Jaafar, K. Kabalan, F. Khuri, N. Melhem, R. Mohtar, L. Musfy, M. Nachar, M. Nasrallah, T. Nezameddin, G. Saad, N. Saliba, A. Shihadeh, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, , B. Tucker, G. Zaatari, S. Zein-el-dine

Absent: S. Mallat*, R. Nakkash*, A. Sibai*, F. Talih*

(* = 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 February 26, 2021 Senate meeting minutes

The minutes of February 26, 2021 were unanimously approved as presented.

2) President report on BOT March 2021 meeting

President Khuri stated that thirty-four trustees and trustees’ emeriti participated in the meetings and discussed topics including the following:

- “Challenges and Opportunities” for the current ongoing financial and economic situation in Lebanon and for the university. The discussion detailed the issues of faculty attrition, doubled student financial aid, forthcoming strategies for faculty and staff retention, AUB’s enduring strengths, and AUBMC’s vaccination campaign.
- CFO Drew Wickens briefed the Budget Committee on the 2021/22 Capital Budget which was approved by both the Budget Committee and the Full Board.
- The Board of Trustees approved, with the unanimous support of the Budget, Investment, and Executive and Planning Committees, to pass the President’s Fund Resolution. Considering the pressures on the University’s budget and general operations as a result of recent crises in Lebanon, the Board decided it is in the best interests of the University to approve an exceptional \$10 million withdrawal from the endowment to be invested into the University for the priorities and initiatives of the President of the University, particularly with respect to faculty and staff retention.
- Progress reports from two VITAL Advisory Groups: “Innovation in Times of Challenge.” Trustees Viviane Tabar and William Zoghbi presented six innovative themes, thoughts, and strategies to help AUBMC create new revenue streams and position the Medical Center at the forefront of emerging medical technologies. Trustees Salwa Darraj and José Zaglul presented slides and recommendations from the committee on the university experience including ethics and values, student education and learning, student financial support schemes, and enhancing student services.
- VP for Administration Mary Jaber spoke on two resource areas covered by the Campus Resources and Design Committee namely human resources and facilities. She gave an update on staff and faculty retention and introduced possible strategies for the short and longer terms. She updated on the status of the Campus Master Plan in the current environment with respect to projects that were put on hold and projects that continued but especially emphasized the need to invest in the Energy Center which would bring more environmentally friendly and sustainable options for AUB.

- The Academy and Its Values Committee discussed and approved Amendments to the 'Policy and Procedures for Tenure and Promotion Evaluation of Tenure-Eligible Faculty Members' and MSFEA Online MA in Engineering Management
- All committees discussed, from one perspective or another, the issue of faculty and staff attrition and the importance of retention.

3) Discussion and approval of “Supplemental guidelines for Tenure and Promotion Appeals Committee members elected by the faculties/schools

Interim Provost Choueiri presented the proposed supplemental guidelines for TPAC. According to the approved policy, TPAC consists of thirteen (13) tenured faculty members, at the rank of professor, distributed as follows: Seven (7) elected, one from each faculty/school; Two (2) elected by the senate from the faculty at large; and Four (4) appointed by the president in consultation with the provost.

Because of the limited number of tenured full professors, we are facing a deadlock situation and are not being able to complete the composition of the TPAC committee as per the policy requirements. Moreover, some faculties with a relatively low number of tenured full professors cannot elect TPAC representatives. As such, the provost’s office is seeking approval to the below supplemental guidelines:

- In faculties/schools where no tenured faculty member at the rank of professor is eligible to serve, then the faculty/school should elect a tenured associate professor.
- In faculties/schools where no tenured faculty member at the rank of professor or associate professor is eligible to serve, then a tenured professor should be elected from another faculty/school selected by the president in consultation with the provost.

A senator questioned the rationale behind the second bullet point. The senator inquired why the Dean of the faculty is not explicitly included in the consultation process. Choueiri replied that the current state of practice includes the Deans in all such occurrences, and it was agreed to amend the second bullet point by as follows:

- In faculties/schools where no tenured faculty member at the rank of professor or associate professor is eligible to serve, then a tenured professor should be elected from another faculty/school selected by the president in consultation with the provost and the relevant deans.

Another senator asked why not open up TPAC membership to all tenured associate professors. Choueiri replied that this might be considered in the future when revising the policy.

A motion was made to approve the TPAC supplemental guidelines as amended. Vote 2020-37. The motion was unanimously approved.

4) Approval of the Post-Tenure Review Policy

Associate Provost Dawy presented the changes to the post tenure review policy that were made after the February 2021 Senate meeting. Dawy stated that most of the raised issues during the past Senate meeting were incorporated. The only outstanding point is the requirement that the department chair and FAC members must be tenured.

A senator commented that the possible measures in case of two negative PTR’s need to be better specified not to leave the door open to other ramifications. Dawy replied that the range of measures listed are benchmarked against common practice in other institutions and the final decision will be made on a case by case basis.

Another senator said that the statement that “the PTR cannot in itself lead to dismissal” is misleading because 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. Dawy clarified that while the PTR process may lead to initiating the termination of tenure appointment, the termination of tenure is not a direct outcome of the PTR.

A senator suggested extending the PTR clock by one year given the current challenges the country/university are passing through. Dawy replied that this is a procedural and not a policy related issue and can be addressed in due time.

A senator inquired about the value of a PTR after one year of a failed promotion attempt to a tenured full professor. The senator added that one year is not enough to reverse things and make improvements on the file. Another senator asked why the promotion file itself cannot be used for the PTR evaluation process. Dawy replied that the PTR and the promotion are different processes governed through different approval layers, requiring different documentations, and having different expectations. He added that consistency is essential and that is why mixing between the two processes cannot be allowed.

Other senators discussed the tenure versus non tenure requirements at the different evaluation layers of the PTR. **A motion was made to remove the tenure requirements for the Chairperson and FAC members, and to approve the policy as amended. The motion passed with a vote. Vote 2020-38. (31-0-2).**

5) Update on spring 2021 student enrollment and tuition settlement

Vice Provost and Registrar, B. Tucker, presented the following updates:

- Spring 2020-2021 Tuition Payment
 - As of March 16, 2021 there were around 200 students who have not paid their tuition dues for the Spring semester.
 - 60 students were deregistered and have to follow up with the comptroller on how to settle their dues before resuming classes.
 - 35 were unreachable and their status remains as pending
 - The rest have either negotiated or are currently negotiating with the comptroller on the best way to settle their dues. This category of student can attend classes but will not receive course grades before settling their tuition fees.
- Fall 2021-2022 Admission Stats
 - 4000 admission letters for the Fall 2021-22 semester were sent out to about 2200 students:
 - Positive response from students to admission letters
 - Number of sophomore applicants decreased by 500 students as compared with last academic year, but the number of freshman applicants has increased
 - Depending on the yield rate, it is expected that the number of undergraduate students for the Fall 2021-22 semester be around 700 students less than Fall 2020-21.
 - In consultation with the different departments, the admission composite scores were lowered in some department and raised in others. Challenges were faced because of missing SAT scores. For students who have taken the SAT, their composite score was calculated with and without the SAT reported grades, and the higher composite score was selected.

A senator inquired about the status of the lawsuits filed by students against AUB. Interim provost Choueiri replied that no formal decision has been communicated to AUB yet.

6) Vaccine for AUB community

President Khuri gave an update on the status of the vaccination process at AUBMC:

- So far 3200 members of the AUB community were vaccinated.
- AUB working closely with the Ministry of Health and making progress towards purchasing their own supply for vaccinating faculty, staff and their dependents by June 2021.
- The goal is to have hybrid/in class teaching during the Fall 2021-2022 semester, but health and safety issues remain a priority.

7) Other business

Under other business, the following topics were discussed:

- **Compliance**
A group of senators brought up the compliance issue highlighting that AUB is losing good speakers/ participants in events due to the compliance policy. The senators asked if there is anything that could be done to relax the policy constraints. President Khuri acknowledged the raised concerns; he added that this is a New York issue and should be revisited soon. Khuri will consult with the legal team and push for making a case in the United States to relax some of the imposed constraints.
- **Update on search for Provost and Deans**
President Khuri stated that shortlists for interviews for the different positions were made. Interviews are either about to start or have already started. He has not been officially engaged in the process yet, and he will be giving updates as they become available.
- **Streamlining GRA appointments**
A senator complained that the GRA appointment process requires a large number of approval layers which is making it inefficient. He requested that the process be revisited and streamlined for maximal efficiency. Interim provost Choueiri said that the process will be checked and documented, and if there is a need for streamlining a taskforce may be formed for the purpose.
- **Summer Pay**
A senator requested revisiting the summer pay policy. The reimbursement package for faculty members teaching summer courses has been recently reduced as per a memorandum circulated by the Provost's office. Given the current economic challenges, the senator requested that this topic be revisited and the decision be reversed.
President Khuri said that this will be discussed with the provost and the board of deans.
- **Admission Requirements for Graduate programs**
A senator requested that vetting of graduate students should be done at the departmental level and then approved by the graduate committee of the respective faculty. He added that the decision of the department should not be overruled.
This comment stemmed from an incident where the provost office directive not to accept students coming from specific Lebanese institutions to graduate programs at AUB was violated.
The interim provost highlighted that this was a directive and not a policy; vetting will always take place at the department level, and departments will be held responsible for the graduate student admission decisions.
- **Hire Freeze**
A senator asked about the possibility of relaxing the imposed hire freeze in light of the need for new hires to counter balance the high faculty attrition in some departments. President Khuri said that the situation will be assessed on a case by case basis.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 pm.

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