

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, April 28, 2023

Present: A. Abu-Alfa, I. Abou Faycal, H. Abu-Khuzam, F. Afiouni, N. Al-Akl, A. Al-Hakim, A. Al-Hroub, I. Baalbaki, R. Boustany, F. Dahdah, Z. Dawy, J. Doumar, N. Dumit, T. Ghaddar, A. Ghauch, N. Hwalla, M. Jaber, S. Karaki, M. Khraiche, S. Kharroubi, F. Khuri, M. Massoud, L. Musfi, M. Nasrallah, S. Nouredine, A. Olabi, A. Sabra, F. Ziyadeh (for R. Sawaya), K. Scheid, Y. Shaib, S. Sadek (for A. Shihadeh), A. Sibai, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, B. Tucker, R. Zurayk.

Absent: S. Zein-el-dine, S. Altug, P. Bou Khalil, A. Daou,* G. Honein,* S. Mallat, N. Melhem*
(*= regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 2:07 p.m.

1- Approval of Senate meeting minutes of March 31, 2023

A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 31, 2023, Senate meeting minutes as amended. The motion carried **(28 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**.

2- Election of two tenured faculty members (full professors) for the TPAC from faculty at large

Elections took place for two tenured professors from the faculty at large (4 nominees: I. Srour, R. Sultan, L. Nasreddine and M. Kazan) after Provost Dawy explained the committee's function and election rules. The two elected committee members were Dr. R. Sultan (from FAS with 65% of the votes) and Dr. L. Nasreddine (from FAFS with 55% of the votes).

3. Election of a senate representative to deliver a statement at the June 2023 BOT meeting

President Khuri reminded the Senate that the representative can't be a senator who has previously given the statement in the last decade. He added that several senators were nominated but only three accepted the nomination (R. Sultan, F. Afiouni and N. Melhem). Dr. Afiouni withdrew her nomination. Dr. R. Sultan was elected to represent the Senate at the June 2023 BOT meeting with 55% of the Senate votes.

4- Approval of change of name of the Department of Geology to Earth Sciences

Dr. J. Doummar, Chairperson of the Department of Geology, presented a proposal to change the name from the Department of Geology to Department of Earth Sciences. Dr. Doummar informed the Senate that the department has undergone a revamping process since October 2021 where the aim was to increase enrollment, decrease the number of under-enrolled courses, and highlight three aspects of geology: exploration of resources, earthquakes and hazards, and environmental problems. She added that an extended committee, including members from outside the department, was assigned to deliberate and propose options for this task that resulted in the current proposal in hand. Dr. Doummar presented to the Senate the new program learning outcomes (PLOs) that focus on teaching laboratory and computational skills, as well as field skills, which allow students to reproduce a concept and understand the related fundamentals in science. She added that the department opted for Earth Sciences as the new name for both the department and program because it encompasses fields greater than geology, such as meteorology, climatology, and oceanography, in addition to including core courses that teach fundamental science such as math, physics, and chemistry.

A motion was made and seconded to approve changing the name of the department of geology and its program to “Department of Earth Sciences”.

A Senate member commended the work and commented that these changes would make the program more attractive to students. Dean Sidani commented that the mission presented is a bit long and suggested shortening it to make it more compelling for a wider audience, including high school students. Another two Senate members agreed with the comment that the mission statement is longer than usual. A Senate member asked Dr. Doummar on why the department kept its current tracks as unofficial and not implementing them as official ones. Dr. Doummar replied that these tracks are currently unofficial during the testing period and can become official upon reevaluating the program changes in the future. Another Senate member commended the work especially adding environmental chemistry and math courses in the new program.

Vote 2022-24: The motion carried **(30 with: 0 against: 0 abstain)**.

5- Approval of the revised “Policy on Policies”

Mrs. K. Nasrallah, Chief Compliance Officer (CCO), presented the revised policy on policies for approval by the Senate. The CCO informed the Senate that the revised policy has gone through comprehensive consultations with policy owners and benchmarking with peer universities, in addition to the Office of Compliance. She added that upon identifying the main areas of improvement, the policies were separated from procedures, and two distinct workflows were created for each, in addition to changing the ownership of the policies that was limited to the direct report of the President. The CCO informed the Senate that the policy management has been centralized under the Office of Compliance, a fast-track process has been implemented for urgent policies, and the role of the Policy and Procedures Review Committee was removed from the policy-making process due to overlapping administrative functions with the Office of Compliance. CCO Nasrallah explained that it was not possible to share with the Senate the “tracked” changes document since the entire policy was revised which made it unreadable as such, however, a revised version of the policy will be shared with the Senate.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the revised policy on policies.

Upon an inquiry by a Senate member concerning management and governance, the CCO explained that all policies are now under the management of the Office of Compliance that is not involved in the review of the policies. A Senate member inquired on whether the faculty at large discuss policies and if the Office of Compliance review them. The CCO explained that the Senate and in some cases SCFA approves policies but not the Office of Compliance. She added that the office does not review nor recommend policies but only manages them, and sets the right hierarchy according to the policy in order to go to the relevant reviewers for approval. Associate Provost Choueiri commented that the Policies & Procedures Review Committee, which was replaced by the Office of Compliance, had only an administrative role and did not review policies. She added that the major change in the policy is changing ownership of the policies, since the President used to be the owner and approver of the policies, which results in a conflict of roles. A Senate member inquired about a policy that deals with the “break of service” for staff in certain situations, and expressed her dis-likeliness with this policy since it interrupts the work/research continuity. President Khuri commented that this policy is set this way due to the Lebanese NSSF regulations, however, this policy could be reviewed and brought back for discussion. Dean Dahdah commented that adding a grace period could fix this hurdle.

Vote 2022-25: The motion carried **(27 with: 0 against: 2 abstain)**.

6. Update on the budget planning

CFO Wickens updated the Senate about the University's operating budget. The CFO started by explaining the guiding principles behind the set budget, from supporting students financially, diversifying the student body, restoring the income of faculty and staff by 2025, investing in faculty advancements and success, to maintaining financial sustainability. The CFO presented to the Senate the timeline for the budget process, which started in March 2023 with the Financial Planning Committee meeting and has included Senate meetings, town hall meetings, and subsequent Financial Planning Committee meetings. He also presented the proposed budget that includes a 4% tuition rate increase for next year and 4-5% annually over the next four years to keep up with inflation, in addition to moving from the current 60% collection in dollars to 80%, while targeting full dollar pay for faculty and non-academic staff by 2025. He added that the implementation for non-academic staff would be different from that of the faculty due to factors such as wage increases and changes in allowances that were set by the Lebanese government. The CFO showed the Senate the students' enrollment figures (7,647 students in the fall 2022 and the target 7,772 for the fall of 2023). The CFO informed the Senate that starting July 2023 a portion of the HIP premium would be changed into dollars. The CFO expressed the need to invest in infrastructure to support enrollment growth, including building a new dormitory and improving technology infrastructure. Dean Akl presented the importance of investing in student success and their experience at AUB; the latter is a key component of higher education where personal growth is necessary for success. Dean Akl noted the importance of connection and engagement and discussed plans to invest in student support services, particularly mental health and accessibility. She added that there are plans for expanding the counseling center, creating webinars and support groups, and training staff, in addition to offering merit-based and athletic scholarships, as well as to address basic needs such as affordable food and supportive living environments. Finally, CFO Wickens showed a slide that included a small operating surplus of \$500,000 for the upcoming year, which is expected to come from the campus educational operations producing a surplus of \$5 million. However, the Medical Center is facing a loss of \$4.5 million this year. He added that the final version of the budget is expected to have a deficit for the Medical Center of around \$2.5 million next year, while the campus budget is balanced that relies on \$15 million in support from the BOT. As for AUB Online and AUB Mediterraneo, they are still in their startup phases and the latter is not being covered by the budget and is instead being supported by the trustees.

President Khuri commented that the administration is building a holistic budget that addresses critical components of student life, in addition to resuming capital projects that were deferred for several years. A Senate member inquired about the whereabouts of the rest of the BOT funds. President Khuri replied that \$1,000,000 of the funds were set for the Heroes fund, from which 930k USD had been already used, and another portion is being used to fund the Board Designated Professorship awards. He added that the latter is a "scaffold" since it helps AUB to bring the salaries of some faculty up and in turn enables AUB to increase the dollar portion of the salaries of the others in order to move everyone up together as quickly as possible. The same Senate member inquired about who is helping AUB in the assessment of the economic situation and whether inflation would be factored in the dollar percentage portion of the salary. President Khuri replied that Dr. Simone Naimi has been helping the administration with assessing the economic situation. He added that the inflation in Lebanon is very hard to assess, since the presented inflation is for the Lebanese pound value but not for the dollar one. A Senate member suggested having a full-fledged student center that is student centered which enhances diversity. Dean Akl commended the comment and added this interesting idea would need more discussion since a lot of engagement between students take place right outside their classrooms and not only in student centers. A Senate member inquired about the salary packages for new faculty hires and whether they have the same dollar percentage fraction as

the faculty currently at AUB. Provost Dawy replied that even though it has been a bit hard to recruit new faculty to fill any empty positions lately, AUB was able to find people who agree to the same salary terms of the current faculty, largely due to the valuable benefits package that AUB is still giving to the faculty and staff. Another Senate member inquired whether one should worry about the deficit value in the AUBMC budget. President Khuri replied that currently most hospitals and medical schools across the globe are losing money with losses in the hundred millions, therefore a loss of \$5 million this year and \$2.5 million next year could be acceptable by the BOT. A Senate member suggested to campaign for more funds to be put in athletics, which is an important part of the students' university life. President Khuri acknowledged the comment and added that students do understand the components of student life and the need for new students' facilities which AUB hasn't been able to invest in lately, and they accepted the planned tuition increase knowing that this money is not just being used for salaries. A Senate member inquired if donations and funds raised are included in the presented budget plan. CFO Wickens replied that a partial percentage is included but not all. He added that most donations are restricted funds and can only be used for special designations such as tuition help or for certain capital projects and thus can't be included in the university operation budget. The same Senate member clarified that when the university provides financial support to the Medical Center, it is specifically for its medical services, community outreach initiatives and education and not for paying salaries. President Khuri commented that the University is currently providing financial assistance for everything, and current efforts are aimed at utilizing this support as efficiently as possible in order to recover from the current economic situation as quickly as possible. Dr. Ziadeh commented that the Medical Center deficit of \$2.5 million becomes a small fraction once one looks at the total operating budget of \$300 million. He added that in the future, the campus might be losing money and the Medical Center would support since both entities are in this together. President Khuri commented that the main priority now is getting faculty and staff salaries back to where they were before, and the focus has been to try to get people through this. A Senate member inquired if part of the Medical Center budget deficit is due to the fact that many medical doctors left during the crisis. President Khuri replied that this is certainly one of the reasons, especially the specialized and general surgeons and interventional radiologists. He added that AUB is working on recruiting faculty for these open positions and once filled the deficit would go away. A Senate member commended the presenters for combining the budget and students' needs presentations together. He added that recently there has been a decrease in the students' performance and attentiveness in classes, and thanked Dean Akl for including students' centered initiatives in the presentation for budgeting purposes. A Senate member acknowledged the comment about the lately seen challenging behavior of students that is also present in schools across the country, and expected this to resolve once the whole situation goes back to normal. The same Senate member inquired if there are plans for merit increase to faculty and staff. Provost Dawy replied that since it is the same pot of money, any merit increase would result in less percentage of the dollar component. He added that their focus now is to eliminate disparities and inequalities in salaries and get everyone's wages to 100% in dollars by 2025.

7. Other Business

President Khuri thanked VP Jaber for her efforts in meeting and negotiating with the staff syndicate and making sure that the staff are treated well. A Senate member gave her feedback about her visit to the Paphos campus while she was in Cyprus. She informed the Senate that Cyprus has a lot of potential and that it was the right time to invest there, and asked if there are plans to open a Medical Center there. President Khuri replied that there is interest in developing health-related specialties like medicine, nursing, and public health in Cyprus. He added that this would be a good investment

and synergistic with what is being done in Lebanon, but it will take some time to accomplish. A Senate member suggested that students in Cyprus who finish their medical degree could do their training and residency at AUB instead of doing it in the UK. President Khuri acknowledged the comment and added that now there is a better chance to do this especially after the UK's Brexit from Europe. A Senate member inquired if the Senate would be updated soon about the progress of AUB Mediterraneo. President Khuri replied that this would be brought up at the next SSC meeting.

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

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