

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES WITH THE UNIVERSITY SENATE
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**

February 20, 2012

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the American University of Beirut with the University Senate was held on February 20, 2012 beginning at 4:30pm at College Hall Auditorium B1 in Beirut, Lebanon.

Trustees Present

David Bickers
Said Darwazah
Peter Dorman
Alexander Ercklentz
Randa Haffar
Abdulsalam Haykal
Farouk Jabre
Riad Kamal
Philip Khoury
Fawzi Melhem
Nemeh Sabbagh
Tawfic Zein

Trustees Emeriti Present

Munib R. Masri
Thomas Q. Morris
Richard W. Murphy

Others Present

Ahmad Dallal, Provost
George Farag, VP for REP
Steve Kenney, VP for Finance
Peter May, VP for Legal Affairs
Jim Radulski, VP for Human Resources
Bassem Barhoumi, Director of Facilities
Patrick McGreevy, Dean of FAS
George Najjar, Dean of OSB
Iman Nuwayhid, Dean of FHS
Makram Suidan, Dean of FEA
Nahla Hwalla, Dean of FAFS
Huda Huijer, Director of HSON
Eileen O'Connor, Secretary of the University
Jennifer Bayne, Assistant to the Secretary of the University

Elected Senate Members Present

Faculty of Arts and Sciences: Abdel Fattah Abdel Rahman, Nabil Dajani, Sirene Harb, Samih Isber, Jad Melki, Waddah Nasr, Simon Neaime, Malek Tabbal (chairing), Amy Zenger;

Faculty of Medicine: Alexander Abdelnoor, Aghiad Al-Kutoubi, Samir Arnaout, Marwan El Sabban, Joseph Ghafari, Ghassan Matar, Julnar Usta; Samar Nouredine (HSON);

Faculty of Health Sciences: Shadi Saleh

Faculty of Engineering and Architecture: M. Adnan Al-Alaoui, Alan Shihadeh;

Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences: Fawwak Sleiman;

Olayan School of Business: Dima Jamali.

The chair, Malek Tabbal, called the meeting to order at 4:40pm and said that members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs, who prepared the agenda, would give short introductions to each item and then open the floor for discussion.

Job Security, Governance, and Transparency

Shadi Saleh began by thanking Trustees for scheduling this meeting and expressed the hope that this could be a standing opportunity for faculty members to share their thoughts on improving the university. Tenure and housing concerns are paramount to improving faculty members' morale and sense of security. There are taskforces currently working on these subjects and the faculty would like Trustees' support on these issues. Another issue of concern affecting faculty morale is renewal of contracts; a system of more rigorous review has been put in place by the president and provost but there are still some concerns among faculty regarding the transparency of this process.

Discussion points raised by faculty members included that the lack of tenure at AUB could negatively affect recruitment and retention, especially since LAU has instituted tenure. Also that a main issue of concern is the clause allowing faculty contracts to be terminated by the president without giving a reason. The Provost clarified that even universities with tenure have a clause to allow termination in extreme cases, but there has not been any instance at AUB of a contract being terminated by the president without the recommendation of the many levels of committees and boards who consider promotions and reappointments. A trustee responded to the Provost and indicated that the senator is referring to a clause in the contract. As a follow up, a faculty member suggested that the ombuds office being established may help in providing a process for questioning promotion or reappointment decisions. Another issue raised concerning faculty morale and recruitment/retention was the lack of administrative support, support for research, and the issue of health benefits (e.g., medications are not covered).

Plan B Returns

Fawwak Sleiman noted that Pension Plan B returns were negative for the first time and that the Senate has asked Trustees, through the administration, to consider allowing Plan B members to be given the chance to change their plan more than one time per year, to be given more flexibility and more options, and to have an advisory office to help faculty make decisions.

During the discussion, Trustee Ercklentz suggested that the Plan B options should be revisited. VP Kenney replied that AUB is investigating the possibility of distributing the university portion (12.5% of the total 17.5%) of Plan B to the employee but first need to resolve issues of taxation, legality, and length of service. Also, they are vetting some advisors who can meet with interested faculty. Another faculty member suggested looking into the possibility of converting Plan B monies to a different currency (e.g., Lebanese Pounds).

Salary Increases vs. Cost of Living

Aghiad Al-Kutoubi said that faculty would like Trustees to look into the issue of fair compensation, keeping in mind the high cost of living increases in Lebanon. Faculty salaries are not keeping pace, especially if "salary increases" are considered without the merit component, which should be considered separately.

During the discussion, several faculty members noted that salary increases to keep up with cost of living increases should be separated from merit-based increases, in order to truly reflect the contribution of different faculty members in terms of research, scholarly activity, and administration responsibilities. VP Radulski noted that cumulative numbers for 2000-2011 for salary increases vs. CPI are very close (46.7% vs. 57.9%) and that a comprehensive academic compensation policy is currently under review by the BOT. Another faculty member noted that these cumulative numbers do not show the true picture since there are great discrepancies in salaries across Faculties, with FAS being the lowest.

Financial Health of AUB in light of Current Expansion Plans

Malek Tabbal said that, although AUB's financial health has been shown to compare favorably with U.S. universities, faculty remain concerned, especially in light of regional volatility, and in terms of AUB's borrowing strategy and how this will impact liquidity. Faculty would also like to see more discussion with the community on expansion plans.

Trustee Ercklentz responded that faculty should be reassured that the University is pursuing expansion plans and funding issues in a very prudent manner, but that some borrowing will be needed for large-scale projects, and that all Faculties will be helped by the coming campaign. Trustee Bickers added that Trustees and the administration are aware of the risks involved in AUBMC 2020 and that they have built in several "break points" in case fundraising is not successful.

Some faculty members noted that FAS is facing a major problem in terms of its physical plant. It occupies many of the oldest buildings in dire need of repair, plus it is the largest faculty with the highest teaching loads, yet there is not enough space to house new faculty, visiting scholars, or graduate students and yet the plans for new buildings are all for other Faculties. The president responded that the need to renovate old buildings and provide additional space are well understood and that the coming campaign will be all-inclusive and linked with the strategic plans of the university and of each Faculty.

Other Business

A faculty member reiterated the importance of finding solutions to the problems faced by faculty in terms of not being able to rent or buy homes, especially for junior faculty.

Another faculty member inquired about the status of the Trustee committee investigating allegations from a former Trustee. The president said that the report of this ad-hoc committee is in final draft form and will be presented to Trustees during the March meeting, with a public announcement to follow.

A faculty member suggested looking into the issue of why building project costs at AUB seem to be higher than expected or higher than the market. The president said that they are addressing the issue of cutting costs and realizing savings for all projects.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.

Minutes prepared by Jennifer Muller