

**American University of Beirut  
Minutes of the University Senate  
Meeting of Friday, 25 November 2011**

Present: A. Abdel-Rahman, M.A. Al-Alaoui, B. Barhoumi, R. Brow, S. Chahine, N. Dajani, A. Dallal, P. Dorman (chairing), I. El-Hajj, M. El-Sabban, G. Farag, J. Ghafari, S. Harb, H. Huijer, N. Hwalla, S. Isber, A. Jaffa (for M. Sayegh), D. Jamali, Z. Kassaify, P. McGreevy, G. Najjar, W. Nasr , S. Neaime, S. Nouredine, I. Nuwayhid, J. Radulski, S. Saleh, S. Sadek, M. Salameh, I. Saoud, A. Shihadeh, F. Sleiman, R. Smith, M. Suidan, M. Tabbal, S. Talhouk, J. Usta, D. Wickens (for S. Kenney), A. Zenger.

Absent: A. Abdelnoor , A. Al-Kutoubi, S. Arnaout, R. Brow, R. Habib, R. Khayat-Toubia, G. Matar, P. May, T. Nizameddin

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm.

***1. Approval of minutes of October 28, 2011***

A request was made by Prof. Sleiman to amend the minutes to include a sentence referring to a comment made by Dean Hwalla during the meeting. The president indicated that such sentences were not befitting of senate minutes and opened the floor for discussion. Feedback ranged from suggestions to revise the proposed sentence to indicating that there was no need for any amendment. The president then put the issue to a vote and the majority voted against amending the minutes of October 28, 2011 (Vote 2012-07: 2-28-0)

**Motion: to approve the minutes of October 28, 2011 as circulated**

**Vote 2012-08: Motion approved (26-1-3)**

***2. Voting of degrees, October 2011 graduates.***

Deans McGreevy, Najjar, Hwalla, Suidan, Nuwayhid, Dr. Huijer, and Acting Dean Jaffa presented motions recommending the awarding of degrees to graduates in their respective Schools: (Attached list of expected graduates of October 2011)

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FAS graduates and graduates with distinction**

**Vote 2012-09: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to OSB graduates and graduates with distinction**

**Vote 2012-10: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FAFS graduates and graduates with distinction**

**Vote 2012-11: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FEA graduates and graduates with distinction**

**Vote 2012-12: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FHS graduates**  
**Vote 2012-13: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FM NURSING graduates**  
**Vote 2012-14: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**Motion: Recommend to senate and president awarding degrees to FM graduates**  
**Vote 2012-15: Motion approved (unanimous)**

**3. *Report on the November 2011 meeting of the Board of Trustees***

President Dorman informed the senate that the BOT elected Dr. Linda Jacobs and Dr. Nawal Nour as new trustees, and Tawfik Zein as the alumni trustee for a three-year term. He indicated that the BOT approved the Unified Faculty Bylaws and thanked everyone for their efforts and contributions to the document. The BOT approved the new PhD in biomedical science and the appointment of Dr. El Solh in Pediatrics.

The president announced that AUB received an art collection donation, which will soon be housed in the Mayfair building, and that more information on this will follow. Also, a presentation was given to the BOT by Mr. Omar Blaik, a consultant working with the housing task force. The information presented was based on a recent study which revealed the difficulty experienced by young faculty in finding affordable housing near campus.

The senate inquired about allegations made against AUB by a former trustee. The president indicated that the case is being followed by an ad hoc committee of the Board of Trustees and that the allegations are handled by the attorney general. The case has attracted brief media attention, including a little-read blog in the Chronicle of Higher Education. The case seems to be contained within a confined niche, although resurfacing every few months by another newspaper, often just before BOT meetings. Trustees are concerned and following up closely and seriously on the allegations. AUB is taking this case as an opportunity to deal with findings and address issues. In January, a report on the case will be presented to the BOT that will most likely make an official statement regarding the issue.

The senate inquired as to why faculty members are required to present two picture IDs to receive their salary by check. The president responded that this is a procedural measure implemented in response to the accusation that AUB has shadow employees and the measure is being applied to a randomly selected group at all levels with faculty, staff, and administration. While faculty and staff may resent the intrusion, the measure is important to ensure transparency and is a standard audit procedure practiced in other institutions.

A senate member said that, due to recent staff departures in the offices of communications and external relations, AUB public relations with media is weak. The president responded that these vacant positions will be filled shortly and that AUB has appointed crisis communication teams in Beirut and New York. A senator added that public relations had been handled in the past by one

person and it is important that this case not trigger an overstaffing response by AUB. The president noted that the positions to be filled are existing ones.

#### ***4. Ombudsperson update***

Provost Dallal read a text summarizing the progress made by AUB regarding the establishment of an ombudsperson office. The committee following up on this issue proceeded by benchmarking against practices in other universities and completed a policy document which includes guidelines and a job description for an ombudsperson. The document has been reviewed by legal counsel in Lebanon and New York and awaits review by VP May before commencing discussions with AUB faculty and the wider community. The administration is in favor of establishing an ombudsperson office as one component of an institution-wide integrity strategy which will also include a “whistle blower” policy and revised code of ethics. Discussion followed and several comments were made by senate members on the role of the ombudsperson, including concerns that the ombudsperson as described would not be given enough power and therefore will not serve as recourse to faculty. The provost responded that the role of an ombudsperson is to inform about resources and policies available. He/she empowers individuals by providing them with the necessary information, by helping them reframe issues, and sometimes he/she may mediate agreements. An ombudsperson would not become officially engaged in grievance cases.

Several comments were also made on the impartiality of the ombudsperson, including the following: The ombudsperson should not report to the person who makes the decision; instead of reporting to the president, he/she should report to CEO or board of directors; if the president hires an ombudsperson, then he can also fire her/him. The provost responded that the ombudsperson is outside the AUB faculty/staff organogram; he/she hears issues and complaints and steers individuals. The president said that in the vast majority of institutions the ombudsperson reports to the president or provost but an ombudsperson does not represent the administration, similar to the case of an auditor.

A senate member suggested that the process of hiring an ombudsperson should be accelerated to put a stop to all the ongoing gossip throughout the university. Also, until an ombudsperson is recruited, the president could form an independent presidential committee to put a stop to ongoing speculations.

In addition to the ombudsperson issue, the senate discussed current processes for promotion and renewal, and grievance. Comments by senators included that faculty cases have become a regular discussion at faculty lunches. The perception is that an important decision was made arbitrarily with no obligation to explain the basis or justify the decision. Maybe it would help if the president or provost makes a statement re-emphasizing the process. Weaknesses should be pointed out on regular basis even for senior faculty.

The provost responded that the procedure for renewals and promotion include seven levels and this process was approved by the senate. The president added that if there are conflicting

opinions between the ‘seven levels’ then the president uses information from all levels to make his decision, and may ask for clarification. The provost said that a key issue is confidentiality which has to be maintained in order to ensure frank decisions for appointment and renewal. If people realize that the process allows for leaks, then we cannot build excellence. The primary purpose is to make decisions that benefit the institution. The senate can review policies but cannot discuss specific cases. The president added that mentoring and evaluation should go hand in hand to promote a collegial environment at the department level and to enable faculty, junior or senior, to receive regular feedback to better prepare themselves for review cycles.

Some senate members suggested that AUB should negotiate a dignified exit strategy for senior faculty and that non-renewal for senior faculty is not only a legal issue but also a humanitarian issue. The president responded that the humanitarian aspect is always taken into consideration and faculty are wrongly assuming that AUB does not make offers to senior faculty whose contracts have not been renewed. The fact that faculty are senior and have served AUB during hard times was taken into consideration, but the review process was primarily guiding the decision making.

In response to some comments on the grievance process, the provost noted that the grievance structure is different from an ombudsperson in that it is within university structure. Grievance policy is already within the current policies and procedures and includes procedural irregularities as well as willful malfeasance and bias of individuals.

Other comments from senators included a suggestion that faculty members should have the right to submit evidence if there is bias against him/her. Also, some faculty members feel that they have no recourse except through AUB-faculty mail.

In response to a question about how the university administration will deal with the void until an ombudsperson is recruited, the provost noted that there is no void: a new procedure is under consideration, but the old grievance procedure continues to apply until a new one is approved. A grievance letter is sent to the president who decides whether or not there is need for an external committee and this is standard procedure in other universities.

The president congratulated Prof. Nabil Dajani on his election as the president of WAAAUB.

The president left the meeting and the provost chaired the remainder of the session.

##### ***5. Housing policy and housing subsidies update***

The provost explained to the senate that the task force, which consists of trustees, administration, and faculty, is looking into issues related to housing with the help of a US-based company that specializes in housing solutions for universities. He indicated that the consultant conducted a study to assess real estate trends, faculty needs, and patterns, and this study was presented to the BOT. Until longer-term solutions can be agreed upon, the university has taken two interim decisions to be effective December 1, 2011:

- a. The university will increase its subsidy to off campus faculty housing rentals from 40% to 60%.
- b. The university will give a one year extension to faculty members in their 13<sup>th</sup> year of benefiting from the housing rental plan.

The provost explained that the study revealed that the average rental rates in larger Beirut are high and AUB is looking into strategies which will help alleviate high rental costs and will also help those who would prefer to purchase a home. He also indicated that the proposed plans have a safety net measure whereby rental rates do not exceed a certain percentage of salary.

The provost opened the floor for discussion and senate members made several comments, including that the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs should be reviewing the proposed new policies before sending it to the senate but the committee has not yet met. It was noted that the president should be reminded to call for the first meeting of the SCFA. Also, AUB should communicate regularly with the faculty because the real estate market is experiencing cash shortage and it is going down. This would be an ideal time for faculty to own apartments. Accordingly AUB should try to finalize its housing and subsidies policy as soon as possible to enable faculty to benefit while the economy is weak. Further, AUB should inform faculty who cannot wait until the March meeting of the BOT whether the housing policy decisions will be retroactive or not.

The provost noted that the housing committee is working as fast as possible

Senate members added some questions related to AUB's housing plans: Is housing a benefit or eligibility? Some junior faculty are asking why they are not provided with on campus housing when faculty apartments are occupied by administrators with higher salaries and sometimes no families. Are there plans to build additional faculty housing? Suggestions also included that AUB should consider investing in the purchase or construction of small size apartments which are not currently available on the market; many campus apartments are large and can be reconfigured to increase the number of available apartments; consider joint AUB/alumni ownership.

VP Radulski noted that the majority of on-campus residents are faculty members; this information has been compiled in a report that was previously presented to the senate. Prioritization for on-campus placement has not been discussed by the housing task force but a document explaining housing priorities is available.

#### ***6. Report of the senate representative to the June 2011 BOT meeting***

Prof. Sadek informed the senate that, despite time constraints, there was good reception of the senate representative report by the BOT. He indicated that in his opinion there is a need to clarify the role of the senate representative and that a quick historical overview showed that the

representative did not only present a statement on behalf of the senate but he/she also sat on various BOT committees.

During the discussion, suggestions included that the BOT, since they are now meeting in Beirut in June, also meet with the senate; consider appointing a senate representative for a few years in order to build experience and be more efficient at relaying issues raised by the senate; to clarify the expected outcome from the senate report read to the BOT; allow the senate representative more time to discuss issues with the BOT.

There was a motion to recommend to the president to schedule a meeting for the Senate Faculty Affairs Committee with the BOT. It was agreed to postpone discussion of this issue since there was no quorum.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm.

Salma Talhouk, secretary