

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, October 1, 2021

Present: S. Abdulrahim, A. Abu-Alfa, H. Abu-Khuzam, F. Afiouni, A. Al-Hroub, T. Amin, I. Baalbaki, P. Bou Khalil, R-M. Boustany, S. BouJaoude, G. Burris, R. Chedid, A. Daou, H. Darwish, M. Darwish, Z. Dawy, J. Doummar, N. Dumit, S. Elbassuoni, N. El-Cheikh, L. Farhoud, T. Ghaddar, A. Ghauch, S. Guler Altug, N. Hwalla, H. Jaafar, M. Jaber, S. Kharroubi, M. Khraiche, F. Khuri, S. Mallat, N. Melhem, L. Musfi, M. Nasrallah, A. Olabi, H. Puzanian, R. Sawaya, Y. Shaib, Y., Sidani, A. Shihadeh, A. Sibai, R. Sultan B. Tucker,

Absent: S. Zein-el-dine

(* = 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 May 28, 2021 Senate meeting minutes:

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the meeting of May 28, 2021 and seconded. The minutes were approved as circulated with a vote of 22 (for)- 0 (against) – 5 (abstain).

2. Welcome of new Senate members by the president:

President Khuri welcomed the following new members to the Senate: Interim Dean of FAFS A. Olabi; Dean of FM R. Sawaya; Dean of OSB Y. Sidani; and faculty members from the various faculties: **FAF:** A. Ghauch; J. Doummar; H. Abu-Khuzam; S. El-Bassuoni; S. Altug; T. Ghaddar; **FM:** Y. Shaib; R. Boustany; P. Bou-Khalil; **HSO:** H. Puzanian; **FHS:** S. Abdulrahim; **MSFEA:** M. Khraiche; M. Darwish; **FAFS:** N. Hwalla; S. Kharroubi. He also announced that T. Amin of FAS had kindly agreed to serve as Senate Secretary.

3. Voting of Degrees for Summer 2021 Graduates

Dean El Cheikh 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 2021-01. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean Sawaya 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 2021-02. 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 HSO. Vote 2021-03. 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 2021-04. The motion was approved unanimously.** Interim Dean Olabi 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 2021-05. 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 2021-06. 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 2021-07. The motion was approved unanimously.**

4. Annual reports of Senate Committees and Boards, 2020-21

The annual reports of the Senate committees and boards were circulated before the meeting. The chairs of the following committees/boards were invited to highlight key points and respond to questions from Senate members: Senate Admissions Committee; Board of Graduate Studies; University Disciplinary Committee; Library Committee; University Publications Committee; University Research Board; University Committee on Student Affairs; Academic Development Committee; Senate Steering Committee; Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs.

The Chair of the Library Committee and President Khuri thanked University Librarian Lokman Mehio, who will be leaving AUB, for his years of dedicated service.

5. President report on the September BOT meeting:

The President briefed the Senate on the full BOT meeting of Sept 6-7, 2021. He highlighted key topics discussed with the BOT, many of which related to AUB's response to the multiple current crises in Lebanon, including: status of Covid-19 pandemic and AUB's response and preparedness for the new year; student enrolment; the plan for return to campus; academic continuity; energy supplies; financial projections; funding opportunities; plans for twin campuses abroad. Particular emphasis was given to the latter twin campuses initiative. The President emphasized that the possibility of establishing twin campuses outside of Lebanon is being considered within a framework centered on AUB's mission, and the opportunity for enhanced relevance and financial sustainability that such an initiative provides. The President also mentioned that this project clearly highlights AUB's identity not just as a Lebanese, but also as a *global* university.

Senate members raised various questions and comments related to the twin campuses initiative including: where exactly these campuses will be established; whether it was clear yet what specific faculties and departments would be established; what the role of the current AUB faculty will be; whether there is already a clear timeline for this initiative and will faculties be kept informed about the progress of the project; whether this might be producing further financial strains on the AUB campus already experiencing significant stresses and facing many challenges; whether options other than the Gulf (a typical context for such projects in the region) are being considered; the sense in which AUB is not a "Lebanese" university; it was suggested by one member that this could be a very good opportunity to position AUB in the context of high quality international educational hubs; a concern was raised that such a project could create some internal competition and another about how the balance will be maintained between attracting students to AUB as an institution versus to Lebanon as the home of AUB and maintain the diversity of the AUB campus in Lebanon.

The President responded to the questions and comments noting that no final decisions have yet been made but that these projects were at the stage of conducting feasibility studies and exploring possibilities. He noted that the locations currently being considered are Cyprus and Greece and the Arabian peninsula; but that "micro-campus" elsewhere, possibly in Africa, were also being considered.

Given international guidelines to be designated a “university” these campuses would need to have a minimum three schools and at least 6 departments. He indicated that technology and health-related fields might be among the early programs established, but that all would strongly ascribe to AUB’s core values. With regard to concerns on financial strains on the Lebanon AUB campus, the President emphasized the distinction between capital commitments for which we are responsible to donors who earmark funds for particular projects and the university’s operating budget. Given this distinction, this initiative should not place financial strains on the operating budget. The president clarified that this initiative seeks to emphasize AUB’s identity as a global university. Indeed, it has always been a diverse university attracting students from all over the world. At present, many students cannot come to Lebanon but would like to have the AUB experience. This initiative would build on (and indeed sustain) our present identity and add to AUB’s financial sustainability in a very turbulent period in Lebanon. He pointed out that we need to expand beyond Lebanon to sustain our mission. While it is hard to project a timeline but 2023 might be a possible target date. Faculty input would be welcome – including from the Senate. Faculties will be kept informed and a series of town hall meetings with faculties are being planned during this month (October 2021). It is expected that current AUB faculty will be directly involved, but that this initiative will certainly involve recruiting new faculty as well. The vision of the student experience currently being discussed is one in which any AUB student (regardless of which their home campus is) would have to spend some time at the AUB Lebanon campus. There will be more details to report after November 2021 BOT meeting.

6. Elections by Senate

Elections took place for the members of two Senate committees. The nominees and elected committee members were as follows:

Senate Steering Committee (SSC)

FAS: J. Doummar (elected with 20 votes) [also nominated was Al-Hroub (12 votes); 3 abstentions]

FM: M. Nasrallah (was nominated and elected by acclamation)

MSFEA: L. Musfi (was nominated and elected by acclamation)

FAS: S. Kharroubi (was nominated and elected by acclamation)

FHS: N. Melhem (will continue to serve)

OSB: F. Affouni replaces A. Daou

HSON: N. Dumit (will continue to serve)

Secretary of the Senate: T. Amin

Senate member appointed to the SSC by the President: M. Darwish

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA)

FAS: G. Burris (will continue to serve)

FM: A. Abu Alfa (elected by acclamation)

MSFEA: M. Khraiche (elected with 16 votes) [also nominated was M. Darwish (13 votes); 6 abstentions]

FAS: N. Hwalla (elected by acclamation)

FHS: S. Abdulrahim (elected by acclamation)

OSB: A. Daou replaces F. Affouni

HSO: H. Puzanian (elected by acclamation)

7. Approval of two programs

Proposals for two new (related) programs - Graduate Diploma in “Online Education” and Masters of “Computing in Education” - were circulated before the meeting and highlights of the proposals were presented by H. Baytiyeh, from the Department of Education, FAS.

Senate members raised a few questions including: concern that survey may not be very informative now given that it was done in 2019 (prior to the crisis) and was limited to FAS students; a request for elaboration on the nature of internships in schools and NGOs; what are expectations of cost (especially the cost of implementing courses online) and revenue? Will there be enough faculty to run these programs? A comment was made in support of the fact that instructional designers are in great demand.

In response, H. Baytiyeh commented that if anything the recent crises and the wide reliance on online instruction has only increased demand for programs of this kind; the data initially collected, and more recent less systematic data, only increases our confidence that the programs would be in demand. The internships in schools will build on existing school placements for diplomas in the Department of Education, a program that has been in place for many years; moreover, increasingly NGOs are involved in educational development projects, many of which involve enhancing the presence and use of ICT technology in instruction. H. Baytiyeh pointed out that detailed budgets are in the proposals indicating the financial viability of the proposed programs and added that in fact a grant has been received from the Ford Foundation which will support the launch of these programs. With regard to faculty, the programs will initially rely a lot on part-timers.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Graduate Diploma in Online Education. Vote 2021-8. The motion passed with a vote of 32 (for)- 0 (against) – 3 (abstentions).

A motion was made and seconded to approve the MA in Computing in Education. Vote 2021-9. The motion passed with a vote of 34 (for)- 1 (against) – 1 (abstention).

8. Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) policy

F. Homeidan presented the Financial Conflict of Interest for Federal Research Grants Policy, which was circulated to senators before the meeting. She clarified that this policy is required for applying for federal US research funding, especially funding through the Department of Health and Human Services; and the NIH. The need for the policy and key features of it were presented.

Senators raised some questions and made comments including: why this policy was restricted to federal grants only and did not address all grants; it was suggested that a policy of broader scope be considered to include, for example, “external interests” and interests that might not be financial in addition to broadening the language to a scope that would include community-based research projects.

F. Homeidan agreed with the need to broaden the scope of AUB’s policies on conflict of interest. She clarified, however, that this policy was specifically for financial conflicts of interest and was prepared to address a particular gap identified which needed to be addressed so that AUB can benefit from federal grants. This is why this policy needs to be considered for approval now even if ongoing work will develop other broader policies. It is likely, she pointed out, that we will need to develop additional or expanded

policies allowing AUB to benefit from EU grants, for example. She also pointed out that the existing conflict of interest form prepared and administered by AUB's HR does cover issues beyond financial conflict of interest and can be reconsidered to expand its scope to include some of the other non-financial conflicts of interest mentioned by Senate members. With regard to what happens when a potential conflict of interest is identified by OGC, F. Homeidan clarified that the process would involve informing the Provost, who would probably convene a committee which would investigate and then set up a management plan to address potential conflict of interest if needed. If this cannot be done in a satisfactory way the conflict will need to be reported. The Provost interjected that the discussion suggests the need for an action item for the future to develop an expanded policy but pointed out that the policy circulated needed to be considered in a vote now.

A motion was made to approve the circulated Financial Conflict of Interest for Federal Research Grants Policy as circulated and was seconded. Vote 2021-10. The motion passed with a vote of 32 (for) – 0 (against) – 1 (abstention).

9. Update on fuel shortage and planned mitigation measures

H. Itani presented a report on the work of the Transportation and Housing Taskforce which started working last month and was tasked with coming up with solutions to various housing and transportation problems currently being faced by AUB faculty and staff given the currency and fuel crises in Lebanon. Her presentation detailed the nature of the problems AUB faculty and staff are facing and the proposed short- and long-term solutions considered, some of which were about to be announced. Details of the options being considered addressed the following: easier access to gasoline; revisiting AUB's transport subsidy for staff; bus service options; ride-sharing; a 4-day teaching week, and temporary housing in and near AUB.

Senators commended the taskforce for the work done to understand these problems and explore possible solutions. Various questions were raised and comments made including: what's the latest on the problem of AUB's access to fuel? What are the accommodations being considered for faculty working from home? There was concern that a "priority pass" approach to securing access to fuel at gas stations was a potential source of conflict, not good for the image of the university and not socially responsible. There was a request for elaboration on the idea of installing a fuel pump at AUB.

H. Itani clarified that while AUB did face a serious problem on one occasion with a worrisome drop in our fuel reserves, the response to the public alarm sounded at the time was quick and effective. Since then, reserves have been stable and satisfactory. She informed senators that there has been an effort to secure UPSs and routers and other equipment that can support work from home. She reassured senators that AUB decided not to pursue the "priority pass" approach to securing access to fuel and pointed out that the fuel crisis has essentially ended with the recent lifting of the subsidy. But she clarified that AUB will continue to plan for the possibility of setting up its own fuel pump based on securing a mobile pump; logistics will be explored in case this is needed at a future time.

10. Other business

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.

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