

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, April 1, 2022

Present: A. Abu-Alfa, H. Abu-Khuzam, F. Afiouni, A. Al-Hroub, S. Guler Altug, T. Amin, I. Baalbaki, R-M. Boustany, G. Burris, M. Chayaya (for A. Sibai), R. Chedid, L. Choueiri, A. Daou, Z. Dawy, J. Doummar, N. Dumit, S. Elbassuoni, I. Elhaji, L. Farhoud, A. Germani, T. Ghaddar, A. Ghauch, H. Jaafar, P. Karam, M. Jaber, S. Karaki, S. Kharroubi, M. Khraiche, F. Khuri, S. Mallat, N. Melhem, L. Musfi, M. Nasrallah, A. Olabi, H. Puzantian, R. Sawaya, S. Sadek (for A. Shahadeh) Y. Shaib, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, B. Tucker.

Absent: S. Abdulrahim, P. Bou Khalil, N. Hwalla, S. Noureddine

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

1) Approval of Senate minutes of March 4, 2022

Motion was made to approve the minutes of the senate meeting of March 4, 2022 with minor edits as sent to the secretary; this was seconded and the motion passed: **Vote 2021-32: 30 (in favor) – 0 (against) – 0 (abstentions).**

2) Update on the Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting

President Khuri presented an update on the recent March 16-18 meeting of the Board of Trustees. He pointed out that the BoT made a number of decisions regarding the approval of renewal of several trustees, three University Medal recipients, additions to the international advisory committee, emeritus appointments, three tenure appointments, the proposals to establish a PhD in Mathematics and a Professional Masters in Education, and the change of the name of Department of Anesthesiology. The meeting focused on the state of the AUB campus and the medical center addressing: faculty departures and the return of some; the improved fiscal health of AUBMC; the numbers of student applicants and acceptances which reflect favorably on enrollment in the upcoming year; the general healthy status of research at AUB despite this challenging time; faculty retention and promotion and board designated professorships which will be announced soon. The meeting also included an extensive discussion of the draft budget and planned tuition adjustments. The board was satisfied that the 3-year, \$150 million discretionary fund was being used to retain faculty and staff; and they approved the proposed plan to change tuition to include a significant dollar component with a gradual transition to tuition being priced 100% in dollars while concomitantly increasing the dollar component of faculty and staff salaries. Seeing that the launch of the twin campuses project would not harm the Beirut campus, the BOT voted in favor of AUB-Mediterraneo in Pafos, and approved its preliminary budget for the next 3 years contingent on that the budget comes from capital fund savings, gifts designated for capital projects, independent from tuition or patient care revenue from the mothership. President Khuri concluded by pointing out that a signing ceremony to launch the campus in Cyprus was planned for the following Friday April 8, 2022.

President Khuri then opened the floor for questions and comments. One senator said that it was not clear how the transition to increasing the dollar component of faculty salaries was going to work; this senator asked for a more precise plan. Another senator followed up on this point emphasizing that it is important to clarify this plan because it is important not to be increasing tuition without increasing salaries sufficiently. Another senator commented that we are at a stage where we critically need a

positive message and suggested that approaching the increase in the dollar component of salaries as a three-year plan might be too slow to retain faculty effectively.

President Khuri responded by clarifying that the plan was to raise the dollar component of faculty and staff salaries annually, increasing the dollar component gradually. He pointed out that not all students will be able to pay the tuition as the dollar portion is increased and as a result it will be necessary to raise financial aid. As a result, it will not be possible to simply raise the dollar portion of faculty salaries to the same exact percentages. But the administration understands that particular faculty or staff members will have specific difficulties and are invited to communicate their needs to the administration, who will try to help on a case-by-case basis. He concluded that he did not agree that a short-term plan is appropriate. He argued instead that we need to give faculty, staff and students a more concrete picture of the change over the coming three-year period so that they can plan more effectively, to provide them with some predictability and certainty in a country and region where instability and uncertainty predominated.

3) Election of a Senate representative to BOT

President Khuri reminded the senate that as of six years ago, the BOT now has an elected faculty representative attend their meetings and participate in deliberations on matters of interest for the faculty. He pointed out that senate needs to elect the next faculty representative to the BOT and asked for nominations, including self-nominations. A senator pointed out that the document about this is still labeled a “proposal” and needs to have a more formal or permanent status. Another senator expressed surprise that there weren’t more senators interested in nominating themselves for this important role.

President Khuri invited nominations and self-nominations. N. Melhem and Y. Shaib nominated themselves; R-M Boustany and L. Musfy were each nominated by fellow senators and accepted the nomination. A poll was launched with these four nominees.

In the first round of voting 34 members voted: N. Melhem and Y. Shaib were the two nominees with the most votes with 36% and 33% of the votes, respectively. A runoff vote between these two candidates was conducted. Y. Shaib won with 56 % of the votes (3% abstained). (**Vote 2021-33**)

4) Presentation on research at AUB: funding, support and future plans

Provost Dawy made a presentation entitled “Advancing Research” in which he addressed a number of different issues in relation to research at AUB: vision, strategy and initiatives; faculty retention and recruitment; internal and external funding; recognition and values; research staff and infrastructure and support systems and processes. He shared various facts and figures, opportunities and risks, and plans and enablers. He outlined an institutional vision for an “Office of Research” that would coordinate all of the above aspects of research at AUB; this office would include the following units: Grants Development Unit, Awards and Initiatives Unit, Infrastructure and Systems Unit, Sponsored Programs Unit, Technology Transfer and Commercialization Unit, Strategic Partnerships Unit, and an Integrity and Compliance Unit. During his presentation, he pointed out that there has been steady improvement in publications over the last few years but some reduction last year; however, the percentage of AUB’s contribution to research publication output in Lebanon remains very high. With regard to grants, he mentioned that we are on track this year for a record high in external grants awarded in number and total value, but that current submissions are lower than last year.

The floor was then open for discussion. A senator commented that this was an impressive presentation and asked how the proposed Office of Research would relate to the current OGC and whether it would also replace REP. Another senator commented that this Office of Research was long overdue; this senator expressed appreciation for the presentation, but felt that the positive outlook doesn't match how researchers are experiencing the research climate, and suggested that we need to move faster and showcase better what is happening. Another senator commented that this was an inspiring presentation and suggested that we need to make all this more public; this senator was not very concerned with recent drop in grant submissions. Another senator raised a concern with the current policy of paying RAs only 60% in fresh dollars and asked that we move to 100% as soon as possible. Another senator agreed and pointed out that it is a struggle to recruit RAs given this salary scale, and suggested that other constraints in the RA policy need to be removed, and argued that we need to capitalize more on PhD programs; this senator added that it is not clear how every faculty is getting back the overhead on external grants. Another senator agreed that the Office of Research is a very good initiative and especially appreciated the administrative structure being proposed, but suggested that we need to be more attentive to the great need to simplify processes. Another senator argued that as an institution we need to give more thought to balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches to identifying institutional strategic goals in research, suggesting that we need to think about more diverse forums for discussion to explore niche areas in which AUB could excel and make distinctive contributions in research. Another senator (speaking as URB chair) reemphasized the importance of addressing bottlenecks in processes and revisiting RA salaries as soon as possible.

Provost Dawy responded by clarifying that REP will not be incorporated into the Office of Research as it has been administratively dissolved, clarifying that all business development work is now under the Office of Advancement. With regard to OGC, he clarified that indeed the functions overseen now by OGC will be incorporated under the new Office of Research. With regard to the concerns about RA salaries and the current policy of paying only 60% in fresh dollars (in the case of external grants), he agreed that this is not a policy that is intended to stay and it was a temporary measure to deal with various financial administrative challenges as the university is trying to adapt to the changing economic climate in Lebanon and the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira. He assured senators that the goal is to get as close to 100% in fresh dollars as soon as possible. He also pointed out that he was very aware of the need to simplify and streamline processes and that this will be one of the main goals for the planned Office of Research.

5) Approval of proposal waiving the GRE for one year for admission to doctoral programs and update and status of graduate applications for Fall 2022-2023

Associate Provost and Chair of the Graduate Council J. DeJong presented a brief update on the current status of graduate programs with reference to those currently frozen and others newly developed. She reported on trends in graduate enrollment pointing out a recent decline after a steady upward trend. She provided most recent statistics for the current graduate admissions cycle including the number of graduate applications created and submitted. She called on faculty to reach out to applicants to bridge the gap between created and submitted applications so as to approximate our enrollment targets this year to the extent possible given the challenging economic circumstances. She then turned to the proposal to waive the GRE requirement for graduate admission. She provided an overview of the reasons for this proposal which included: the reduction in submitted-to-created applications ratio as a result of requiring GRE; evidence that the acceptance ratio does not seem to be impacted by waiving the GRE; and the concern that the GRE discriminates against some applicants. She indicated that this proposal has been shared with faculties already and there was strong support across faculties to waive the GRE requirement. She clarified that individual programs could still require it as needed.

A motion was made to approve the proposal to waive the general GRE requirement for admission to graduate programs at AUB; the motion was seconded. The motion passed: **Vote 2021-34: 33 (in favor) – 1 (against) – 0 (abstentions).**

6) Update and status of undergraduate applications for Fall 2022-2023

Vice-Provost and Registrar B. Tucker presented the status of UG applications for the current application cycle for Fall 2022-23 admissions. He provided an overview of recruitment activities and services and shared currently available statistics. He noted that early confirmations are healthy and indeed up from last year. He reassured the senate that, in total, applications are on track to be stronger than last year. He shared plans for up-coming activities, highlighting the Open House with prospective students and parents that will take place on May 7th, 2022. One senator asked if the dollarization of the tuition had been taken into account when making enrollment predictions. B. Tucker responded that yes, models that incorporate this dollarization of tuition are used but that it was very hard to predict in advance how the pricing of tuition will affect applicants' continued interest in our programs.

7) Approval of proposal for a Joint FHS/MSFEA Academic Diploma in Humanitarian Engineering and Public Health Innovations

I. Elhadj and A. Germani presented an overview of the previously circulated proposal for a diploma in Humanitarian Engineering and Public Health Innovations (HEPHI) which is part of the larger Humanitarian Engineering Initiative. They clarified the overall humanitarian engineering model and the range of activities, projects and programs that it incorporates. They then explained the need for the HEPHI diploma which has been developed jointly by FHS and MSFEA. They clarified the benchmarking that was done, what is distinctive about this proposal (i.e. the integration of a joint engineering and social science focus), the curriculum, the administrative structure of the diploma and its sustainability. They clarified that there is already a minor and an undergraduate certificate that mirror this diploma, so all the courses already exist. There is already great interest in the core course among students and multiple governmental and nongovernmental partners, in which many faculty are engaged already engaged.

A number of senators congratulated the presenters on an exciting and impressive initiative and wished them luck moving forward. One senator and RHSON I/Dean Farhoud encouraged the presenters to consider including FM and RHSON faculty in the program. President Khuri also commended the presenters for this timely proposal and encouraged them to try to incorporate the remaining faculties. FM Dean Sawaya indicated that FM are in full support of the program and would be happy to contribute.

A. Germani responded that they will certainly continue to reach out to other faculties; more generally, they will be reaching out to see how more students and faculty across all faculties can be engaged.

A motion was made to approve the HEPHI diploma and seconded. The motion passed unanimously. **Vote 2021-35: 36 (in favor) – 0 (against) – 0 (abstentions)**

8) Approval of proposals from Clinical Psychology

G. Ismail presented an overview of two proposals previously circulated to the senate to introduce a practitioner track with a non-thesis option in the MA in Clinical Psychology Program which would require

a project instead of a thesis; and curricular updates to the Graduate Program in Clinical Psychology were also explained. She provided an overview of the new track and curricular changes proposed and explained the rationale for these proposals.

A senator asked about the total number of hours of the practicum experience required for the clinical psychology program. G. Ismail explained that students in both the thesis and project tracks are required to complete 400 hours of practical experience, which is the current legal requirement designated by the Ministry of Labor for employment in this profession.

A motion was made to approve the new non-thesis track in MA in Clinical Psychology program and proposed curricular changes. The motion was seconded. The motion carried with a unanimous vote. **Vote 2021-36: 36 (in favor) – 0 (against) – 0 (abstentions)**

9) Other business

A senator requested the floor and pointed out that a concern has emerged regarding the sick leave policy; specifically, the current policy states that if one takes a paid sick leave for one semester, this cannot be extended to a second semester. This is problematic in the case of an extended illness. Current policy dictates that if a second semester leave is needed it must be a leave without pay. The senator suggested that this was harsh and needs to be reconsidered. The senate agreed that this issue be passed on to SCFA for consideration and possible review.

Another senator asked if there is an update regarding the administrative tasks that are remunerated under the 3/9 summer salary scheme. Provost Dawy explained that this is being considered and a proposal will make its way to the senate soon.

Provost Dawy shared with the senate that he has been contacted by colleagues outside the senate asking for more timely access to the minutes of senate meetings after approval. He recommended that the minutes be made public more quickly than current practice soon after approval by the senate.

There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Minutes taken by Tamer Amin