

**American University of Beirut**  
**Minutes of the University Senate**  
**Meeting of Friday, January 27, 2023**

**Present:** A. Abu-Alfa, H. Abu-Khuzam, F. Afiouni, A. Al-Hroub, N. Al-Akl, I. Baalbaki, P. Bou Khalil, R. Boustany, F. Dahdah, A. Daou, Z. Dawy, N. Dumit, T. Ghaddar, A. Ghauch, G. Honein, N. Hwalla, M. Jaber, S. Karaki, M. Khraiche, S. Kharroubi, F. Khuri, S. Mallat, M. Massoud, N. Melhem, L. Musfi, M. Nasrallah, S. Nouredine, A. Olabi, A. Sabra, R. Sawaya, K. Scheid, Y. Shaib, A. Shihadeh, A. Sibai, Y. Sidani, R. Sultan, B. Tucker, R. Zurayk.

**Absent:** I. Abou Faycal\*, S. Zein-el-dine, S. Altug, S. Elbassuoni, J. Doumar\*  
(\*= regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

President Khuri welcomed the new FAS Dean, Dr. Fares Dahdah, who joined AUB in January 2023. Dean Dahdah is world renown in the area of architecture, culture and heritage, and worked for many years at Rice University as a Professor of Art and Architectural History after graduating from Harvard University with a Doctor of Design (Theory of Architecture). President Khuri called to stand for a moment of silence in the memory of Prof. Richard Smith. FAS Dean, F. Dahdah, read out an honorary statement about Prof. R. Smith.

### **1- Approval of Senate meeting minutes of December 16, 2022**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 16, 2022, Senate meeting minutes as amended. The motion carried (32 with: 0 against: 1 abstain).  
President Khuri agreed with the Senate to move up items 4 and 5 of the agenda.

### **2- Update on new/modified taxation law**

President Khuri introduced the subject by informing the Senate that there has been some progress concerning the new taxation law, but not in the retroactive component. He briefed the Senate about meetings he held to explain that the private sector has not had adequate time to get back on its feet, and taxes are being added without getting back basic services from the government. Mr. Dayya informed the Senate about the amendments to the taxation bills that took place after December 16, 2022. These changes were only related to the exchange rates to be applied to the USD portion of the salaries for the purpose of calculating the value of taxable income starting January 1, 2022. There have been no changes for the tax brackets or deductions as modified in the 2022 budget law issued on November 15, 2022. He added that the 15,000 LL exchange rate against the dollar would be used this year for the fresh dollars' earnings, and the rate of 8000 LL for the first 3,000 local dollars earned on monthly basis, and any excess above this monthly amount in local dollars to be converted at the old rate of 1507 LL. Mr. Dayya presented a real-life taxation situation before and after the recent tax law amendments, where before the amendments a professor making 10

million LL would end up losing 19% of his/her salary, however, with the new modifications 4% would be the deducted amount. A Senate member inquired about taxation on benefits under these new taxation amendments. Mr. Dayya replied that this will be performed as usual but for this year Sayrafa's rate would be used, which is currently at 38000 LL, to convert any dollars payments in such taxation. A Senate member wondered how can the government tax income retroactively. Mr. Dayya explained that the Lebanese government claim that this has been published in early 2022 but there is still dispute around this from institutions and individuals. A Senate member inquired about the dollar rate that should be used by physicians to file their taxes especially that their earnings are collected in Lebanese pounds, Local, and fresh dollars, and using different rates by different physicians might cause discrepancies that can be legally contested. Mr. Dayya replied that AUB will provide the physicians with monthly earnings statement indicating the currency of what actually was payed (LL, fresh USD or local dollars), to be used by physicians to file their taxes. President Khuri informed the Senate that AUB and the alliance of Lebanese universities, in addition to many professional orders, will legally contest this new tax law in the coming few days. A Senate member asked about the rate that will be used to calculate the faculty's salary tax deductions since if the 1500 LL rate is used there will not be enough Lebanese pounds in one's account to cover the taxes. Mr. Dayya answered that the comptroller's office is still working on this, and the situation will be clearer next month. President Khuri reminded the Senate about his previous statement that by 2025 the AUB administration intended to restore the buying power of the faculty and staff back to pre- 2019 levels. To get there AUB will adjust tuition and compensation to more dollar based ones by 2025. A Senate member stated that there is a new coalition composed of different health syndicates (physicians, nurses, physiotherapists...) that is evolving and they could be contacted for joining efforts in the legal contestation. The same Senate member wondered on how the government has two official dollar rates, if not more, at the same time. A Senate member inquired about the position of other private sectors on the new tax law implementation. Mr. Dayya answered that some private sectors implemented the changes without the retroactive component and others have delayed it in total. A Senate member asked about taxation lines that appear in the payroll slip, and Mr. Dayya suggested meeting with the payroll manager for explanation. A Senate member asked about the exchange rate AUB uses for taxation purposes for American citizens and Green card holders. Mr. Dayya explained that for calendar year 2022 AUB reported all dollar amounts at 1,508 LL, moving forward AUB will most probably use either the 15000 LL or the 8000 LL rates depending if payments are made in fresh or local dollars, respectively. He added that AUB will continue to work closely with its lawyers and auditors in the United States to report taxes to IRS based on acceptable official rates. A Senate member asked whether physicians should respect the deadline set by the ministry of finance in terms of taxes filing. Mr. Dayya answered that the deadline for filing taxes has been extended and physicians could wait until mid-February to have a clearer picture of the situation.

### **3- Update from SCFA on deductions and taxation on benefits**

Dr. Abu-Alfa informed the Senate that SCFA has met with Mr. Dayya and CFO Wickens and discussed the taxes on the educational part. SCFA has not arrived to a resolution of this matter, however things would be clearer once the final picture about taxation in general has

been finalized with the Lebanese government. A Senate member wondered why the taxes on benefits should be deducted from the payroll and not paid in cash by the employee at the cashier's office. Mr. Dayya explained that monthly payroll of faculty and staff numbers processed exceeds 6000 members and this would make collection very difficult if each one has to go to the cashier's office to pay these taxes, and thus the deductions have to be processed through payroll deductions.

#### **4- Approval of Amendments of the Bylaws of Faculties to include the School of Architecture and Design at MSFEA**

Dr. H. Al-Harithy presented to the Senate the proposal of the restructuring of the architecture and design department into a school of architecture and design, and the administrative changes involved. Dr. Al-Harithy went over the history of the department since its formation in 1963. In order to reflect the growth and to add new tracks on the graduate and undergraduate levels, it has been decided to transform the department to the school of architecture and design, which would give more visibility and become a solid reference point to AUB and beyond while being under the umbrella of MSFEA. The proposed school would have its own multi academic units run by conveners and coordinators. The formal proposal was presented to the upper administration in 2017 and was integrated into the strategic plan of MSFEA and designated as a strategic initiative for the AUB master plan. Dr. Al-Harithy added that what is needed from the Senate is to formalize the restructuring in order to allow new tracks to emerge and be added to the structure, where this can be done through approving the amendments to the current faculty bylaws. Dr. Al-Harithy presented the different bylaws' amendments that needed the Senate's approval. These were:

- 1- Add "...dean to appoint director of the school of architecture and design" (Article III-Section 2)
- 2- List the School of Architecture and Design with its tracks under MSFEA instead of Department of Architecture and Design (Article IV- Section I)
- 3- Include the director of the school of architecture and design in the administrative committee composition (Article V-Sections 2)
- 4- Add "school" to "department" at MSFEA for committee compositions that state: "one from each department /school" (Article V-Sections 3, 4, 6, and7)

Provost Dawy reminded the Senate that such approvals would need a two-thirds majority. A motion was made and seconded to approve the bylaw's amendments. A Senate member inquired about the cost for the change from a department to a school. Dr. Al-Harithy explained that this change would not result in any additional cost at the time being, however, such a change would allow new endowments to be acquired besides that of MSFEA. A Senate member commended the work and asked if it was common to have schools and departments within the same faculty. Dr. Al-Harithy replied that this is common in many American academic institutes. A Senate member inquired about the absence of mentioning of possible interactions between the proposed school and other design and architecture related

disciplines in the university. Dr. Al-Harithy replied that they have established a committee in the past for this purpose and many joint courses have been taught with the landscape architecture and ecosystem management program in FAFS. She added that this would continue in the future and extend beyond towards the general education program at AUB. A Senate member inquired about the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed change, and wondered about how would the faculty promotion procedure go after this change since usually schools are independent entities within an academic institution. The same Senate member commented about adding the name of the school and the faculty to the diploma that would result in a very long student's major title and department association, and wondered on who would represent the school during graduation ceremonies. Dr. Al-Harithy explained that the proposed change is only in the name for now. President Khuri, Provost Dawy and Dean Shihadeh commented that any promotion or graduation responsibilities would stay under the jurisdiction of the MSFEA dean similar to other faculties. Two Senate members commended the proposed change and considered it as the right evolution that can open new opportunities including fund raising and new endowments. Dean Sawaya commented that recent changes approved for FM are not included in the faculty bylaws version that has been circulated. Provost Dawy explained that the bylaws presented are probably the ones that were used during the proposal preparation and they do not include the recently approved amendments, and added that he will follow up on this after the Senate meeting. Dean Sibai wondered if the change at MSFEA would have any implications on accreditation and if the change needed to be approved at the Board of Deans. Dr. Al-Harithy explained that the change does not affect any future accreditation of the school. Provost Dawy explained that the change of the name was approved at the faculty level, whereas the amendments to the bylaws were approved at the faculty level and have to be approved by the Senate as per the current policies and procedures, and therefore, these changes do not require the approval of the Board of Deans.

**Vote: 2022-11:** The motion carried unanimously (33 with: 0 against: 0 abstain).

#### **5- Update from Senate Committees, plans and challenges:**

- **Academic Development Committee**

Dr. H. Rassy, chairperson of the Academic Development Committee (ADC), presented the plan of the committee for this academic year. He explained that the committee is intending to work on two separate projects: (i) the evaluation of undergraduate programs, and (ii) the evaluation of faculty loads. Dr. Rassy summarized the current practice for the evaluation of undergraduate programs. He mentioned that this evaluation is normally done at the level of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committees in the various faculties, via the assessment of the PLOs that take place every 2 years, through the periodic program review (every 8 years) or the accreditation/re-accreditation. The concern of the committee is the absence of periodic regular evaluations. The committee plan of action is to map the criteria and indicators currently in place and develop additional ones to be used in the evaluation of undergraduate programs. The committee would like to prevent data silos and wishes to collect data that could be integrated for broad applications. The committee would come up with a mechanism

for a periodic evaluation (every 1 or 2 years) with a procedure broad enough to cover the various faculties without forgetting the specificity of each unit. The second topic ADC plans to investigate would be the faculty workload. The current practice as per the Faculty Workload Policy (FWP) in place limits this load to teaching load with 4-6 courses per year. ADC sees that limiting it to teaching without addressing the balance between research, teaching and service does not reflect what a faculty load means. Dr. Rassy mentioned that the Office of the Provost worked on a revised version of the FWP in 2019 based on the recommendations that appear in the Tenure Design Committee (TDC) report. However, this project of revision has been put on hold. ADC would like to assess the set of principles and guidelines mentioned in the TDC report and revise/replace accordingly the FWP. Dr. Rassy mentioned that this work would be done in collaboration with the Office of the Provost. A Senate member wondered about the meaning of the database for accreditation and the number of years that was mentioned. The same Senate member asked about how would the committee quantify the research and service in a workload policy. Dr. Rassy answered that the committee is not coming up with new criteria of evaluation but rather using the existing ones at the different faculties. He added that the “two years” span is different from the “eight years” one, and it is an intermediate timing between the yearly PLO’s and the departmental self-assessment. As for the workload part of the question, Dr. Rassy replied that this is one of the most difficult problems the committee would face. A Senate member wondered if the committee’s functions allow it to work on the set plan that was presented, and if the committee’s bylaws should be amended accordingly. Dr. Rassy explained that the committee will not evaluate programs but rather put the criteria and procedures. The same Senate member asked about the difference between this plan and the PLO’s assessment on yearly and 5-year intervals, and whether the proposed plan includes accredited programs. Dr. Rassy explained that AUB already has an assessment system, and the committees plan would be aligned with that system and it won’t result in more workload to the faculty. Provost Dawy added that this would only allow departments and schools to evaluate performance after the periodic assessments and create a dashboard of indicators such as students’ numbers, students-to-faculty percentage, etc... Associate provost Afiouni added that this dashboard would consist of color-coded mapping (red, yellow, green) for each program indicator to help assess progress and identify areas of improvement on a regular basis. Dr. Rassy added that PLOs are more about the learning objectives in a certain program whereas this dashboard is more about checking and/or making sure that the undergraduate program is performing well. Provost Dawy added that the dashboard will give a better picture of the performance of each program and can be helpful for decision making. A Senate member asked if the committee has a different approach to the workload policy from what the university and the Senate have worked on before, and whether it would take into account some specificities of a certain program or would it be a university wide one. The same Senate member asked about the names of the committee members that represent their faculties in order to communicate with them these specificities. Dean Nouredine asked about the fate of the workload policy developed by the taskforce in which she was a member. Provost Dawy mentioned that in 2019 there was a mature draft of the revised workload policy, ready for the approval process and, thus, any work that will take place should capitalize on what has

been done before. A Senate member asked about how does the presented review plan differ from the self-assessment that is done every 8 years especially that the latter is meticulously done and takes a lot of effort. Dr. Rassy answered that the idea behind this plan is not to have any additional layers of evaluation, rather to have clear criteria that would be used for the dashboard mentioned before in order to understand how programs are performing.

- **University Research Board**

Dr. T. Ghaddar presented to the Senate the different functions mandated to the University Research Board and presented the plan for this academic year. Dr. Ghaddar informed the Senate about what has been finalized and/or in progress since the start of the academic year, 2022-23, and about the new initiatives the committee are working on. The URB has already finalized the revisions of the URB grant guidelines and initiated the call for the 2023-24 URB research grant applications. As for the work in progress, this involves reviewing the URB grant applications and approving the requested budget, coordinating with OGC on the implementation and working closely with the University Libraries on research publications especially in open access journals. The URB is currently working on two new initiatives: 1- to establish a call for graduate students' conference awards that mainly support graduate students to attend and present their research work at regional or international conferences, and 2- to establish an outstanding research recognition award (similar to the teaching excellence award). Dr. Ghaddar informed the Senate that the URB has met 5 times since the start of the academic year and has finalized the first initiative, where the guidelines and award application have been sent to Provost Dawy for final approval before disseminating to faculty. As for the second initiative, the URB committee will be working on this starting February 2023. Other future initiatives the URB committee would be exploring are: 1- to establish a call for applications by AUB faculty members for organizing research conferences at AUB (not a symposium) that are open for local, regional and international researchers, and 2- to establish a call for interdisciplinary research proposals (between at least 2 different faculties). Dean Sawaya wondered about the money amount of the graduate conference award. Dr. Ghaddar informed the Senate that it would be granted up to \$2,000 for Europe and MENA region and \$2,500 elsewhere. A Senate member asked if the awarded graduate students are selected from among the ones who receive the best thesis award in some faculties, and commended this new URB initiative and suggested that the URB join efforts with the University Publication Committee, since the latter committee is very interested in finding ways to highlight students' research work. Dr. Ghaddar acknowledged the suggestion and explained that the graduate students' conference award is open to all graduate students at AUB. A Senate member asked on the reasoning behind granting the conference award for Master's students preferentially over PhD students, where the former reside at AUB for at least 7 months before having enough material for presenting at a conference. Dr. Ghaddar explained that this award is open for Master's and PhD students; however the latter are entitled for a similar award at the faculty level but not for Master's students. As such, it becomes of high importance to offer this opportunity to Master's students who do very well in their research at AUB. A Senate member commented that Lebanon has recently been categorized as a low-to-middle income country and thus would be entitled for lower fees for open access publications. Dr. Ghaddar informed the Senate that the URB committee only

approves requests for open access payments after a faculty member shows a proof of negotiation with the publisher for lower rate and contacting the University Libraries for assistance. He added that these requests have to be approved by the respective faculty research committee and the publication has to be accepted in Q1 journals before URB gives the final approval. A Senate member thanked the URB for the new graduate students' conference award; however, he commented that faculty members are at a disadvantage since they are entitled for only one paid conference a year by the University, and when it comes to promotion such conferences attendance is of high importance. Provost Dawy explained that the graduate students' conference award will have its own budget and typically graduate students publish their work with faculty members. He added that travel grants of the faculty members are covered by the respective Dean's office and in case a faculty member has an external grant that allows travel, he/she can attend extra conferences and meetings. A Senate member asked about the reason behind switching advising money from local dollars to fresh dollars but with a much less value even though these were accumulated pre- 2019 and should be considered as fresh dollars. Provost Dawy explained that all of AUB's money that was in dollar pre-2019 has been stuck in the Lebanese banks and are dealt with as local dollars and that explains the mentioned change in currency value. A Senate member commented that Master's students normally have little time to generate data worth of publishing before graduation, and consequently the student might get the award after their departure from AUB, and asked if similar awards exist at US institutions. Dr. Ghaddar explained that such student awards do exist at many US institutions. He added that these award applications would be reviewed and decided upon within 4 to 6 weeks of URB receiving them; this would give them the right time to plan their travel accordingly while they are active students at AUB.

- **University Disciplinary Committee**

Dean Sibai presented the University Disciplinary Committee (UDC) plan for this academic year. Dean Sibai started by explaining to the Senate how the UDC is responsible for handling violations of the students' code of conduct that may result in expulsion, suspension, or other consequences. The committee, chaired by a representative of the University, includes members from each faculty and a student representative. After reviewing a recent incident, the committee has identified gaps in the student code of conduct and procedures, such as the lack of understanding by students of the code of conduct and the consequences of violating it. The committee is proposing changes to ensure students have a clear understanding of the code of conduct and the procedures, including emphasizing the code during orientation, providing statistics on past incidents and decisions, and revising the code of conduct to better reflect current needs. Dean Sibai also suggested the need for a higher standard than a simple majority when making decisions on suspension or expulsion, and that all details of a case should be presented and understood before making any decision. She also suggested to have an archive of past students' disciplinary cases that lists the problems and the decisions taken at the time as a reference. She also added that the current student code of conduct is being revised, based on comments and recommendations made in previous years. A Senate member suggested having some kind of a form to be signed by the students once entering

AUB and before registering courses that states they have read and understood the policy and the code of conduct, as such any student cannot claim that he/she is not aware of the regulations. Dean Sibai answered that this is exactly what the committee is looking into and about ways to make this mandatory and ensure that students do read them. Dean Noureddine suggested having an exam on this policy administered using some kind of an online module that forces students to answer questions about it. Dean Al Akl commented that students are informed about the policy during their orientation; however, this procedure is being revised currently to ensure that students understand it, but this still needs an implementation mechanism.

- **Board of Graduate Studies**

Dr. D. Currell, chair of the Board of Graduate Studies, presented the committee's plan for the current academic year. The remit of the board is to handle academic and regulatory aspects of graduate education, represented by faculties and the Graduate Council. The members of the board focus on evaluating substantive changes to academic programs, approving new programs, and improving their procedures. Dr. Currell pointed out that there are plans to make expectations for proposals more accessible and legible to those making proposals, with guidelines, templates, and a checklist to align with the evaluation procedure. The board also plans to create a timeline for proposals to reach the Senate for final approval. He added that one of the main challenges is to find ways to encourage knowledge exchange between faculties to improve the quality of proposals. There are also challenges related to benchmarking and market studies for niche programs, for which the board will come up with guidelines for evaluation. A Senate member asked Dr. Currell whether the committee is working on new criteria of evaluation for proposals that advance to the BGS. Dr. Currell affirmed this and added that the committee would work on and publish guidelines for building a proposal at the early stages. A Senate member commented that similar criteria are present at BGS but might just need some revisions. The same Senate member agreed with the fact stated that sometimes schools or divisions do not understand what is benchmarking and there should be some guidelines about this. She added that in case BGS follow up on approved programs after their launching it should include the online programs. Dr. Currell acknowledged the comment and added BGS can also set a periodic review of such programs. A Senate member wondered if there is a mechanism at BGS to follow up with substantive changes to a certain program. Dr. Currell answered that this is listed within the new criteria, where faculties would be reminded of self-reporting any major curricula changes. Mr. Tucker commented that during the spring semester of every year, faculties are requested to update the University catalogue for any curriculum changes. He added that this year the Registrar has a better process in place, and would be looking at all of the curricular changes and be able to point out any irregularities or substantive unapproved changes. A Senate member asked the Provost for updates on the programs that need approval by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Provost Dawy explained that the ministry has a three-stage approval process for new programs or changes to existing programs. There are currently around 15 programs pending approval, some for several years. He added that the



appointment of Dr. Karma El Hassan as AUB's representative in the ministry's technical committee helped accelerate progress on the approval of several programs. He added that programs that require evaluation and approval at the level of the ministry are making significant progress, but programs more recently submitted are still in the first stage and require approval from the Council of Ministers, which is not possible for the time being.

## **6- Other Business**

- Provost Dawy informed the Senate that the Leadership Academy has been launched this week with 25 members (7 faculty and 18 staff), based on a nomination and selection process. A call for nominations email was sent to members of the leadership team to recommend suitable candidates from the units that report to them. The selection committee was composed of the Provost, Vice President for Administration, Director of HR, and Director of AUBMC, and the final recommendations were approved by President Khuri.
- A Senate member inquired about the ICE scores that have not been received by the faculty before the start of the semester, and in case the previous technical problem that caused the delay has been resolved. Mr. Tucker replied that the problem persists with the server, on which the software "blue" is housed, and the IT team was unable to address yet with the resources available. However, AUB worked with the company in order to move the entire data to the cloud, which will take some time to implement. Mr. Tucker added that an email will be sent to the faculty, as soon this technical problem is resolved.

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

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