

**American University of Beirut**  
**Final Minutes of the University Senate**  
**Meeting of Friday, October 29, 2021**

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

**Absent:** H. Darwish, N. Hwalla, P. Bou Khalil, S. Mallat

The meeting called to order at 2:00 pm.

**1- Approval of October 1, 2021 senate meeting minutes:**

Minutes of the senate meeting of October 1, 2021 were approved as circulated unanimously: 34-0-0.

**2- Announcements:**

President Khuri announced the election of the following chairs of senate committees:

- Nada Melhem, Chair, Senate Steering Committee
- Ali Abou Alfa, Chair, Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs

President Khuri presented a short video documenting the commencement exercises that took place early in Fall 2021-22, and thanked faculty and staff for their important contributions in making all these events possible.

**3. Election of two faculty members (from the faculty at large) to serve on the Policies and Procedures Review Committee (PPRC)**

SSC chair, Nada Melhem, presented the nominated candidates listed below:

1. Assoc. Prof. Daniel Asmar, MSFEA
2. Assoc. Prof. Tony Bazi, FM
3. Assoc. Prof. Nuhad Dumit, RHSON
4. Prof. Eveline Hitti, FM
5. Prof. Samer Jabbour, FHS
6. Assoc. Prof. May Massoud, FHS
7. Assoc. Prof. Houssam Rassi, FAS

It was announced from the floor that E. Hitti has withdrawn her nomination.

Provost Dawy clarified that senate members will be voting for two members of the PPRC. Voting will take place in rounds: a candidate is elected if he/she obtains half the votes in the first round, otherwise another round of voting is conducted with the two candidates obtaining the top two number of votes in the first round. It was noted that there were 34 voting senate members present.

The first round of voting for the first PPRC position included the following candidates:

1. Assoc. Prof. Daniel Asmar, MSFEA
2. Assoc. Prof. Tony Bazi, FM
3. Assoc. Prof. Nuhad Dumit, RHSON
4. Prof. Samer Jabbour, FHS
5. Assoc. Prof. May Massoud, FHS
6. Assoc. Prof. Houssam Rassi, FAS

33 members voted; N. Dumit was elected with 20 votes.

The first round of voting for the second PPRC position included the following candidates:

1. Assoc. Prof. Daniel Asmar, MSFEA
2. Assoc. Prof. Tony Bazi, FM
3. Prof. Samer Jabbour, FHS
4. Assoc. Prof. May Massoud, FHS
5. Assoc. Prof. Houssam Rassi, FAS

34 members voted; H. Rassi was elected with 17 votes (there were 4 abstentions)

#### **4. Revocation of the *Tenure Procedure for 2017-2018***

Deputy Provost Choueiri clarified that the senate is being presented with the *Tenure Procedure for 2017-18* to be revoked as this policy has now been superseded and needs to be archived.

**A motion was made and seconded to revoke the Tenure Procedure for 2017-18. Vote 2021-11. The motion passed unanimously: 34 (in favor) - 0 (against) – 0 (abstentions)**

#### **5. Revocation of the *Publications Office Manual***

Deputy Provost Choueiri explained that the *Publications Office Manual* is an outdated policy document that has now been superseded by a number of other manuals that cover the same policy content. This needs to be revoked and archived.

**A motion was made and seconded to revoke the Publications Office Manual. Vote 2021-12. The motion passed unanimously: 34 (in favor) - 0 (against) – 0 (abstentions)**

## 6. Update on Promotion and Tenure

Provost Dawy made the annual presentation updating the senate on promotion and tenure. He reviewed the recent timeline for faculty promotion and tenure at AUB pointing out that there have now been four completed promotion and tenure cycles since tenure was reinstated by the BOT on May 17, 2017 and that the *Post-tenure Review Policy* was recently approved by the BOT in Sept 2021. Over the four cycles, starting in 2017-18, there have been a total of 237 applicants and 184 awarded for an overall success rate of 78%. In the current 2021-2 cycle, 35 applications have been submitted: assistant professor applying for associate professor with tenure (37%); associate professor applying for tenure in the rank (20%), associate professor applying for full professor with tenure (26%), tenured associate professor applying for promotion to full professor (11%); and full professor applying for tenure in the rank. In addition, 11 applications for promotion in nontenure clinical tracks were submitted. The current fifth cycle was launched in July 2021 and an orientation program was conducted with all faculty members considering applying. The provost emphasized that for the first time the CTL director conducted workshops on how to evaluate teaching portfolios and pointed out that more information is available on the Provost's Office website (under *Faculty Resources*).

Senate members were invited to ask questions and make comments. The following issues/questions were raised: Is a success rate of 78% success considered good and how do we benchmark this? Do unsuccessful applicants get feedback and what happens to them? Are there any statistics on the 184 awarded in relation to those who subsequently took leave without pay? Has the current crisis had a negative impact on the quality of applications? Will there be priority given to faculty applying for promotion when it comes to periodic paid research leave, which is currently still frozen?

In response to these questions, the provost mentioned that we're happy with this success rate but pointed out that there is no predefined rate. President Khuri added that we believe we are at a rate similar to the targets of peer institutions (although these are not typically published). Provost Dawy added that many apply early and if unsuccessful they can apply again. No feedback is provided in the formal decision letter that applicants receive but applicants are offered meetings with their dean to request feedback. The provost stated that at present no data has been compiled on the tenure status of those who taken a leave without pay. He pointed out that one measure that was taken in response to the recent crises was to give one year extension to the promotion/tenure clock as an option. He noted that it was hard to measure impact on quality of the current crisis at this point, but his sense is that the quality of the files was unchanged in comparison to previous cycles. The president agreed with this assessment but added that there was certainly a need to leverage more resources. The president added that the issue of restoring paid research leave has been discussed at the level of the Board of Deans but clarified that there is no current plan to undo the current freeze given the economic situation which demands financial caution.

## **7. Update on student enrollment & Update on return to campus: status of faculty, staff and students**

Registrar B. Tucker sent apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. Provost Dawy presented both the Update on the Return to Campus and Update on Faculty and Students.

Provost Dawy started by presenting the Update on the Return to Campus. He outlined the timeline of key events over the last 2-year period pointing out how academic continuity was achieved in response to the multiple crises and disruptions that AUB, and indeed the country, faced between Oct 2019 and Sept 2021. He summarized the approach taken to the return to campus this Fall 2021 in terms of three pillars: vaccinating the AUB community, the transition to in-person teaching, and the student life and campus experience.

With regard to vaccination, the provost pointed out that the vaccination campaign and the associated communication strategy was rolled out with the goal of vaccinating all students, faculty and staff, with exceptions granted for approved medical reasons only. In addition, an automated access to campus process was implemented. He announced that the current vaccination rate for the AUB community overall stands at over 98% which has created conditions for a safe return to campus.

The return to in-person teaching and learning began slowly during September 2021 for courses for which this was necessary (e.g. labs and art studios) but starting the beginning of October 2021 all courses were being conducted in person. This was possible because of the successful vaccination campaign and has led to a more positive outlook for this academic year. The provost shared faculty tweets expressing the excitement of faculty and students about the return to campus.

With regard to student life and the campus experience the provost shared various steps taken to prepare the campus for students' return. This included the creation of various safe working spaces, the preparation of student dorms, food services and athletic facilities, as well as the anticipated need for the counseling center, health and wellness initiatives and the activation of societies and clubs.

Provost Dawy concluded by pointing out that Deputy Provost Choueiri developed an academic continuity framework with colleagues from different faculties. A central component of this was the establishment of the Expanded Council of Associate Deans and faculty/school Academic Continuity Teams (ACTs). The provost mentioned that communication has been key and pointed out that there are faculty FAQs available on the AUB website which are periodically updated. He stated that the approach moving forward was to hope that conditions allow in-person teaching and learning to continue, but that it was necessary that we continue to be ready to use online tools and strategies as needed so as to adapt to needs that arise.

The provost then presented an Update on Faculty and Students for Fall 2021. He shared statistics on student enrollment over the period between Fall 2012 and Fall 2021. He noted the peak in overall student enrollment in Fall 2019 and the most notable drop in undergraduate student

enrollment in Fall 2020. He commented that while there was continued drop in Fall 2021, this was less concerning than anticipated and that the increase in the number of new UG students (about 200 more in Fall 2021 than Fall 2020) was reassuring.

The provost then turned to faculty attrition. He shared trends for the number of faculty (full-time professorial, full-time non-professorial, full-time clinical and part-time) over the last five academic years. Notable decreases were apparent over the last two academic years especially for full-time professorial and full-time clinical faculty. Professorial faculty attrition (including clinical) relative to peak in Fall 2019-2020 was a total of 210 (consisting of 100 departures and 110 leaves). Most impacted has been the Faculty of Medicine followed by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

The provost went on to outline the strategy for retention and growth. He outlined a four-pronged strategy: 1) base support packages including \$150M over 3 years for salary recovery, endowed chairs, and board designated professorships; 2) a grants incentive program; 3) a faculty recruitment strategy; and 4) a strategy for promoting successes. He also added that a new orientation program for new faculty has been launched which now includes and new chairs.

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor. The following issues/questions were raised. What has happened to the pre-2019 plan to expand the number of students and faculty, is this on hold? Have there been any cases of COVID-19 among students, faculty and staff? Are there any updates on the administration of booster vaccination doses? Do we know where students who left AUB went and was there any way to support them to stay? It was suggested that it is important for us to keep graduate numbers high and noted that it was good to see high MA numbers, but the question was raised as to why there was a cap placed on the admission of PhD students. A senator made a remark to emphasize that those who left Lebanon need not be seen as having left AUB in spirit and that we should continue to “have them in our hearts” as these are people who might have left out of necessity but are still committed to AUB. A senator congratulated the deans of MSFEA and FHS for low faculty attrition. Another noted that the student decline in FAFS is alarming and asked what the university strategy was to address this. With regard to student enrollment overall, a senator asked whether it was the number of applications that was declining or the acceptance rate. Another pointed out that the mark of a mature university is to recruit its own graduating students as faculty and so emphasized that we see our prior students as potential resources. A senator noted that the provost’s presentation makes it look like we had a problem and we’re picking up, but suggested that this might be dangerous as the situation at AUBMC, in particular, is very serious and must be acknowledged and tackled head-on.

In response, the provost indicated that there is no plan to scale down. But while faculty and student numbers are down, we are exploring new initiatives outside of Lebanon as discussed in the town halls conducted by President Khuri, as well as the AUB online initiative. We need to look at numbers and their significance in this broader context. In response to the question on whether there have been reported cases of COVID-19 among members of the AUB community, the provost said that yes there have been. N. Melhem confirmed this but pointed out that there have been no identified cases of transmission within the AUB campus and all cases to date seem to

have been cases of community transmission outside AUB. With regard to the availability of the booster vaccination dose, President Khuri mentioned that there has been relatively slow progress on this by the Lebanese Ministry of Health, but that AUB is in close dialogue with the MoH and that he is confident there will be progress in the coming weeks. N. Melhem added that the National Committee for Communicable Diseases have put guidelines for younger age groups for the receipt of the booster doses so implementation for younger age groups is in the pipeline. Provost Dawy noted that there is no data at present on where students who have left AUB went. President Khuri added that there is no evidence that these students are transferring to other universities in Lebanon. Provost Dawy added that we have provided significant financial support and believe these students have mostly left the country. He also clarified that the cap on admission of PhD students had to do with the absence of needed faculty in some departments. With regard to student decline in FAFS, Provost Dawy pointed out that the Provost's Office is working with the dean of the faculty and offering support to address this challenge. President Khuri added that when economies decline severely sectors are impacted differently. He noted that RHSON graduates have jobs waiting whereas the impact on the agricultural sector has been severe which is likely to impact student numbers in FAFS. I/Dean Olaby mentioned that a number of strategies that are being explored to address the problem including meeting with high schools and raising funds for scholarships. With regard to the question about number of applications versus acceptance rates, President Khuri responded that the number of applications has gone up versus the previous year, but the yield has dropped. In response to the comment about the seriousness of the situation and caution against trying too hard to search for positives, especially at the Faculty of Medicine, President Khuri emphasized that the administration is certainly taking the situation very seriously and emphasized that much is unpredictable, but stated that contingency plans are being put in place. Dean Sawaya acknowledged that this is an important point. He shared that he met with all departments in FM and has carefully noted all of the many issues of concern. He asserted that responses are coming and that solutions will be enacted to improve the situation. Dean Shihadeh added that he agreed with the concerns, stating that we are all aware of the challenges. He argued that those who are here have stayed because they want to fight to keep higher education viable in Lebanon. He added that in MSFEA they do recruit their own students quite a bit. He suggested that we are forced to think carefully about where to channel our resources. He said that as a university our priorities are high quality education and patient care, so we need to make difficult decisions with programs that are not viable. I/Dean Farhoud added that with regard to student applications, they have received a large number at RHSON.

## **8. Other business**

Senator M. Nasrallah, at the request of faculty from FM, made a **motion to request that SCFA study the current policy on Outside Activities of Fulltime Faculty Members (issued on April 27,2020) with specific attention to the length of allowed duration of these activities at any one time. Vote 2021-13. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously by senate members.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30.  
Minutes taken by Tamer Amin