

**American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Wednesday, May 29, 2019**

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abou Araj, E. Al-Chaer, I. Baalbaki, T. Bazi, A. Chalak, H. Diab, N. Dumit, S. El Fakhani, H. El Rassy, N. El-Cheikh, N. Ghanem, M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, E. Hitti, H. Huijjer, S. Isber, K. Kabalan, S. Kanj-Sharara, F. Khuri (chair), N. Melhem, R. Mohtar, H. Muller, I. Nuwayhid, G. Saad, S. Sadek, N. Saliba, M. Sayegh, E. Shamma, A. Shihadeh, F. Talih

Absent: A. Abu-Alfa, J. Chaaban*, L. Daouk, W. El-Hajj*, M. Farah*, C. Fugate, A. Harutyunyan, M. Jurdi*, T. Nizameddin, R. Sharara

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

1) Approval of Senate minutes of April 24, May 3 and May 8, 2019

Dr. Al-Chaer and the chair will make revisions to the minutes of April 24 and they will be submitted for approval by circular vote. The minutes of May 3 were approved with minor revisions. The minutes of May 8 were approved as circulated.

2) Voting of degrees

H. Abou-Araj presented the list of degree candidates and statistics on their distribution (circulated list of expected graduates spring 2019). 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 2018-35. The motion was approved unanimously.** EVP/Dean Sayegh 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 2018-36. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Huijjer recommended awarding degrees to the indicated students in the Hariri School of Nursing HSON. **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in HSON. Vote 2018-37. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Nuwayhid 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 2018-38. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Nuwayhid also recommended awarding degrees to the indicted students in the two degree programs that are jointly administered by FHS and FM and whose graduates have their diplomas signed by the deans of both those faculties. **A motion was made to award degrees to the candidates in FHS/FM. Vote 2018-39. 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 2018-40. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Mohtar 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 2018-41. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Harvey 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 2018-42. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3) Update on HIP

Hala Bikhazi and Mary Jaber gave a presentation updating the Senate on the status of, and recent changes to, the health insurance program (**see appendix I**).

4) Presentation of a proposal on admissions criteria for special categories of students by the University Admissions Committee

In his role as chair of the University Admissions Committee (UAC), Dr. Riad Chedid gave a presentation on that committee's proposal for admissions criteria for special categories of students. The categories identified by the committee are athletes, musicians, students with learning and physical difficulties, female students for certain majors, exceptionally talented students, talented students from underprivileged families, international students, and students from underrepresented groups (e.g. refugees). A senator drew attention to the fact that this list of categories constitutes a very heterogeneous class and, as such, it may require very different sorts of initiatives to recruit from these various categories. The Dean of FAS noted that her faculty's experience with the freshman program, for which increasing diversity was originally a major goal, shows that this is something that AUB is not yet very good at; so serious effort should go into trying to figure out how to be more successful. Several senators expressed the concern that bringing subjective criteria into admissions decisions could open the door for illicit influence and sectarian bias gaining sway in the process. The president urged senators to consider the possibility that such concerns had led the institution to be overly cautious and thus err too far on the side of focusing on only SAT scores and grades. Several senators said they thought that diversity should be a priority and thanked Dr. Chedid for updating the Senate on the work his committee had done thus far and suggested that this should be seen as a work in progress and not a finished product. The president asked the Senate for volunteers to work with the UAC on this diversity initiative. Dr. Elie Al-Chaer and Dr. Mohamad Abiad graciously offered their services.

5) Vote on a proposal for a system to transition from number grades to letter grades

Dr. Saouma Boujaoude and Hala Abu Arraj gave a presentation to the Senate on a proposed system to transition from number grades to letter grades (**see appendix II**). Following up on three years of work in the Senate and the offices of the Provost and Registrar, AUB will begin assessing first-year students with letter grades starting with the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. Students with more seniority will continue to receive number grades. Those entering as sophomore this fall and who graduate in the spring of 2021-2022 will be the first cohort with an AUB transcript bearing letter grades. Dr. Boujaoude emphasized the time pressure on this proposal. All rules for entering majors, transferring between majors, being put on academic probation, etc. are currently set out in the catalog in terms of number grades; so rules based on letter grades need to be put in place with all due haste. **A motion was made to approve the proposal as written.** There was an energetic and multi-faceted discussion. Several senators expressed the concern that there was not yet a clear enough implementation strategy to ensure that all faculties will be using the same scheme to transition from number to letter grades. The Provost suggested that Deans can and should work with their faculties on implementation. Dr. Boujaoude said that alongside providing a table to help instructors convert number grades to letter grades, there need to be efforts to change the grading culture at AUB. A senator asked why, on the proposed conversion chart the, there is a seventeen point range for grades falling in the "A" range (83-100), but only a three point range for grades falling in the "D" range (60-62). The Provost offered the clarification that this scheme was developed with the goal of keeping two categories relatively stable over the transition from number grades to letter grades: the number of students who are put on probation and the number of students who graduate with distinction. Several senators asked whether instructors were to consider the chart for converting number grades to letter grades as a guideline or as law. Multiple answers were given to this question. **Vote 2018-43. The motion was approved by a vote of 16-7-4.**

6) Update on letter of appointment for tenured faculty

The President summarized what was covered at the recent town hall meetings on this topic. The input of the BoT was that the current draft letter is too long and contains too many details, as the standard

in the field is two paragraphs of text in which benefits are mentioned only via reference to university bylaws. The issue is being tabled for now and will be brought back to the Senate when a new document is ready. The Dean of OSB noted that when a contract runs out and a new one is not yet in place to supersede the old one, the legal standard is for the old contract to remain in force and, thus, nothing is put at risk by not settling this issue now.

7) Update on non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy

Mitra Tauk gave the Senate an update on AUB's non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy. Ms. Tauk began by reminding the Senate that in their meeting of May 3, it was decided that all patients follow the AUB policies addressing sexual harassment and discriminatory harassment (that were subject to approval during that meeting). However, it was decided that "non-related" patients (meaning patients who do not have another role at AUB/AUBMC; who are not at the same time members of the AUB community: faculty, staff, students, etc.) follow separate procedures to be developed by AUBMC; while "related" patients would follow the existing AUB procedures. Following the Senate meeting of May 3, 2019, a discussion was initiated to remove "patients" from the "Sexual Harassment" and "Non-Discrimination and Anti Discriminatory Harassment" policies and to develop a new AUBMC policy for them. Accordingly, it was decided to remove "patients" entirely from the policies addressing sexual harassment and discriminatory harassment and to develop a new AUBMC policy and procedures that would apply to them. Accordingly, the president formed a working group (chaired by the Title IX Coordinator) to follow up on the development of this policy.

8) Vote on proposed policy and procedures concerning consensual sexual or romantic relationships

Mitra Tauk and Dr. Brigitte Khoury gave a presentation on a proposed policy concerning consensual sexual or romantic relationships (**see appendix III**). In the course of the discussion, the presenters emphasized that the main goal of the policy would not be to police or constrain interpersonal interactions, but rather to guard against conflicts of interest, exploitation, favoritism, and negative bias. The merit for having such a policy is supported by benchmarking. Of the nineteen institutions surveyed, eighteen have a policy on consensual relationship and fourteen make an explicit distinction about how the policy is to be applied where undergraduate students are concerned, as opposed to other members of the community. Several senators raised concerns related to the fact that the expectation to disclose a consensual sexual or romantic relationship might have different impacts in the US context, where these sorts of policies are the norm, than they might in Lebanon. There was a range of such concerns: from cases where public knowledge of a sexual relationship might create exposure to criminal penalty under Lebanese law, to cases where the relative cultural sensitivity to relationships between non-married people could lead to stigmatization. Ms. Tauk and Dr. Khoury clarified that the expectation to disclose is not a requirement to make the existence of the relationship public knowledge. The expectation to disclose needs to be understood in the context of the goal of the policy which is, once again, to guard against conflicts of interest, exploitation, favoritism, and negative bias. So the question of whom one should disclose the salient information to should be indexed against how to ensure that those four problems will not arise. So, for example, if one of the people in the relationship would normally have a supervisory role over the other person in the relationship, it may be that the former party recusing himself or herself from any assessments of the latter party would be enough to cure the conflict. In such cases, the appropriate person to whom to disclose the relationship would be the next supervisory level: e.g. a department chair or a dean of the relevant faculty. In other cases, the expectation to disclose might be successfully met by talking to a Title IX officer. In all cases, every attempt will be made to maintain confidentiality. Several senators had questions about how the issue of asymmetrical power relations fits into the policy. One issue is that the burden to disclose is on the person with the higher rank and/or with the supervisory responsibility. A second issue is that if a consensual relationship is not disclosed, it may not be possible to decisively establish consent if, at a later time, one party says that interaction was in fact not

consensual. This creates a particular jeopardy in cases where there is an asymmetry in power between the parties and the one with more power is accused of having used coercion. One senator said he thought that was unfair. Another senator said she thought much of the preceding discussion was being conducted in abstraction from the reality of how asymmetrical power relations are experienced by women in academia and urged her colleagues to consider the fact that many, many women receive advances from men in positions of relative power at every stage: from professors and TAs as an undergraduate, from professors and supervisors in graduate school, from supervisors in such contexts as internships, and from higher ranking colleagues once one is working in academia. She closed by saying AUB very much needs a policy like the one being proposed today. A senator asked whether the proposed policy will be applied retroactively. The President said that it would not be. A senator suggested that the special protections provided for undergraduates under this policy be extended to graduate students as well because the relatively large amount of time faculty spend with their graduate students, and relatively high amount of power because the faculty member's supervisory role makes it even more likely that problems might arise. There was some discussion of this issue, during which the fact that the safeguards against coercion should help protect graduate students and the fact that undergraduates are more clearly at risk of not being able to fully and properly consent were emphasized. **A motion was made to approve the proposed policy and procedures. Vote 2018-44. The motion passed by a vote of 18-1-4.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

(Minutes recorded by Hans Muller: substituting for Wassim El-Hajj, Secretary of the Senate)

Appendix I: Update on HIP



HIP Senate
Presentation May 20

Appendix II: Proposal for a system to transition from number grades to letter grades



Proposal for a
System to Transition

Appendix III: Policy and procedures concerning consensual sexual or romantic relationships



Presentation to
Senate-CSRR-May 20