

American University of Beirut
Final Minutes of the University Senate
Meeting of Friday, November 29, 2019

Present: M. Abiad, H. Abou Araj, A. Abu-Alfa, E. Al-Chaer, I. Baalbaki, T. Amin, G. Burris, A. Chalak, L. Daouk, N. Dumit, S. El Fakhani, N. El-Cheikh, W. El-Hajj, H. El Rassy, M. Farah, L. Farhoud, Z. Ghazal, M. Harajli, C. Harb, S. Harvey, S. Isber, H. Jaafar, F. Khuri, N. Melhem, R. Mohtar, R. Nakkash, I. Nuwayhid, G. Saad , N. Saliba, A. Shihadeh, F. Talih, E. Hitti, R. Sharara, G. Zaatari

Absent: T. Bazi*, H. Diab, R. Chedid*, A. Chehab, A. Harutyunyan*, D. Jaalouk, K. Kabalan*, S. Kanj-Sharara*, T. Nizameddin, M. Sayegh*

(* = regrets notified before meeting)

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

1) Approval of Senate minutes of October 30, 2019

The minutes of October 30, 2019 were unanimously approved as circulated.

2) Voting of Degrees for FM and MSFEA Graduates

Dr. Ghazzal moved to recommend awarding an MD degree to the candidate Ibrahim Hashem in the Faculty of Medicine. **Vote 2019-13. The motion was approved unanimously.** Dean Shihadeh moved to recommend awarding a BE degree to the candidate Michel Dibo in the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA). **Vote 2019-14. The motion was approved unanimously.**

3) Report of the president on the November BOT Meeting

President Khuri explained that the November Board of Trustees meeting occurred under unusual circumstances; 27 days after the outburst of the protests in the country. Many important items were originally planned for the meeting but the agenda was altered considering the political/economic instability in Lebanon. President Khuri listed some of the items discussed during the BOT meeting:

- Approval of the updated corporate bylaws
- Approval of the amended senate bylaws
- Approval of permanent naming's
- Honorary Degrees
- Approval of the appointment of three new alumni trustees (Ghassan Abou-Alfa, Leila Bissat, and Salwa Darraj)
- Approval of academic appointments
- Review of financial status and forecast

It was noted that the hospital is starting to incur financial losses. The hospital revenues are still positive when compared with previous years but they are falling below the forecast. This loss in revenue is mainly attributed to the significant drop in paying patients and an increase in trauma and emergency related cases. Moreover, it is noted there is an increase in the number of deferred payment requests both on campus and in the medical center. In light of these changes, different financial forecasts and strategic plans were discussed to help balance the books and keep the community whole. Moreover, the Provost and EVP Sayegh presented their visions on how the university and the medical center are coping with these changes. VP Baalbaki also reported a significant decline in the value of endowments received by AUB. While \$101M were received in 2016-17 and \$108M received in 2017-18, the amount received in academic year 2018-19 is less than \$38M.

It was decided to adopt 3 major undertakings:

- Establish a Global Emergency Fund in New York to offset part of the financial losses

- Establish a Council of Economic Advisors
- Establish urgent student and patient solidarity funds
- Approval of 5 new appointees to the International Advisory Council
- New Trustee Orientation

4) Update on Tenure

Provost Harajli presented an overview of the number of tenure applicants and the success rates over the past two cycles.

Year	# of applicants	# Tenured	Success Rate
2017-18	107	73	68%
2018-19	51	41	80%
2019-20	41	-	-

The Provost also presented a breakdown of the applicants by faculty. He announced that the UPTC for this cycle is already formed. The UPTC includes six external international referees, and the names of all UPTC members are published on the Provost’s office website. The Provost also presented statistics on the ratio of tenured to non-tenured professors in the different ranks at AUB.

A senator inquired about the number of UPTC members that were replaced from last year’s committee. The provost clarified that the bylaws require that 50% of the UPTC members have to rotate off each cycle, but due to the limited number of tenured full professors currently at AUB, only 45% were replaced. It was announced that no repeat tenure applications were received as most of the denied applicants are still under appeal considerations.

President Khuri praised the work of Tenure and Promotion Appeal Committee (TPAC) and commended the stellar efforts of the chair of the committee Professor Charles Harb. It was announced that TPAC will present recommendations regarding the tenure and appeal process for the Board of Deans and the Senate after debriefing the President and Provost on the recommendation of the submitted appeal cases.

5) External Referees for Tenure Only Applications

Provost Harajli presented a change to the tenure policy requiring referees for Associate Professors applying to Tenure be of the rank of Full Professor only. The change is proposed to avoid having Associate Professors who have been in rank for few years only evaluate more senior colleagues. It was noted that this change came at the recommendation of the UPTC while having the best interest of the applicants in mind. According to the UPTC and based on their experience from past cycles, referee letters from Associate Professors did not hold as much weight as those written by Full Professors. Moreover, negative letters from Associate Professors significantly harmed the application.

Senators argued that this change in policy regardless of its merit does not follow due process and should have gone through proper channels before being implemented. They claimed that the change is not only a violation of procedure but also a violation of shared governance principles.

Provost Harajli noted that all applicants were informed of this change by their respective Deans, and all applications abided by the new change. Nonetheless, the Provost stated that this change will be brought back to the senate for voting, and if not too late this year we will revert back to the original policy where referees for Associate Professors applying to Tenure could be of equal or higher rank.

6) Compensation for Summer Courses

Provost Harajli stated that a message was sent out to the faculty earlier this semester stating that starting in Summer 2020, the compensation for teaching a summer course will be 1/12 of the annual basic salary as long as this amount is not less than LL9,000,000 and not more than LL13,500,000. The summer course compensation used to be 1/10.8 of the annual basic salary with no set limits. The Provost agreed to go back to 1/10.8 of the annual basic salary per summer course but insisted on enforcing the new set compensation limits.

A senator suggested adopting a fixed flat rate per summer course but it was argued that this might be disadvantageous for some disciplines. It might also become too financially attractive for some junior faculty and might stray them away from research during the summer term.

Another senator argued that the decision was unilaterally communicated to the faculty without being discussed by SCFA and presented to the Senate. The Provost clarified that there are no policies regarding Summer teaching and as such summer compensation changes should not come to the Senate for voting.

It was noted that some faculties have required summer courses in their curricula and it is important to make sure that such changes will not impact the quality of the offered courses.

7) Proposal to the Board of Graduate Studies for a modification of the requirements of the MS in SHARP (FM/FHS) from 40 to 35 credits

Dr. Hajj Fleihan presented an overview of the MS in SHARP degree with the reasoning behind the change in the number of credits. She also stated that the proposed changes were already approved by the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Board of Graduate Studies.

It was noted that the MS in SHARP is the only degree targeting MD students in the region. Some concerns were expressed regarding the overlap between the MS in SHARP and some other graduate programs at FHS. Dr. Fleihan clarified that the structure of the program is uniquely tailored to the needs of physicians and that the intensive summer certificate courses are transferrable to any international degree. **A motion was made to approve the presented changes. Vote 2019-15. The motion was approved by a vote (28-0-2).**

8) Extending Deadline for “Approval of Master Thesis Topic and Committee”

Due to the ongoing circumstances in the country, it was proposed to extend this semester deadline for approval of the Master’s degree thesis topic and committee from December 20, 2019 to January 17, 2020. A senator asked about extending the deadline for thesis defense as well. It was explained that the extension of the thesis defense deadline will impact graduation date and that such decision requires further investigation for feasibility. It was suggested to keep the thesis defense deadline unchanged and deal with extension petitions on a case by case basis. **A motion was made to approve the extension of the deadline for “Approval of Master Thesis Topic and Committee”. Vote 2019-16. The motion was approved unanimously.**

9) Amendments to the Faculty Bylaws re “E-Voting”

Dr. Zaatari presented an overview of the proposed amendments to the Faculty Bylaws to incorporate the possibility of using electronic voting for electing representatives to the Senate, to the faculty/school, and to University committees. He also stated that the E-Voting idea was originally presented to the Senate in the September 2018 meeting and later approved in the October 2018 meeting. The point of discussion in this meeting is the implementation procedure of the E-Voting system based on the Single Transferrable Vote (STV) technique.

Some senators expressed that although they are fine with adopting an E-Voting system, the problem with the presented changes to the bylaws is that they create a two tier voting criteria: the presented STV system and the current counting votes system. There should be a unified approach to electing faculty representatives to avoid biasing the results.

A motion was made to change Article II, Section 1.4 of the faculty bylaws as follows:

“Each Faculty shall choose only one of the following two systems to elect its representatives to the Senate, to the faculty/school, and to University committees:

- a) Elections via an in person faculty meeting whereby to be elected, a candidate for a position must receive a simple majority of votes cast. If no candidate receives a majority on the first ballot, only the two candidates receiving the largest number of votes in that ballot will face each other in a runoff election.*

- b) *Elections via electronic voting whereby elections are held electronically by means of online ranked choice voting using Single Transferable Vote (STV). Electors have a single vote in which they rank their candidates according to their preferences. To be elected, a candidate for a position must achieve a quota equals to $\text{Floor} \left(\frac{\text{valid votes cast}}{\text{seats to fill} + 1} \right) + 1$. Any surplus vote is transferred to other candidates in proportion to the stated preferences of the electors. If there are more candidates than the available seats, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated and this vote is transferred to other candidates as determined by the stated preferences of electors. This process continues with other candidates with low votes until all seats are filled."*

Vote 2019-17. The motion was approved by a vote (22-3-5).

Based on the discussions on the subject, President Khuri decided to form a Senate taskforce to look at reducing inconsistencies between the resulting outcomes from the two proposed voting options. He also nominated Dean Alan Shihadeh, Professor Charles Harb, and CIO Youssef Asfour to lead this effort.

10) Update on Salary Valuation by the President

President Khuri expressed that there are four major considerations that the AUB Leadership team are currently evaluating:

1. Potential devaluation in the Lebanese Lira

President Khuri stated that although the official exchange rate of the Lebanese Lira is 1515LBP/USD, it is actually fluctuating between 1650 and 2300LBP/USD. The president will form an adhoc Council of Economic Advisors to help the administration establish significant measures to cope with economic deterioration. The council will include three professors: Ibrahim Jamali from OSB, Jamal Al Sagheer from IFI, and Simon Naimi from FAS. In addition the council will include two members from the USFC and two members from the staff syndicate. The President then opened the floor for nominating a Senate representative on the council. A senator nominated the SCFA chair for the position; another senator expressed that we should look for both the qualifications and expertise of the senate representative to best serve the council goals. Three senators were nominated: Ali Chalak, Elie Al-Chaer, and Said El Fakhani. The first round of voting eliminated Dr. El Fakhani. The result of the second round of voting was a tie between Drs. Al-Chaer and Chalak. Therefore, the President decided to have both Senators serve on the Council of Economic Advisors.

2. How to protect the most vulnerable community members at this time

President Khuri announced that AUB will establish an emergency fund in New York. The fund will serve to help the most vulnerable community members survive the economic crisis. President Khuri ranked the community constituents from the most vulnerable to most secure:

- The most vulnerable are the students and the university is committed to all currently enrolled students to help them complete their diploma requirements without additional financial implications. To do so:
 - A smart two tier payment system will be created. Lebanese students or students whose parents earn money in LBP will be considered in state students and will continue to pay tuition fees at the pegged rate of 1515 LBP/USD.
 - Tuition Fees cannot be switched to LBP because more than \$30M of the endowment funds are pegged to USD (Mastercard, Al Ghorair ...) and 25% of the students are either foreign or their parents work abroad and they pay tuition fees in USD. The total annual tuition fees are approximately \$208M, the equivalent of \$110M is paid in LBP, \$38M are through endowment funds and the rest are paid in USD.
 - Additional financial aid for students using the global emergency funds will be considered on a case by case basis.
- The second most vulnerable are the staff of grades 1 – 12

- Support options for these members might include vouchers or group purchasing deals for food and supplies to make sure these people can feed their families and educate their kids.
- Then come the faculty and staff above grade 12
 - The mandate of the faculty compensation taskforce will continue. The administration will take the recommendations of the taskforce into consideration but will prioritize faculty needs based on the most vulnerable especially those that have commitments outside Lebanon (mortgages, alimony, educational fees ...).
 - One option is to borrow against endowment money to help faculty members who urgently need money outside the country. Although most endowment funds are locked for specific purposes, AUB will look into the possibility of drawing money from the funds or borrowing against them as long as the spent amounts will be replenished later.
- The medical staff rank fourth on the list
 - The medical center is currently losing money. The administration is working on a plan for adjusting to the fluid situation the economy is facing.
- The most secure are the 26 individuals who get paid in USD. These include senior administrators and some faculty members. They get paid about 0.6% of the operating budget.
 - The President decided to defer part of his annual salary for this year to start the global emergency fund.

3. How to enable tuition payments

President Khuri stated that AUB will work with the different banks in the country to facilitate intra bank transfers from the students' parents' accounts to the AUB accounts directly without relying on cash transactions.

4. How to cut costs and diversify revenue

In addition to the messages regarding budget constraints and cost cuttings that were circulated by the Deans to their respective faculties, President Khuri announced that all costs relating to meals and celebrations will be stopped. Faculty travel funds and leaves will be allocated based on a prioritized schedule with tenure track assistant professors and non-tenured associate professors having an advantage over tenured faculty members.

President Khuri stated that stopping non-AUB employees, workers on a daily basis, will be one of the first cost saving options if the need arises.

New potential revenue streams were discussed. Deans Shihadeh and Harvey talked about potential revenue that could be generated from distant or online learning. The economic crisis can be used to push forward faster such initiatives. Revenue from online course offerings could be paid in New York and transferred to Beirut on as needed basis.

Senators thanked the President for the update and stressed on the importance of continuous communication and transparency in such times. They requested if the president can hold a town hall meeting with the faculty to inform them of all the changes. President Khuri agreed to the request and will schedule a town hall meeting with the faculty during the first week of December.

11) Other Business

Provost Harajli presented the revised academic calendar with the final exam schedule finishing on December 23, 2019 instead of December 29, 2019. The change was already approved in the Board of Deans. A motion was made to approve the change in academic calendar. **Vote 2019-18. The motion was approved unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.
(Minutes recorded by G. Saad, Secretary of the Senate)