

American University of Beirut
Minutes of the University Senate
General Meeting of Friday 28 November 2008

Present: A. Abdel-Rahman, A. Abdul-Malak, G. Araj, S. Arnaut, K. Bitar, L. Choueiri, N. Darwiche, J. DeJong, H. Diab, N. Ghaddar (for W. Nasr), J. Ghafari, I. Hajj, K. Hindi, H. Huijjer, N. Hwalla, M. Jurdi, A. Kayssi, R. Khauli, M. Kisirwani (chairing), W. Masri, L. Musfy, G. Najjar, N. Nassif, I. Nuwayhid, I. Osman, J. Radulski, S. Sadek, M. Salameh, S. Seikaly, B. Shayya, F. Sleiman, R. Smith, D. Wrisley, F. Ziyadeh (for N. Cortas).

Absent: I. Bashour, R. Dean*, P. Dorman*, L. Farhood*, R. Haddad, S. Jeffrey, A. Jurjus, S. Kenney, S. Maamari*, M. Obeid, R. Zurayk*.

(* = regrets notified before meeting or on leave)

The meeting was called to order at 2:04 p.m.

1. *Approval of minutes.* The minutes of 31 October 2008 were approved as corrected.

2. *University calendar, 2009-10.* The registrar explained the reasons for delaying the start of the Fall semester 2009-10 until Monday 5 October 2009, saying that a full week was needed for the orientation of students coming from abroad after 'Eid ul-Fitr which was expected to fall during the week of 21 September. He added that the Spring semester would end on about the same date as in the present academic year since holidays would largely fall on weekends and there would be only one Easter. Questions were raised concerning (a) the late date of July 27 for advising new sophomore students, since this meant advisors would have to remain until then even if they were not teaching during the summer, and (b) the advantages or disadvantages of a short period of Drop and Add. In answer to a question concerning the date of student elections, M. Kisirwani said that a date could not be determined so far in advance but that he would determine the date as soon as possible. After further discussion the calendar was approved unanimously with one editorial addition (**vote 2009-04**).

3. *Voting of degrees, October 2008 graduates.* The Senate voted unanimously to grant degrees to the October 2008 graduates as listed by the Registrar's Office and presented by the respective Deans (**vote 2009-05**). In addition Dean Bitar brought a case to the attention of the senate of FAS student Leila Khairiddine who, he said, should have graduated in June 2008 with distinction but whose final grade of 84.3% had at the time been calculated on the basis of less than 60 credits, contrary to regulations. In answer to a question he said that the revised grade of 85.3% had been based on 67 credits since the grades of a whole additional semester had been included. The senate voted unanimously to grant the degree of BA with distinction to Leila Kamel Muakkassa Khairiddine (**vote 2009-06**).

4. *Report on pension plans.* VP Radulski presented a ten page memorandum on Retirement Plans. He went through the memo page by page. In reply to a question he said that the university hoped to make provision for loans in both plans. In reply to another question he said that the university would provide for life insurance coverage at no cost to the employee and that the plan, when introduced in 2009, would result in the elimination of the life insurance aspect of Plan B. The life insurance benefit to be introduced in early 2009 would provide for up to two times the annual salary as a death benefit.

I. Osman raised two points against the report. (a) The comparison of Plans A and B on page 4 shows that a Plan B member receives a pre-tax university contribution of 12.5% versus 10% for a Plan A member; but this hides an additional contribution of 6.2% paid by the University to match the contribution of 6.2% a Plan A member makes towards US social security to provide for a monthly income after retirement. He maintained that the difference of 4% in favour of plan A members could be used to create a special post-retirement health fund for Plan B members or as contributions to the NSSF medical plan. Secondly (b) the salaries of Plan A members being that much higher than those

of Plan B members, the comparison made by Watson Wyatt Worldwide in November 2005 of benefits for the same fixed salary of \$80,000 needed adjustment, considering also that the average salaries of both Plan A and Plan B members were less than this. In both cases the implication was that, for equity, the university contribution of 12.5% in Plan B should be increased.

VP Radulski agreed that the details of both plans were more complex than could be presented summarily but he said that the university was very concerned with parity between the pension plans for US and non-US citizens and he directed attention to the statement on page 9: "The current plan [B] does not provide for any reduction in the memo account balances [of the 12.5% university contributions] and the balances are not at risk for declines in market values since the interest is based on TIAA [Teachers Insurance Annuity Association] annuities, not equity type investments." He said that a memorandum account was like an IOU issued by the university to an employee for encashment on the date of retirement. He gave the further example on page 10 of the total in the memorandum account of an employee of more than 30 years for whom there was a guaranteed interest rate of 2.5% for the portion of contributions to the account up to 1978, a guaranteed interest rate of 3% for the portion between 1979 and 1998, and a larger guaranteed minimum rate for the portion from 1999. He said that he would make the report available to the AUB community.

Dean Bitar emphasized that for the last ten years there had been zero discrimination between US and non-US citizens in offers made to prospective faculty members of FAS; Dean Hajj made the same point for FEA. Dean Hwalla said that in the past the university had always maintained that the guaranteed interest rate was 5%, not 3%. After further discussion, F. Sleiman thanked VP Radulski for his presentation and requested that there would be regular updates.

5. *FAS amended committee bylaws.* Dean Bitar presented the proposed amendments to committee bylaws in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, explaining that in response to a request from the Provost's office eighteen months ago concerning the possibility of unified bylaws each committee in FAS had been asked to review what it actually does, and the proposed amendments had been approved in a faculty meeting on January 20. He proposed a motion which was seconded **that the new committee bylaws in FAS be approved as presented.** There was considerable discussion on whether amendments to committee bylaws of FAS might not better be brought to the senate at the same time as those of other faculties, after coordination by the Provost's office, and on whether committee bylaws could ever be made uniform since each faculty differed in the size of its student body and therefore in the distribution of work to committees. Dean Bitar said that the purpose of seeking the senate's approval to the amended bylaws now was to avoid further delay in making known to students what the job of each committee was. He added that it was not intended that FAS committee bylaws become the standard throughout the university, and that it was correct to proceed from two-thirds approval in FAS to approval by the university senate without the Provost's office's intervention and without involving the Board of Deans. In answer to a question, he said that the motion concerned only those committees whose bylaws had been amended, not those whose bylaws had not been amended. F. Sleiman said that as a point of order discussion should be on the motion, not on whether bylaws could or could not be unified across the different faculties. After further discussion the motion was put to the vote.

Vote 2009-07: the motion was carried (for 14, number of voting members present 21)

6. *Other business.* L. Musfy asked for clarification of the procedure for calling a meeting of a senate committee before the election of a chair. F. Sleiman said that only the President or Acting President could call for a meeting in such a case.

F. Sleiman expressed thanks to the Dean of Student Affairs for the democratic and successful conduct of the recent student elections.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Richard Smith, secretary