

**American University of Beirut
Minutes of the University Senate
General Meeting of Friday 31 October 2008**

Present: A. Abdel-Rahman, A. Abdul-Malak, G. Araj, S. Arnaut, I. Bashour, K. Bitar, L. Choueiri, N. Cortas, N. Darwiche, R. Dean, J. DeJong, P. Dorman (chairing), L. Farhood, B. Hamad (by invitation), R. Heath (by invitation), K. Hindi, H. Huijer, N. Hwalla, S. Jeffrey, A. Kayssi, S. Kenney, R. Khauli, S. Maamari, W. Masri, F. Moukalled (for I. Hajj), G. Najjar, W. Nasr, N. Nassif, M. Nimah, O. Obeid, I. Osman, J. Radulski, S. Ramia (for I. Nuwayhid), S. Sadek, M. Salameh, S. Seikaly, B. Shayya, F. Sleiman, R. Smith, D. Wrisley, R. Zurayk.

Absent: H. Diab, J. Ghafari*, R. Haddad*, M. Jurdi*, A. Jurjus, M. Kisirwani, L. Musfy, M. Obeid.

(* = regrets notified before meeting or on leave)

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

1. *Approval of minutes.* S. Seikaly said that his recommendation that a member of the senate be appointed to the search committee for a new provost had not been recorded in the minutes of 26 June 2008 as an item discussed under other business. The secretary promised to review his notes of the meeting and amend the minutes accordingly. The minutes of 26 June 2008 were otherwise approved as read.

2. *Welcoming the President.* On behalf of the university senate the acting chair of the Senate Steering Committee, A. Abdul-Malak, welcomed President Dorman and expressed the hope that the work of the senate during the coming years would be fruitful and effective.

3. *Welcoming new senators.* The president read out the names of new senators welcoming them to the legislative body of the university: L. Choueiri, W. Masri and D. Wrisley (FAS), S. Arnaout, J. Ghafari and A. Jurjus (FM), J. DeJong (FHS replacing M. Khawaja for 2008-09), A. Kayssi and S. Sadek (FEA), and R. Zurayk (FAFS).

4. *Voting on degrees.* Dean Cortas proposed a motion that was seconded that Ramzi Melhem (ID 20020099) who recently completed the requirements, be granted the degree of Doctor of Medicine. The motion (**vote 2009-01**) was carried unanimously.

5. *Election to Senate Steering Committee (SSC) and Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA).* The following senators were elected to the Senate Steering Committee:

FAFS:	R. Zurayk	FHS:	M. Jurdi
FAS:	A. Abdul-Rahman	FM:	S. Arnaout
FEA:	A. Abdul-Malak	OSB:	K. Hindi

The president said that he would make his own appointment after consideration. The election was approved unanimously (**vote 2009-02**).

The following senators were elected to vacancies in the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs:

FAFS:	F. Sleiman	FM:	R. Khauli
FEA:	A. Kayssi	At-large:	S. Seikaly
FHS:	J. DeJong		

The election was approved unanimously (**vote 2009-03**).

6. *Proposed new title of 'Preceptor Associate'.* This item had been withdrawn from the agenda before the meeting.

7. *Annual reports of senate committees and boards.*

- (a) *Board of Graduate Studies.* The chair of the BGS, K. Hindi, introduced the report. There was some discussion concerning the assignment of teaching duties to Ph.D. students and whether it was proper that Ph.D. students be put on probation. K. Hindi said that a taskforce would be reporting soon after reviewing the regulations governing the Ph.D. program. After discussion the report was placed on file.
- (b) *University Research Board.* In the absence of the URB chair, A. Bazarbachi, the report was presented by I. Osman. He said that two problems were evident: one, that the review process for funding was not uniform in the different faculties; and secondly, that increased funding of new faculty did not match the increase in funds, with the result that individual grants were less than in the previous year. Dean Huijjer said that the question of how to allocate funds to the different faculties had been a further problem. N. Darwiche said that whereas the average research grant in FAS was \$6,000, that in FM was more like \$8,500; moreover FM had other funds to draw on for which faculty in FAS, even those doing medical research, were not eligible. Dean Cortas said in clarification that the statement given in the URB table of grants was incomplete: for FM the sum of \$201,000 in the right hand column represented only URB funds granted to 24 research grants, whereas altogether there had been some 60 grants from the total funds available to FM. The chair of the Research Committee of FAS, A. Abdul-Rahman, appealed to the URB to take into consideration the number of applications for research grants, which had increased from 42 to 48 in 2007-08, and not to peg the level of funding to the number of applications in the previous year. He said that after paring grant applications in FAS as much as possible the URB had cut a further \$44,000 from the FAS budget, and this had led to a reduction in the average size of grants. The president closed further discussion saying that a review of research funding should be put on the agenda of the senate's business during the current year. The report was placed on file with a request that the names of the chair and members of the board be added.
- (c) *University Committee on Student Affairs.* A. Abdul-Malak, the UCSA chair, presented each item of the report serially, saying that action needed to be taken on each. Acting Provost W. Nasr said that as a matter of procedure he hoped that senate committees would decide on items needing to be brought to the attention of the senate early in the current academic year in order for more time to be devoted to discussing those items than had been allocated for the simple presentation of annual reports. The report was placed on file.
- (d) *University Admissions Committee.* B. Hamad, the chair of the UAC presented the report, reading out portions of pages 2 and 3. He laid emphasis on the disparity between the desire for regional diversity or diversity in particular capabilities like sports and the criteria for admission to the university. Acting Provost W. Nasr said that a further matter for the attention of the senate was the inability of some senate committees to meet with a quorum of members over the course of an academic year. The report was placed on file.
- (e) *University Library Committee.* R. Heath, the chair of the ULC, presented the report. She highlighted two issues for further discussion during the coming year: one, whether a faculty member should continue to be allowed to take out up to 100 books for a whole year at a time or whether this might be reduced to three or six months; and secondly, how to improve the function of the library at the Agricultural Research Extension Center in the Bakaa valley. In clarification, R. Zurayk pointed out that AREC was a part of the AUB campus, not an extension center. The report was placed on file with a request that the names of the chair and members of the committee be added.
- (f) *Academic Development Committee.* N. Nassif, chair of the committee, presented the report. He said that all six items mentioned in the report had been brought to the senate and all had in

fact been approved (two in the senate meeting of 29 February 2008, three in the meeting of 30 May 2008, and one in the meeting of 26 June 2008). The report was placed on file.

(g) *Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs*. The chair of the SCFA, I. Osman, presented the report by running through all the items brought before the senate during 2007-08, both those passed and those defeated by senate vote, and pointing out the report's appendix on suggested improvements to the Housing Department Services. He expressed dissatisfaction with the degree to which each item had been followed up, and called on the administration to state clearly what action had been taken. He was asked by more than one senator not to confuse the presentation of his report on SCFA's activities during 2007-08 with the initiation of new items for deliberation by the senate during 2008-09 (see item 8 below). He was also asked, as a point of order by F. Sleiman, not to disparage the qualifications of a member of the Employee Benefits Committee (EBC) who had been elected by the senate. He said that an item for future discussion was whether the senate, the highest legislative body in the university on academic affairs, should be concerned with faculty affairs or whether some other body be constituted having direct access to the administration.

In answering the various points in the report, VP Radulski brought forward with approval item 9 of the senate agenda, *Update on the financial situation as it pertains to retirement*. He went through each point in the SCFA report serially.

1. Regarding AUB's benefits package for faculty and staff (short-term disability, long-term disability, and life insurance) he said that from the beginning of 2009 a new benefits package would be introduced.
2. Regarding the EBC he said that members of the committee had the required financial ability and that AUB had on board one of the most respected legal firms in the world to advise on benefit issues.
3. Regarding the adjustment of salaries to compensate for inflation, he said that \$0.5 million had in fact been allocated for salary adjustment in 2008-09.
4. Regarding the level of adjustment to each faculty employee's salary in relation to increases in the Consumer Price Index, he said that there was nothing to say since the motion to tally salary increases in such a manner had been defeated by vote of the senate.
5. Regarding compensation for summer administrative work by department and program chairs, he said that the motion before the senate had similarly been defeated.
6. Regarding housing, he said that he had not been aware of the issue, but that he was concerned to learn of it, and he suggested that it be brought as an item for future deliberation by the senate under item 8.
7. Regarding pension plans A and B he said that whereas the former was up to the individual and had some 150 members, the latter, with 457 members, had a 12.5% component from the university. He said that questions had been raised in February 2008 about the performance of Merrill Lynch as a result of which a sum of \$4m was withdrawn from that company and put in safe cash deposits. He added that the question of alternative providers had been considered for some time and that currently three were under review, as stated in the email to AUB faculty from Human Resources sent a little prior to the present meeting, a copy of which he then distributed. He said that because of the current financial uncertainty information on Plan B investment was being made available for the period ending Sept. 30, 2008 instead of the normal once a year summary statement of employee's memo accounts. He added that the administration took its fiduciary responsibilities to AUB faculty and staff extremely seriously.

Discussion revolved around the last point. I. Osman said that Merrill Lynch's management of funds was in question, and he expressed the opinion that investment in banks rather than private companies would be less risky in the present circumstances. S. Seikaly said that he was learning for the first time that the 12.5% university component of a faculty member's Plan B fund was subject to the university's success in investment. Much discussion ensued. VP Radulski said in clarification that as far as a Plan B member's final benefit was concerned the 12.5% contribution from the university was only virtual in the sense of subject to investment until realised. F. Sleiman said that members of Plan B were not protected by social security when they retire from the university, unlike members of Plan A, and the security of their

investment and the commitment by the university to that security were essential for their survival after retirement. F. Moukalled asked what would happen to the 12.5% university contribution in case of a negative rate of interest. VP Radulski said that whereas a negative interest rate was theoretically possible, he thought that around 5% positive interest was assured until at least the end of February 2009, a fair rate of return in the present circumstances. The president said that a future workshop on the issue of pensions seemed appropriate.

8. Regarding HIP VP Radulski said that, notwithstanding the flurry of recent emails on the topic the actual number of complaints over the last year were in the order of 0.03% of the number of HIP engagements per year (40 out of some 116,000); moreover it was up to an individual whether to enroll in HIP or not. A. Kayssi asked whether a survey had been conducted to measure client satisfaction or not. The president said that, in view of shortage of time, this should become an item on the agenda of the next meeting of the senate.

8. *Potential issues to discuss in the Senate during 2008-09.* The following items were brought before the senate for future discussion:

- a. Pension plans A and B.
- b. Research funding and encouragement.
- c. Admissions criteria.
- d. Housing.
- e. HIP
- f. Faculty affairs, under the jurisdiction of the senate or separately.

Some concern was raised both by W. Nasr and K. Hindi that the proper function of the senate should be academic issues, essential for the future of the university as a centre of research and of both professional and general education in the Middle East. K. Hindi added that the issue of HIP should not be decided by an academic body of some forty faculty members. S. Sadek wondered if it would be possible to increase the number of regular senate meeting per month.

9. *Update on the financial situation as it pertains to retirement.* This was brought forward for discussion under item 7(g) above.

10. *Other business.* There was none.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Richard Smith, secretary