Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Team Report to the Commission on Higher Education

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Dates of Evaluation: *3-6 March 2019*

The Evaluation Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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Section C: Team Findings

I.   **Institutional Overview: Context and Nature of the Visit**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is a private, non-sectarian, independent university situated on the Mediterranean Sea in the Ras Beirut section of Beirut, Lebanon. AUB is ranked as a High Research Activity institution as determined in the QS World University Rankings. Founded in 1866, AUB follows the model of American liberal arts education as expressed in its mission and implemented through its organizational structure. AUB operates under a charter granted by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in 1863, which registers the university's degree programs. AUB degrees are recognized by the Lebanese government through the equivalence committees of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. The American University of Beirut Medical Center has been the major healthcare provider in the region since 1902. AUB was approved for candidacy by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in 2001 and initially accredited in 2004. AUB maintains a New York Office in which meetings including select Board Meetings are held, from which North American recruitment and global outreach are organized including the recently instituted New York-Beirut Briefings series.

AUB is approved by MSCHE to offer degrees at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral (Professional Practice and Research/Scholarship) levels as well as Post-Baccalaureate Certificates, and Postsecondary Awards (<1 year and 1-2 years). A broad range of academic programs - 51 Bachelor's, 77 Master's, 12 Doctoral, and the MD plus 36 certificates and diplomas - are delivered by AUB's seven academic units: Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS), Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), Faculty of Medicine (FM), Rafic Hariri School of Nursing (HSON), Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture (MSFEA), and Suliman S. Olayan School of Business (OSB). The Advancing Research Enabling Communities Center (AREC) is an instructional site situated in the Beqaa Valley and under the leadership of FAFS. AUB offers one distance learning (online) diploma program, the Professional Post-graduate Diploma in Green Technologies, in collaboration with the Lebanese American University (LAU) and the American University in Cairo; this program involves third-party providers. Note that the Lebanese government does not currently approve degree programs delivered through distance learning.

Prior to the current self-study and site visit, AUB submitted a Self-Study Report and hosted a site visit in 2009 resulting in reaffirmation of accreditation, a periodic review report was submitted in 2014 resulting in reaffirmation of accreditation. Monitoring reports were submitted to and approved by MSCHE in 2011 addressing "implementing organized and sustained assessment"

and in 2016 regarding "(1) a financial planning and budgeting process aligned with the institution's mission, goals, and plan that provides for an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments (Standard 3) and (2) a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and readily available to the campus community (Standard 4)." In addition, several AUB faculties/schools and programs are accredited by US professional program accreditors (ACEND, ABET, CEPH, ACGME, CCNE, AACSB) some of these represented accreditors' first international or Middle East region accreditation as well as international organizations (TEPDAD).

For 2018-19, AUB total enrollment was 9468 with 7,338 undergraduate, 1475 graduate, 166 doctoral, 432 professional (MD) and 57 Online Diploma students. The Female:Male ratio is 49:51 for undergraduate and 68:32 for graduate students. The overall international population (non-Lebanese passport) is 26% for undergraduate and 18% for graduate master's, doctoral and medical students. AUB provides approximately $32M USD in scholarships and grants. It is important to note that many students enrolling at AUB enter as sophomores since Lebanese students receive the Lebanese Baccalaureate which is equivalent to the freshman year. The undergraduate retention rate (first-time bachelor degree-seeking students entering in 2014 and returning in 2015) was 87% and the undergraduate graduation rate (six year or less graduation of the initial 2009 cohort) was 90%. The Student:Faculty ratio is 11:1.

For AY 2018-19, AUB employs 646 full-time instructional faculty plus 268 full-time clinical faculty in the Faculty of Medicine; the total faculty headcount, including part time faculty, is 1200. The Female:Male ratio is about 42:58, and about 37% of faculty are international. The total full-time non-academic staff at AUB and AUBMC is 4395.

The academic legislative body of AUB is the University Senate which operates under a set of by-laws and whose members are elected from the University Faculties. A major development to advance AUB faculty recognition, research, and governance was the approval by the Board of Trustees to reinstate tenure after thirty years due to the Lebanese Civil War.

According to the 2019 QS World University Rankings, AUB ranks #237 and #2 in the Arab Region. The 2019 QS World University Rankings lists AUB Graduate Employability Ranking as #45.

Over the past four years, AUB has installed new leadership including the appointments of Fadlo Khuri, MD as President in 2015, Mohamed Harajli, PhD as Provost, and new deans for FAFS, FAS, MSFEA, OSB; the new administration introduced some administrative reorganization as well. AUB is overseen by an engaged and diverse Board of Trustees who support the mission and lead by example in philanthropy to the institution. With his arrival in 2015, President Khuri initiated a vigorous, focused, and integrated look towards 2030, exploiting opportunities and confronting challenges for higher education in the Middle East and globally. This integration is reflected in a highly refreshed academic strategic plan and accompanying campus master plan, aligned individual unit plans, AUBMC Vision 2020 / HEALTH 2025, and the launch of a $650M USD capital campaign, BOLDLY AUB: The Campaign to Lead, Innovate, and Serve. Planning activities, particularly those for master planning, through 2016 involved university administrators, consultants, and the campus community - faculty, staff, students - and included interviews and charrettes. The four broad areas addressed by the strategic plan include the Student Learning Experience, Infrastructure and Academic Support, Collaboration / Engagement

/ Outreach, and Scholarship and Service. In November 2018, President Khuri presented a review of the integrated strategic planning process and a unifying strategic vision to the Board of Trustees under the thematic acronym *VITAL*: *Valuing* our community and sharing our values; *Integrating* a humanities, technology, and purpose-based education; *Transforming* the university experience; *Advancing* a world-class research agenda; and *Lifting* the quality of health and medicine across our region. The Visiting Team recognizes the importance of this integration and unification in planning; it is important that AUB communicates the elements of its strategy, path forward, progress, and assessment of planning clearly and transparently to all constituencies appropriately to derive the maximum benefit of this ambitious vision.

Several policies and procedures - in particular those relating to tenure - have been and/or continue to be developed, reviewed, and/or revised to place AUB at level or above its national and global peers. There have been notable initiatives in education renewal and student success including a renewed focus on graduate education; the areas of gender equity and Title IX; diversity and inclusion; access especially for those students of the region unable to afford higher education; regional outreach and civic engagement; research including the roles of centers and institutes and developing interfaculty / interdisciplinary hubs; renewed alumni involvement; and global partnerships.

AUB embarked on the self-study in December 2016. The Self-Study Steering Committee was chaired by Provost Harajli and adopted a comprehensive model to review the seven Standards of Accreditation and was also tasked to verify compliance with US federal regulations. Each Standard was studied by a subcommittee, and subcommittee chairs engaged in coordinating information gathering and areas of overlap across Standards. The community was invited to review, comment, and discuss the Self-Study Report draft in Summer 2018.

It is appropriate to note in this Institutional Overview that more effective communication will help address various issues that were raised in the Self-Study Report and/or identified as Areas of Improvements across the seven Standards. It is recognized that internal and external communication can be challenging in complex organizations, but efforts to better engage all constituencies can reap great benefits. Therefore, the communication-related suggestion of the Visiting Team in Standard I is meant to apply across all Standards.

The Chair of the MSCHE Visiting Team visited for three days at AUB in October 2018 (10-12 October 2018) to gain a better understanding of this international campus and meet administrators, faculty, staff, and students. The Visiting Team convened from the afternoon of Sunday, 3 March 2019 through the morning of Wednesday, 6 March 2019 completing the visit by delivering an oral report to the AUB community. The Chair can provide a complete schedule for the Team Visit.

The Visiting Team appreciates the well-managed access to the Self-Study Report and its many accompanying documents as well as the collegiality, transparency, and hospitality of the AUB community.

II.   Evaluation Overview

The Visiting Team found the American University of Beirut to be a beacon of higher education quality and best practices in a country and region that presents educational needs and is increasingly served by a University providing American liberal arts education, research, and

service. The administration provides great vision while understanding the challenges and opportunities that exist, and the faculty and staff exhibit a strong dedication and commitment to students, one another, and the broader community. As in every institution of higher education, AUB is constantly adjusting practices, policies, and strategies; the administration is dedicated to working with faculty, staff, and students in a spirit of shared governance to move the institution forward.

The Self-Study Workgroups identified 21 Areas of Improvement and the Self-Study Steering Committee "proposed a subset of 12 chapter-specific recommendations and one overall recommendation, which are actionable and tied to strategic priorities, and will have an immediate and substantive impact on the institution." The single overall recommendation relates to a "need to develop a strategy for effective communication among the different AUB constituencies." In its review, the Visiting Team found their identified Areas of Improvement and the specific recommendations (noted in the chapters below by an asterisk) to be appropriate for AUB. The Visiting Team also proposed several Suggestions, some of which overlap the Areas of Improvement for emphasis.

The Visiting Team found that AUB meets the seven Middle States Standards for Accreditation; in this document, observations, comments, and suggestions are provided in a spirit of peer review and collegiality. Certainly, AUB has a lot to be proud of including its strong regional rankings. The Visiting Team commends AUB on several initiatives particularly, the development of an integrated and visionary strategic plan that touches all areas of the university and is being supported by an ambitious and on-track capital campaign, the remarkable and unique move to reinstate tenure after a thirty-year period of suspension due to war so as to increase the stature of faculty with the complementary goal of growing impactful research, the commitment to increasing financial aid to address regional needs and ensure a diverse community, a robust General Education curriculum, and an enthusiastic student body.

III. Compliance with Accreditation Standards

The Visiting Team based its review on the criteria for each Standard of Accreditation and the Requirements of Affiliation which the institution linked to the Standards. Two members of the Visiting Team and the Chair reviewed the Institutional Federal Compliance Report which required only adjustments of some links which were updated. In the report, the Visiting Team discusses many of the issues that were noted in the Self-Study Report and/or in discussions during the visit; most, if not all, are recognized and are being addressed. In our judgement, the American University of Beirut meets the Standards of Accreditation and the Requirements of Affiliation.

Standard I: Mission and Goals

The institution's mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard I.

Founded in 1866 and chartered in the State of New York in 1863, the American University of Beirut follows the American liberal arts education model as a basis for establishing its educational philosophy and institutional presence in Lebanon, the MENA region, and the globe. AUB's mission statement reads:

> *The American University of Beirut (AUB) is an institution of higher learning founded to provide excellence in education, to participate in the advancement of knowledge through research, and to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond. Chartered in New York State in 1863, the university bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. The university believes deeply in and encourages freedom of thought and expression and seeks to foster tolerance and respect for diversity and dialogue. Graduates will be individuals committed to creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility, and leadership.*

AUB's mission statement was last revised in 2005 to best articulate the institution's values and aspirations, all of which remain in place today. The mission statement emphasizes AUB's commitment to education, research, and service regionally and beyond and clearly declares their commitment to academic freedom and diversity. We consider the overarching institutional student learning outcomes described in the mission and infused in AUB's broad academic offerings in STEM, Medicine and Health, Agriculture, Business, and Arts and Design; these include creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility, and leadership.

It is important to recognize how AUB's mission is articulated across constituencies and how it drives and serves as a guide for long-term and short-term planning and implementation of the institution's initiatives while also supporting day-to-day operations. AUB has embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process around "One University" with the intention of bridging Faculties and disciplines. The Board-approved Strategic Plan - Integrated Academic Strategic Plan: The Path Forward towards AUB 2030 and Beyond, charged by President Khuri upon his arrival in 2015 and finalized in 2016, is the basis for advancing AUB's academic agenda. The plan defines four broad areas on which academic initiatives are built; these include

- ○ Student Learning Experience
- ○ Infrastructure and Academic Support
- ○ Collaboration/Engagement/Outreach
- ○ Scholarship and Service

These strategic areas that map to those of the previous strategic plan of 2014 are consistent with the mission and are directed at enhancing academic outcomes; the underlying initiatives speak to AUB's relevance and impact in the higher education enterprise - within Lebanon, across the region, and worldwide - now and in the future. Documentation as well as the Team's discussion with the Expanded Board of Deans illustrates a well-integrated approach in which key aspects of the plan are derived from strategic planning processes of each of the Faculties, the Office of Student Affairs, and other administrative units.

Because the successful implementation of the Academic Strategic Plan is dependent on many factors beyond academics, it is important that AUB has aligned it with the existing Faculty of Medicine AUBMC, 2020 Vision, and a new overarching plan for health sciences, HEALTH 2025; a new Campus Master Plan; and an ambitious and thus-far successful Capital Campaign, BOLDLY AUB that has reached 70% of goal with almost three years remaining with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer assuming fiscal oversight. The vision that serves as the umbrella for these plans and which is under review for imminent approval, is entitled *VITAL*: (1) *Valuing* the community and sharing the AUB values; 2) *Integrating* a humanities, technology, and purpose-based education; 3) *Transforming* the university experience; 4) *Advancing* a world-class research agenda; and 5) *Lifting* the quality of health and medicine across the region. AUB should be commended for recognizing the importance of integration of strategic planning, funding and sustaining initiatives, creating mechanisms to promote interdisciplinary/inter-faculty programs and research, and emphasizing a strong learning experience for all students and defining Key Performance Indicators for evaluation of progress.

Within the Self-Study Report, we note that Self-Study Working Group I identified some seeming omissions in the Academic Strategic Plan on which we will comment.

> It was noted that the Academic Strategic Plan does not directly address some elements of the AUB mission including the model of American liberal arts education, freedom of thought and expression, lifelong learning, and fundamental research through specific initiatives. As critical elements of the mission, these overarching values may be viewed as drivers of the institution's strategies and serve as guiding principles to formulate goals its objectives across research, education, and service. Thus, these overarching principles could be included in a preamble for the strategic plan.

> The University might be more explicit that the development of new fundamental research is to be recognized and complements applied research on such areas as regional policy and health initiatives. The Visiting Team's conversations with stakeholders did not indicate any conflict regarding fundamental research.

> AUB may not explicitly define student learning goals at the institutional level and their measurement, but metrics around the student learning experience including general education and disciplinary student learning outcomes do align with the mission-defined creative and critical thinking, lifelong learning, personal integrity, civic responsibility, and leadership which are also addressed in strategies to transform the learning experience and improve student services. The progress of the Strategic Plan is being tracked through core Key Performance Indicators with ~200 defined metrics by the Assessment Unit of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

Self-Study Working Group I noted that a schedule for review and revision of the mission or for strategic planning is not addressed in the Corporate Bylaws. Since the University mission is a key guide for introducing a strategic plan, the mission statement is generally reviewed at the initial stages of the planning process. While strategic plans vary in time and comprehensiveness, the University might consider establishing an official schedule for reviewing its mission statement and progress of the strategic plan which should itself be time-framed and specify when deliverables are expected. The VITAL timeline provides some guidance for a review schedule that could occur in 2020, 2025, and 2030.

Awareness and acceptance of the mission was surveyed among employees and students. While the mission appears to have been read and "understood," it is less apparent that it motivates many activities and initiatives within the community. While this might be a common finding at many institutions, the ideal would be to increase the impact of the mission since it is central to the University's existence and operation. Such a disconnect may be related to the challenges in communication across constituencies that are common in complex organizations; it is apparent that many issues noted in the Self-Study Report require greater communication, and it is important that AUB has identified strengthening communication broadly to be an area for improvement.

The Visiting Team recognizes strong evidence that strategic thinking is taking place across AUB at all levels. It was most impressive to interview deans, vice presidents, other administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni who have and continue to benefit from an integrated vision and the commitment of the community to advance AUB. We received consistent and positive views of the direction of the institution and a resolve to strive to become even better.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

1. The university needs to develop systematic and sustainable mechanisms and guidelines for triggering a review of the mission statement and/or the development of strategic plans.*

2. It is important to have more explicit and well-defined initiatives through which the university can illustrate how the aspects of the mission related to the development of personal integrity, lifelong learning, and commitment to freedom of thought and expression will be achieved.*

3. The strategic goals should explicitly support the free pursuit of knowledge and not restrict this support to applied research only.

4. There should be a renewed effort to disseminate more effectively the specific strategic initiatives of the administration to the constituencies on campus.

5. The university should systematically assess the extent to which employees across different units of AUB are aware of, agree with, and are guided by both the mission and the current strategic goals in their work at the university.

STANDARD I

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard I.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices:** *(Be consistent with narrative and suggestions, recommendations, requirements, if any, below)*

  AUB is ably led and is comprised of an engaged and dedicated community of faculty, staff, students and alumni. AUB articulates a forward-thinking vision guided by integrated planning that is aligned across all functional units and at all levels.

- **Suggestions:** *(Non-binding suggestions for improvement)*

  AUB is undergoing a substantial transformation as it aspires to impact Lebanon, the region, and beyond. As an overarching suggestion, AUB should establish processes to strengthen communication across the university to all constituencies to maximize the impact of each individual in the university community. In doing so, AUB should continue to assess strategic initiatives and their impact on university progress.

  Establish mechanisms and timelines for review of the mission statement and/or the development of strategic plans.

- **Recommendations**

  NONE

- **Requirements**

  NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 7 and 10

In the Visiting Team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 7 and 10 in areas relevant to Standard I.

Standard II: Ethics and Integrity

Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard II.

AUB demonstrates a commitment to ethics and integrity that begins with Board of Trustees leadership, governance, and organization. To this end, the University leadership communicates frequently with the University community in support of ethical values and conduct; a significant example can be seen in the compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which is endorsed and championed by the President through mandatory training for students, faculty, and staff. Requirements include a two-hour workshop for all non-academic staff, and an online training course for faculty and managerial staff. Students are required to complete an online module related to discrimination and harassment. The online platform offers approximately forty additional courses for employees on topics related to professional and ethical conduct, and compliance issues. The Visiting Team notes that although mandatory, full participation has not yet been achieved, and this leaves the University at risk. Strategies to assure full compliance should be initiated. It is significant that the most recent Employee Satisfaction Surveys indicate a substantial improvement in awareness of AUB institutional ethics and integrity policies including Principles of Ethical Conduct, Non-Discrimination Policy, Policies Concerning Sexual and Other Discriminatory Harassment, Duality of Interest or Conflict of Interest Policy.

The area of ethics and integrity has been strengthened through a comprehensive revision and update of the Policy on the Development and Revision of Bylaws, Policies, Procedures, and Manuals (Policy on Policies) in 2017; as a result of consultations with the faculty, this policy clarifies for the first time the approval hierarchy required for academic and non-academic university-wide policies. Also, a policy management system (PolicyTech) has been implemented to provide a single site with uniform formats and provisions to manage dissemination of drafts, obtaining comments, processing approval, posting final documents, reviewing (3-year timeframe), and archiving. The policy website identifies various policy types and is easily navigable. The Visiting Team notes that websites and other materials that disseminate assessment data, accreditation status, and other required disclosures such as consumer information and marketing websites and materials appear to be honest and transparent. As a minor note, maintaining up-to-date links and improving website navigation would be helpful.

To promote a culture of transparency, the university administration has created a number of initiatives to encourage a climate of respect for diversity and inclusion, including establishment of a more robust Equity and Title IX program that has significantly expanded the university's response to discrimination on campus, the establishment of the Accessible Education Office to facilitate equal access for students with disabilities to the university's academic, social, and recreational activities and programs, and the Leadership, Equity, and Diversity (LEAD)

Initiative, scholarship programs that are intended to expand the geographic and socio-economic diversity of the student population. In particular "LEAD supports students from underserved communities in their transition to university, engagement in transformative learning experiences, and embarking on a career path as change agents. LEAD champions the principles of inclusion, diversity, and equity in higher education, providing a model for other universities to follow." AUB also has posted policies and handbooks/manuals for faculty, students, and staff that encompass the protection academic freedom, intellectual freedom, and freedom of expression, and define guidelines for intellectual property rights.

Notwithstanding these efforts, it was noted in the Self-Study Report and verified by the Visiting Team that the "concerns raised in the 2008 report about faculty trust have not been addressed well, and the recommendation of an Ombuds office has not been realized." Other reports indicate that some stakeholders might feel excluded or feel that their voice is not heard by the administration. AUB's Governance Score Card expressed a similar result related to queries on "participation." Again, there appears to be a communication gap that needs to be filled also with the promotion of more transparent and effective communication at all levels and as a two-way street open conversation to engage teams, unit and departments in both understanding and continually improving governance across the institution.

The President's commitment to freedom of expression is also supported by many and frequent statements to diverse constituencies and by policies included in the Faculty Manual. A major commitment to bolster academic freedom, intellectual freedom, and freedom of expression and to better support AUB's research was the recent decision of the University Board of Trustees reinstate tenure for faculty; this initiative was shepherded by President Khuri and Provost Harajli. Reinstating tenure has been lauded across the University and the Visiting Team was impressed by its initial implementation for faculty of professorial rank in AY 2017-18 with some serious caveats. Few if any universities have lived through similar histories as AUB to find it necessary to suspend tenure, in this case due to war, and then come to reinstate tenure to better support mission-driven principles such as freedom of thought and to drive a renewed research agenda. Notwithstanding this implementation, the Visiting Team recognizes that crucial policies - Policy and Procedures for Tenure and Promotion Appeals, Policy and Procedures for the Termination of a Tenure Appointment, and Policy and Procedures for Pre-Tenure Performance Evaluation - should have been in place simultaneously with the Policy and Procedures for Tenure and Promotion Evaluation of Tenure-Eligible Faculty Members. In particular, while an interim procedure for the first round of evaluations was instituted, the 107 tenure applications resulted in 34 tenure denials. The initial round appeals were to be handled via the existing Grievance Policy which caused considerable dissatisfaction. The Grievance Policy includes mention of an Ombuds, a position which has not been filled since 2008.

Considering the seriousness of raising standards and assurances of compliance and assuring a grievance process that allows for better guidance and informal solutions, thereby improving ethics and integrity at AUB, improving process, and reducing risk, it is very important to move forward with appointing a Chief Compliance Officer who can oversee mandatory training and awareness activities, and appointing an Ombuds. The team was assured that both of these positions will be posted by the end of April 2019 with the intention of filling them by the beginning of the new academic year.

The Visiting Team recognizes AUB's firm commitment to ethics and integrity and conversations with various stakeholders make it clear that AUB, with in the context of continual assessment,

sees the need to continue to develop in this area in order to even better assure fairness and equity for all constituencies.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

> 1. Create sustainable and well-defined systems by which ethics and integrity are improved on a continuous basis. In part, this will require forming an ethics and integrity office for monitoring adherence to institutional policies and procedures. Also, it will require hiring an ombudsperson to support compliance through training and awareness activities.*

> 2. Transparency should be recognized as being a key aspect of, a means to assess, and a mechanism to improve ethics and integrity.

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard II.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

  AUB's bold move to reinstate tenure after a 30-year hiatus is indicative in its commitment to faculty and research. While not without challenges, having tenured faculty raises the stature of AUB and is expected to aid in recruitment and retention of new faculty.

  AUB's commitment to diversity and inclusion is remarkable particularly in this region of the globe. The creation of a network of qualified faculty and staff to support Title IX, anti-discrimination, and anti-harassment policies is excellent.

- **Suggestions**

  AUB should enact the new faculty policies in draft and evaluate the need for other policies in line with its peers. In particular, policies related to tenure must be aligned and enacted as soon as possible.

  It is critical that an Ombuds and a Chief Compliance Officer be installed by the beginning of the next academic year.

- **Recommendations**

  NONE

- **Requirements**

  NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 5 and 6

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 5 and 6 in areas relevant to Standard II.

Standard III: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence of all program, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard III.

As of Academic Year 2018-19, AUB's seven faculties/schools offer 51 bachelor's degree programs, 77 master's degree programs, 12 PhD programs, and a professional MD program, as well as 36 certificates and diplomas. An increasing number of these programs are accredited by relevant professional/academic entities. For undergraduates, it was previously noted that many students enrolling at AUB enter as sophomores since Lebanese students receive the Lebanese Baccalaureate which is equivalent to the freshman year. Depending on the program, bachelor's degrees require between 90 and 143 credits beyond the freshman year. As graduate programs grow, they are increasingly interdisciplinary.

The content and structure of academic programs are designed by faculty members, who are also responsible for the initiation of new programs and majors. The procedure for initiating new academic programs - graduate and undergraduate - is clearly documented and follows a rigorous review and approval process internally culminating with approval by the New York State Education Department (NYSED); since AUB is chartered by the State of New York, all programs are registered with NYSED and maintained on their Inventory of Registered Programs.

AUB has a total of 1,200 instructional faculty members (914 full-time and 286 part-time), and approximately 80% of the 914 full-time faculty (approximately 550 in professorial ranks) hold a doctorate or other terminal degree in their respective disciplines. The institution has a competitive student-to-faculty ratio of 11:1, although the Self-Study Report points out discrepancies in faculty teaching workloads "among and within faculties/schools." To address this, AUB created a faculty workload task force in October 2017 with the goal of proposing a revised faculty workload policy. Taking into consideration the overall mission of the University and reflecting the desire to strengthen research mission of the University, revising the workload policy is important; the policy is in the advanced stages of development and is including input from the Faculty Senate.

As discussed in Standard II, one of AUB's notable achievements since its last reaffirmation of accreditation has been the reinstatement of tenure, which is anticipated to further enhance the research profile of faculty and improve recruitment and retention of tenured and tenure-track faculty. The tenure process is clearly documented with seven layers of review. New faculty are offered the opportunity to receive mentoring from senior faculty, a program that should improve faculty retention with increased professional success and job satisfaction.

Finally, faculty evaluations are well-defined and include reviews of teaching, research, and service. Teaching effectiveness is based on course evaluations, and results suggest that AUB

faculty achieve high scores in instructor satisfaction, course satisfaction, and learning outcomes. (Note that students are required to complete course evaluations to have access to their semester grades.) A recent proposal to collect direct faculty teaching assessments such as teaching portfolios and conduct peer observations is an excellent idea that will certainly strengthen teaching quality at AUB. Research/scholarly output is measured based on the number of publications and quality of dissemination venues. AUB reports that the assessment of faculty service is often difficult due to the complexity of capturing activities that may not necessarily be documented. A review of best practices at other institutions could help AUB identify assessment techniques that would allow the institution to better quantify and recognize faculty service.

AUB's commitment to providing faculty resources is exemplary. In AY 2017-18, AUB allocated the equivalent of $1.963M USD to faculties to be spent primarily on improving labs and teaching facilities. Faculty research is supported through travel funds to attend conferences as well as two types of research leaves: Junior Faculty Research Leaves and Periodic Paid Research Leaves. AUB also provides a number of competitive internal seed grants for faculty. All faculty members are eligible to apply for intramural research funding. Once a proposal is approved by the University Research Board and depending on the availability of research funding, each faculty member whose project is approved is eligible for research funding up to $40,000 USD per annum. Overall, in AY 2017-18, the total internal funding exceeded $5M USD (including $1.4M USD from the University Research Board, as part of the plan to increase these funds to $2M USD per annum starting in 2018-2019). The combination of capital budget for research, of internal budget for development and search grants, as well as external funds amounted to $16M USD for the last fiscal year.

Mentoring opportunities are presented and discussed during the orientation of new faculty members and by department chairpersons. Based on feedback from faculties/schools on campus, it is noted that faculty mentoring is practiced using different models. For example, in the Faculty of Medicine, a mentoring program was developed around competencies to help faculty develop their skills, unlock their potentials, and achieve personal and professional development. Faculty are encouraged to have meetings for counseling about necessary steps to secure their career development and advancement.

AUB is highly organized in documenting academic program requirements including any required summer training/internships and/or capstone course/projects. Programs of study are described in digital and print format through the Office of the Registrar and are also accessible through a dedicated webpage. Student learning outcomes of all academic programs are also published on departmental/program websites.

The discussion of learning resources was distributed throughout Chapter III. In terms of financial aid/scholarships, AUB has made significant efforts to improve support for students through several new scholarship programs. A concern raised by AUB is that enrollment is expanding at a pace faster than the university's infrastructure and services. The move towards blended/hybrid learning may relieve some of this pressure. With the introduction of blended/hybrid courses, AUB invested in instructional design and training for faculty to redesign their courses to teach more effectively in this new modality. More than 100 faculty completed the training that was offered through the Center for Teaching and Learning. In general, the Center for Teaching and Learning is a valuable, well-led resource for faculty development; assessment of the Center for Teaching and Learning offerings would further enhance its value and assist in strengthening faculty participation. It is noted that fully-online degrees are not permitted in Lebanon. However,

the leadership and structure for training and developing quality e-Learning resources for "traditional" courses across the institution as well as for diplomas and continuing education programs is exemplary.

Notably, the Faculty of Medicine introduced the Impact Curriculum in Fall 2013 which is "student-centered, integrated, and competency based medical program that primarily uses active and contextual learning approaches to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors expected of a physician." Outcomes that include skill development and leadership, and patient advocacy are assessed and communicated to students and the broader community. Faculty of Medicine students visit several primary health care centers that offer free healthcare to underprivileged citizens such as the Karagouzian facility (Burj Hammoud) and the TAHADI initiative in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. These experiences offer students the opportunity to come into direct contact with refugees of war and violence and understand the challenges that face this population. The Faculty of Medicine recently received accreditation from TEPDAD (Association of Medical Education Programs Evaluation and Accreditation).

AUB's commitment to graduate education is evidenced by the increase in the number of graduate programs offered. New mission-driven graduate programs - Master's and PhD - have been introduced in response to local and regional needs and to emerging trends, and several departments are in the process of preparing PhD program proposals, and various units are designing and creating relevant programs. For example, the School of Nursing recently implemented its PhD program with an initial cohort of three students. In fall 2017, new masters enrollment was 455, new MD enrollment was a 112, new PhD enrollment was 24, and other "new graduate" enrollment was 27. Noting that several existing graduate programs are under-enrolled, it is suggested that AUB review these programs as they relate to mission and strategic goals of the institution and Faculties. As noted in Chapter V, there is a serious need to define Program Learning Outcomes for all graduate programs. Additionally, funding available to support PhD students has increased, with support for housing and the monthly stipend doubling since 2012. Supporting a growing cadre of PhD researchers will be a key contributor to strategic initiatives to increase faculty research. Given this enrollment growth, there is a need for more robust research administration and graduate education administrative structure.

The Self-Study Report and discussions with administrators, deans, faculty, and others indicates a direction towards both interdisciplinary/inter-faculty research and academic programs. This is admirable and natural considering the direction of research and practice globally and, particularly for AUB, the types of initiatives in which it is involved. Many institutions move to implement interdisciplinary initiatives that are not well sustained due to administrative obstacles that are oftentimes seemingly insignificant but prevent progress. As it is moving forward on this agenda, AUB might work to formalize policies and procedures to effectively implement and communicate such initiatives. In addition, the Visiting Team noted a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of several administrators particularly in areas of graduate studies, research, and curriculum. While this may be due to the Visiting Team's lack of familiarity with AUB, it is suggested that broader recognition of roles and responsibilities be addressed since communication with leaders of these growing and exciting initiatives is essential for their success.

Admission to AUB as a regular undergraduate student can be either at the freshman or sophomore level; students admitted at the sophomore level are mainly the product of Lebanese, French, or international baccalaureate programs or their equivalent. Of the approximately 1800

new undergraduate students admitted in the fall semester of each academic year, about 19% are admitted at the freshman level. Unfortunately, retention for the freshman class (approximately 85%) is lower than that for students admitted as sophomores (approximately 95%), and graduation rates for these freshman is approximately 65%. Although "pre-planned attrition" may be one factor (i.e. completing one year at AUB and then transferring to an institution in the US or Europe), AUB appropriately lists further investigation of this as an area for improvement.

In concert with its mission, AUB has paid particular attention to its General Education (GE) program. The mission of the General Education program at AUB is to "provide students with essential skills in research and communication, familiarity with significant modes of thought, and broad exposure to fields of learning in a wide range of areas (cultural, societal, and scientific) so that they better learn to think critically and analyze intellectual and social issues in their historical and contemporary contexts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and thereby, to enrich their lives by fostering problem-solving skills and promoting lifelong learning, in a program that embraces the principles of student choice and active learning." The GE program was reviewed in 2016, after which a new director was appointed and a new roadmap for a core curriculum was developed. The General Education requirements consist of 36 credits distributed as follows:

- o   3 credits in Arabic communication skills
- o   6 credits in English communication skills
- o   12 credits in humanities
- o   6 credits in natural science
- o   6 credits in social science
- o   3 credits in quantitative thought

Students have access to an online curricular advising tool to track completion of their General Education requirements. A review of the link in the Self-Study Report shows the courses from which students can select to fulfill their General Education requirements, suggesting a robust selection of courses aligned with AUB's General Education program. However, alignment of AUB General Education credits with the MSCHE-stated learning goals of oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy is not explicit in the Self-Study Report. In particular, there is no clear linkage between the credit distributions listed above and the MSCHE goals of scientific reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy.

Recognizing the excellent work that has enabled AUB to grow both its graduate programs and graduate enrollment, according to the Self-Study Report, the two are "incommensurate," suggesting the necessity for evaluation of the current graduate programs before new master's programs are introduced. AUB's concern that 22% of graduate students take more than three years to complete their (Master's) program requirements is well-founded although the distinction between full-time and part-time participation and introducing opportunities for advising/planning should be made. An area of improvement includes recommendations to assess the sustainability of graduate programs and to evaluate and reduce time to degree for graduate programs.

The goals of graduate education (research, scholarship, and the development of independent thinking) are not explicitly addressed in the Self-Study Report, but this does not mean that they are not an important part of AUB's graduate education. The omission may result from the lack of required program learning outcomes at the graduate level.

AUB's degree-granting programs are primarily designed and delivered by AUB personnel with the exception of two programs:

- The global master's in health and sustainable development (GMP) is being developed in collaboration with EARTH University in Costa Rica. For this program, AUB's Faculty of Health Sciences will coordinate with EARTH to ensure program evaluation and integration of feedback into the program design.

- The Professional Post-Graduate Diploma in Green Technologies (PRO-GREEN) is a joint/dual diploma offered by AUB in collaboration with the Lebanese American University and the American University in Cairo. Although the report states that "curriculum development and course offerings at the three institutions with quality assurance and monitoring plans started in October 2012," the report suggests that further evaluation of the curricula and program will be conducted by AUB under their regular periodic program review process.

Degree-granting programs are evaluated through reviews of program learning outcomes (every three years), program review reports (every eight years), and tracking of Key Performance Indicators. This assessment process seems mature and stable. Further discussion of assessment of student learning is presented in Chapter V.

The Visiting Team recognizes that AUB has a mature process for developing and evaluating educational programs characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement. The institution demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring student achievement of educational goals and employs faculty with appropriate credentials to assure the continuity and coherence of its educational programs as well as competent staff to advance the institution's mission.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

1. Assess the sustainability of some graduate master programs, vis-à-vis their relevance, cost of operation and financial sustainability, taking into account their need for achieving the mission of the institution. Also, evaluate and try to reduce time to degree for graduate programs.*

2. Initiate a process for assessing the reasons behind attrition and hence low graduation rate of freshman students.*

STANDARD III

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard III.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

   AUB has implemented a well-crafted program review process. By integrating review of learning outcomes and program review into a comprehensive evaluation of the student learning experience, AUB can ensure that, regardless of faculty or degree, its academic programs are graduating academically-prepared students. It is important that they plan to expand faculty assessment beyond course evaluations to include direct measures.

- **Suggestions**

   A detailed mapping of AUB's General Education course groupings to MSCHE learning outcomes would provide stronger evidence that AUB meets the requirements for these criteria and would facilitate future assessment of courses proposed to satisfy AUB's General Education requirements.

   AUB should provide evidence of "closing the loop" through the use of assessment data for continuous improvement.

   In order to realize its goal of increasing its research stature, AUB could benefit from more visible research administration and graduate education administrative structures. This may be accomplished by adjusting existing Associate Provost titles. In addition, AUB should create a university-level structure for interdisciplinary/inter-faculty research and academic programs.

   Develop a process to expand faculty assessment beyond course evaluations to include direct measures.

- **Recommendations**

   NONE

- **Requirements**

   NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 8, 9, 10, and 15

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 8, 9, 10, 15 in areas relevant to Standard III.

Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience

Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributed to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

Summary of Evidence and Findings

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard IV.

Students exhibit great pride in being part of the AUB community. They note its excellence among institutions in the region and how fortunate they feel to have been accepted to study at AUB. Several students even acknowledged receiving more financial aid at other institutions but chose to study at AUB because of its excellent reputation.

Clubs and organizations are a very positive part of the student experience and the students feel this differentiates their experience from those of other peers at other institutions. The diversity of the University community is also very attractive to students. They noted that the diversity extends beyond the student body to include diversity of faculty and staff.

Pride in their accomplishments was noted by students who felt that there was "no grade inflation" here. Students felt they worked very hard on a rigorous curriculum and were challenged to do better than they ever have before, really earning the grades they received. Faculty, staff and students alike all spoke to the "transformative nature" of the student experience.

The Self-Study Report and other materials reveal that AUB implements a robust recruitment and admissions program at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels. For undergraduates, data indicate a selective acceptance rate of 70% with a 53% yield rate. Admissions targets are established by each of the individual Faculties but the process for undergraduates is largely centrally managed. For the current year undergraduate enrollment was kept flat, due to constraints in resources needed to manage enrollments and to teach core courses common across majors.

The University demonstrates a vigorous and active recruitment program, visiting 698 school visits and fairs in the past year, along with campus visits from high school students. The report notes that digital marketing has become more important in the 21st century and the University needs to increase its market penetration. Some digital marketing has been tried, however print remains a major focus for undergraduate students. The use of the Common App this year was a successful addition to the Admissions process, with 250 applications received from prospective students from 50 countries.

As part of its liberal education mission, AUB is making a concerted effort to increase the number of Humanities majors, despite a societal push toward majors that result in high revenue careers.

Although a 70% discount has been offered to students who will seek Humanities degrees, there has not been much success. It is suggested that Career Services areas collaborate with Admissions to create a recruitment strategy that aligns Humanities with available job possibilities.

Graduate admission data show a 73% acceptance and 48% yield rates. At the graduate level, enrollment goals are established, and admissions decisions are made at the individual Faculties and department levels.

Financial Aid assistance is a major focus for AUB, and the program is robust. Approximately $32M USD is spent in donor and University funds to support students. In addition, the University has developed a number of scholarship programs for both undergraduate and graduate students, funded by both the University and corporate partners. Close to 44% of graduate students receive some form of financial aid. There are particular scholarships designed for non-Lebanese students in an effort to support diversity and fulfill the institutional mission in the region. The multifaceted programs coordinated through the Leadership, Equity, and Diversity (LEAD) Initiative provide aid to diverse groups based both on need and merit.

From survey results, the Self-Study Report indicated a high level (50%) of dissatisfaction with the Office of Financial Aid. From conversations, this appears to be due to a number of reasons including an inability to verify income data when awarding aid, failure of students to apply in a timely manner (or at all), failure to inform students of external financial aid opportunities for which they might be eligible, and the process involved in tying aid amounts to differential program costs. In addition, the University acknowledges that there is a delay in providing students with their financial aid packages after admission notifications, and this may impact yield. The Office of Financial Aid is encouraged to continue reviewing ways in which these concerns may be addressed.

It is unusual for an institution of this size and type to convene a committee headed by the Provost for admissions and financial aid decisions, and the Visiting Team notes that this approach may overcomplicate both processes. AUB might consider instituting more streamlined processes that retain necessary oversight and decision-making.

Student Support Services are conducted by a dedicated group of individuals. Students are informed of policies and procedures through the Student Handbook and orientation programs. Students reported that they are well aware of the handbook, and that it was made available to them at orientation and other times in their careers.

AUB pays attention to underprepared students including those coming with lack of familiarity with the English language, and the University Preparatory Programs serve as a valuable tool for those lacking English preparation. Approximately 50 -70 students per semester are part of the program. The courses are taken for one to three semesters, depending on the student, and also serve to help integrate them into the Lebanese and University environment. More than 400 students per year are part of the Language Exchange Program.

It was indicated in the Self-Study Report that the retention of students entering as freshmen (85%) is below desired targets; besides a lack of preparation, it is noted that some students leave to attend other institutions out of Lebanon after their freshman year. Staff acknowledged there is a need for increased remedial courses to assist these students and help them succeed at AUB.

The Visiting Team observes that more attention is needed to focus on the incoming freshman cohort and address freshman student preparation and strategies to allay movement to other institutions should be explored.

Faculty are responsible for the bulk of undergraduate advising, and the Visiting Team found the advisors with whom they spoke to be very dedicated. While satisfaction with undergraduate academic advising has increased since the 2008 self-study, there is still 22-25% dissatisfaction with the process. Much of the dissatisfaction appears to be with lack of course availability, and advisors concentrate more on helping with registration and less with course selection and other types of faculty advising and mentoring. On the graduate level, students expressed a need for increased academic advising and career mentoring. The Visiting Team noted that increased attention to support of these areas is under review.

Addressing issues around advising is an area of improvement identified by Working Group IV. This need was confirmed through conversations with faculty and students. There is a level of inconsistency in the way advising is administered across the campus. In some areas it appears to be working well, while others still lack effective methods. Advisors acknowledge there also may be a lack of clarity about the role and responsibilities of advisors. Student government leaders support a mandatory advising process for new students and believe that the practice should continue for first-year students. They also shared that more continuous outreach by advising faculty would be beneficial for all students.

There appears to be a considerable lack of attention and resources attached to graduate advising which is a crucial area particularly because of the intended growth of graduate education at AUB with increased interdisciplinary/inter-faculty programming and the different needs and attendance patterns of graduate students that vary by program. Continued efforts to add to resources and formalization of graduate advising should remain a priority.

AUB must devote continued attention to establishing a strong and consistent method of advising across the University. In addition, there should be a review of technology resources contained within and compatible with the Banner suite of programs, that will help make the process more effective for both students and advisors.

The Counseling Center appears to be very active with about 1,000 visits per month during peak times. Typical concerns relate to anxiety and depression. The counselor load is nominally eight clients per day but this load may rise to seeing 12-14 clients per day in heavy times which can be very stressful for the staff. Over the past year the University added one additional counselor to the staff, and current staffing includes a director, two full-time and two part-time counselors. However, this is still a small staff to accommodate the size of the student population, and it is noted that there is limited space to house additional staff. To overcome this problem and still add assistance for staff and students, the University is encouraged to explore technological resources such as TAO, ULifeline, Go Ask Alice and PsychCentral. The University is fortunate to have the hospital connection since this provides easier access to help for students with major psychological issues including eating disorders as well as being able to address student health needs locally and comprehensively.

Students appear to be positive about career services in general although they point out that utilization and effectiveness are not even across the university. Some students report receiving many emails about jobs and other career opportunities while other felt they were not as helpful.

Due to the disparity in student needs across the various disciplines, students suggested that the career (and major) exploration process should begin early in their academic programs, as early as the first year. There is also a need to address unevenness in the delivery of career services across Faculties.

The functions of a combined centralized and decentralized career services process need to be better understood and articulated. There are structural challenges since, in this model, staff involved with career services report to multiple units. However, the Director of Career and Placement Services reports that they work well together since they embrace the same goals; activities are aligned and they communicate well, trying to meet as a group several times a semester. To be more effective, it is noted that additional resources (both human and fiscal) may be necessary in order to increase the number of programs and level of service provided to all students.

The sports program contains several components including intercollegiate athletics and recreation. The Phoenix is the University mascot. The program has a research component and the availability of licensure in fitness and certification. As noted above, University sports and extra-curricular activities play an important role in student life on campus. Most students are involved in at least one activity, with one student acknowledging that he sees more of his friends and family on campus than his biological family. Several students stated that their involvement made the University feel like home. This level of engagement supports student retention and student success.

The Charles W. Hostler Student Center is a very large and well-outfitted facility that provides holistic wellness programming for all students. Student athletes are not just athletes, but excellent students as well. Student athletes are required to maintain a 3.2 GPA to compete, and current rosters include approximately 600 student athletes, 45% female and 55% male in 22 sports. The Self-Study Report noted a desire to increase athletic scholarships for students in addition to the currently-awarded student athlete awards. Currently, $1.3M USD has been allocated for student athlete awards (aka scholarships), and recipients for 2018-2019 include eight students, four male and four female.

Student safety is taken very seriously at AUB. The University has a security force of 150 officers across the campus and the medical center; eight officers are female. The Chief of Protection intends to hire more female officers in the next year. Officers encourage students to be aware of their surroundings, particularly when they are off campus. It is noted that the campus is considered an oasis, and students are comfortable and feel at home, and the Visiting Team felt safe and comfortable on campus.

The Visiting Team recognizes AUB's commitment to the holistic student experience moving from recruitment to their becoming alumni. Students appear to be enthusiastic about their AUB experience and the institution is committed to increasing the number and quality of activities, enhancing the advising experience, and providing access in all forms with a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

1. Continue improving the current advising system by transforming it into a comprehensive, fully-integrated advising system that clarifies what is expected from all stakeholders (advisers, students, the Office of the Registrar, individual faculties/schools and the Office of Student Affairs), prepares and motivates academic advisers, and includes periodic assessment of the academic advising process and of advisers' performance.*

2. Expand the athletic program at AUB by strengthening its athletic scholarships program.*

3. Refine and cultivate institutional data and analyze them effectively for informed decision making in support of the student experience.

STANDARD IV

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard IV.

● **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

AUB's commitment to provide academic opportunities for Syrians and other refugees in Lebanon is exemplary.

The Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service is commended for its efforts to encourage volunteer and service in all students, particularly in their work with regional refugees.

AUB's commitment to working towards providing adequate financial aid for all students in need is an important approach to promoting diversity and success.

The Student Affairs staff commitment to building student resilience and create stronger faculty alliances is forward thinking and timely.

● **Suggestions**

The Counseling Center staff, like colleagues around the world, is seeing increasing numbers of students seeking services. Staff is encouraged to explore adding technological resources to its professional arsenal, as another method of assisting students seeking support and counseling.

Continued attention to the undergraduate advising process is essential. A plan to create strong and consistent methods of advising across the institution should be developed.

Exploration and review of technological resources consistent with and/or included in the Banner student information system should be conducted as part of the advising review.

● **Recommendations**

NONE

● **Requirements**

NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 8 and 10

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 8 and 10 in areas relevant to Standard IV.

Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their programs of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard V.

The Self-Study Report provides documented evidence of how AUB has fulfilled its educational effectiveness goals that are adequately aligned with the AUB strategic academic plan and institutional mission. This Chapter reports on the different activities, initiatives, and procedures used to assess such goals and concludes with some suggestions for improvement.

AUB has made substantial progress in terms of developing academic goals and learning outcomes. Program learning outcomes (PLOs) have been identified for all undergraduate majors and also for some graduate programs on campus. PLOs are assessed periodically following a three-year cycle for all undergraduate programs. In 2010, AUB initiated a system of periodic program reviews (PPRs) to provide a mechanism for self-reflection and improvement-oriented assessment within academic programs. As of 2018, all academic programs have gone through at least one PPR. The review was originally done every seven years and the policy was changed recently to allow for PPR every eight years citing lack of changes within programs. Recommendations resulting from PPRs as described in the Self-Study Report include curricular revisions, launching new programs, renovations of classrooms/offices, upgrading lab equipment and computers, and reviewing student advising. To support this process, academic programs are required to submit an annual assessment report that includes a summary of assessment activities used within these programs. This report describes how PLOs are assessed, assessment methods used, data analysis, main results, and suggestions for improvement. Accredited programs assess PLOs following accrediting body guidelines for incorporation into the respective self-study.

The Self-Study Report provides an excellent example of how AUB was able to enhance the student learning experience of the General Education program. In 2008, a committee was established to oversee the campus-wide implementation of undergraduate General Education requirements. The committee institutionalized a process for certifying new General Education courses. In 2013, the committee was replaced by a board that includes faculty representing different schools along with a director and an assistant director for General Education. Two assessment cycles for General Education were approved - one in 2013 and the second in 2016. A total number of 574 courses were recognized by the General Education program by fall 2018 with learning outcomes developed and closely linked to most of the academic program outcomes. It is clear that General Education is one of the areas where AUB was able to close the assessment loop. However, as discussed earlier in Chapter 3, the General Education curriculum should be better linked to the MSCHE goals of scientific reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy particularly now in its current review and coming revision.

AUB established the Academic Assessment Unit (AAU) in 2013 to oversee PPRs, which was previously coordinated by the Office of the Provost. AAU is in charge of coordinating assessment activities that involve gathering evidence related to the performance of all academic programs on campus. AAU is also involved in analysis of assessment data and reporting results to different entities on campus. In addition, AAU provides technical support for academic departments concerning preparation of their PPR self-study and annual program reports.

The AAU also supports institutional assessment through tracking key performance indicators for academic strategic plans at both the institutional and Faculties level. For this purpose, online dashboards were developed to streamline assessment procedures and share relevant data with administration, deans, and academic departments and programs. For example, data produced by dashboards are usually included in the school assessment reports and also used to link assessment data to resource allocation.

Other offices that provide support for assessment activities include the Center of Teaching and Learning, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), and the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC). For instance, the Center of Teaching and Learning offers a wide range of workshops and seminars that aim at enhancing assessment literacy among faculty members. Reviewing the Center of Teaching and Learning list of events on its website, assessment-related activities are limited to helping faculty develop both program- and course-level student learning outcomes. Future events should focus on how to make sense of assessment data and how to use them to inform instructional decisions. These are the types of skills that could help faculty and staff see the overall picture and assist in improving quality of education at large. This lack of training in assessment data interpretation and use is not unique to AUB since the same issue has been reported in the literature in different higher education contexts. On a related note, Center of Teaching and Learning training should also focus on how to assess/enhance the quality of assessment tools. Faculty members frequently develop or adopt assessment instruments to use with their students, but they need the skills to help them evaluate the quality and relevance of these instruments. These skills could eventually assist in increasing both the validity and reliability of scores from different assessments employed on campus.

A wide range of internal and external institutional assessment tools are used to assess the quality of education at AUB, students' satisfaction with learning opportunities, and programs' achievement of learning outcomes. For example, the College Outcomes Survey (COS) addresses issues related to students' social and academic skills, instructional context on campus, and services provided to students. The Exit Survey addresses issues related to satisfaction of students with the AUB experience and their future career/academic plans. Other assessment tools include Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Test, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Instructor Course Evaluation (ICE). The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment shares a summary of results for these different tests on its website. The results of these different assessment tools suggest a high quality of education offered at AUB.

From this robust array of assessment activities, it is evident that AUB attempts to use results from the different assessment instruments to improve instructional practices and the overall quality of education. To streamline and coordinate assessment procedures on campus, the Institutional Assessment Committee (IAC) was restructured in 2017 and currently provides guidance for implementing assessment results. AAU categorizes and tabulates assessment results and then provides it to different stakeholders on campus in order to ensure data-driven decision making.

The AUB Self-Study Report cites a number of instances where assessment data were used to make changes to program offerings and instructional activities. However, most of these changes are at the program level; how assessment data is used to improve instructional practices in individual courses is not discussed. It would have been useful to provide examples from different programs where assessment results at the course level were used to enhance learning. It would be useful to AUB to review course level assessment in more detail.

An issue that was noted in the Self-Study Report is the reluctance of faculty to be involved in assessment processes. As noted in the Center of Teaching and Learning discussion above on assessment literacy, it would be useful to better motivate and demonstrate to faculty the value of using assessment to improve student learning, in particular, how to use data within a learning-oriented assessment framework. A first step towards achieving this goal is to ensure that faculty appreciate the value of assessment data in enhancing students' learning experiences. Instead of using assessment only for accountability purposes and as a tool for summarizing student achievement, AUB needs to better use assessment data to help students improve their learning. On a related note, it is clear that faculty are not pleased with AUB's reaction to resources requested by academic departments in assessment reports. Many related concerns were voiced during the Visiting Team meetings with faculty. While we understand budget constraints and limitations, a balance of reasonable priorities and what AUB can afford needs to be openly discussed with faculty. This open discussion could hopefully help faculty take the assessment process seriously and also ease their current concerns.

The Academic Strategic Plan has many initiatives to enhance student learning experience on campus, and the different Faculties have aligned their strategic plans with the University plan. A number of key performance indicators have been identified to assess progress made to fulfill these initiatives campus-wide and also at the Faculties level. As indicated earlier, AAU provides support for institutional assessment in terms of monitoring and tracking the Academic Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicators on the AAU dashboard. Strategic plan dashboards have also been developed for different schools for better Key Performance Indicator tracking at the school-level as well. Assessment data are used to improve instructional practices, enhance educational effectiveness, and inform decision making at different levels on campus.

The Self-Study Report provides a fair evaluation of the assessment process but notes some inconsistencies in the procedures used at the program, department, and Faculties levels as well as efforts to streamline these procedures. However, the Visiting Team would have benefitted from more information on the quality mechanism used to ensure validity and reliability of assessment results. In addition, the Visiting Team observed that multiple administrative units appear to be assigned assessment responsibilities, including AAU and OIRA, without strong day-to-day coordination recognizing the existence of the AAC that meets periodically. Perhaps creating a unifying structure that brings all assessment functions under one institutional effectiveness unit, working in tandem with AAC, could enhance collaboration and streamline all forms of assessment activities towards the implementation more effective and timely action plans that derive from assessment results

The Visiting Team believes that AUB offers a strong educational experience for its students and that AUB is committed to advancing the educational effectiveness of academic programs, the value of the student experience, and the broader impact of the institution and its mission.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

1. Establish a well-defined mechanism for the integration and continuous improvement of the institution's educational assessment processes.*

2. Make assessment of the Program Learning Outcomes of graduate programs mandatory and continue to review all existing PLOs for their alignment with program and university missions.*

STANDARD V

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard V.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

  General education is one of the areas where AUB has been successful in closing the assessment loop. The changes brought to this program and the excellent articulation of learning outcomes could be used as a model for other academic programs on campus.

  AUB has a solid assessment system in place, where both human and physical resources have been provided. This system is a good step towards ensuring that educational effectiveness goals are being met.

- **Suggestions**

  Action plans should better track how assessment data are used to improve teaching and learning in academic programs. While one of the mandates of the Institutional Assessment Committee is to "verify that assessment results have been used for improvements," AUB should focus more on how this process could be carried out at the course- and program-levels. This could also be supplemented by an institutional follow-up mechanism for closing the assessment loop.

  According to the report only 23% of the graduate programs have PLOs. It is essential that all graduate programs have well-defined PLOs, and it is suggested that AUB aims to achieve 100% compliance by end of 2019-20 academic year.

  AUB should explore the development of a mechanism for evaluating the quality of assessment tools used on campus.

- **Recommendations**

  NONE

- **Requirements**

  NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 8, 9, and 10

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 8, 9, and 10 in areas relevant to Standard V.

Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

The institution's planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard VI.

The University has implemented robust planning processes, resources and structures that align with the missions and goals of the university, and metrics have been developed to monitor and periodically assess progress towards institutional goals.

The university follows a conventional budget process approach by creating preliminary projections and assumptions that are developed at the senior administrative level and then promulgated throughout the institution in various forms and iterations until the President accepts the final version to propose to the Board of Trustees for ultimate approval.

The President presented a new Academic Strategic Plan to the Board of Trustees soon after he took office in 2015. The Plan was developed in consultation with the deans, faculty members, and staff. This process also resulted in the development of aligned strategic plans for the different schools and a Campus Master Plan along with the launching of the BOLDLY AUB campaign with directed funding goals.

At the beginning of 2017, AUB launched a five-year capital campaign for which it has already reached 70% of its goal of $650M USD with three more years left to attain its target. The strong momentum gained by the BOLDLY AUB campaign is a strong attestation to the support the university enjoys from its generous donors and alumni including its Board of Trustees. To fully accomplish its ambitious mission and vision, the university Board of Trustees officially approved an overarching vision for AUB in 2030, named *VITAL*, which further combines and integrates under one comprehensive framework the 2016 Academic Strategic Plan, BOLDLY AUB and the Campus Master Plan.

VITAL, an acronym representing the five main strategic themes in the vision for AUB in 2030, supports AUB's institutional goals and builds on its mission: 1) *Valuing* the community and sharing the AUB values; 2) *Integrating* a humanities, technology, and purpose-based education; 3) *Transforming* the university experience; 4) *Advancing* a world-class research agenda; and 5) *Lifting* the quality of health and medicine across the region. Through this vision, AUB aims to continue producing young professionals who will assume leadership roles and make a difference in Lebanon, the region, and beyond, through a commitment to supporting innovative and impactful teaching and research, and to an inclusive campus that is also economically, environmentally, and ethically sustainable.

This vision bases its fiscal soundness and sustainability on:
o the success of the capital campaign, whose distinctive goals (in USD) are:

- Academic and Research Funds ($200M)
- Capital and Infrastructure Priorities ($50M)
- Outreach and Community Impact ($10M)
- Healthcare Priorities ($275M)
- Student Diversity and Life on Campus ($115M)
  - the growth in endowment, especially focused on research and on scholarships
  - the growth of interdisciplinary research and of distinctive research to further raise the profile of the Faculty and of AUB in general
  - a strategic and calibrated growth in enrollment coupled with improved retention.

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer comprises experienced professionals who provide timely and accurate information at both the tactical and strategic levels to inform decisions made throughout the year by a variety of stakeholders.

The University's operating revenues have reached a new high ($492.8M USD) while net assets have also significantly grown over the past two years. The university's investment pool (inclusive of endowment) is on an upward trajectory, totaling ca $731.4M USD in FY 2018 ($605.7M USD in FY 2017). The University's debt portfolio has been prudently structured with a reasonable debt ceiling and including borrowing agreements with lending terms that are not readily found in the market.

Since AUB operates in an environment that poses certain challenges from a variety of perspectives, including political and economic uncertainties within Lebanon, the university has undertaken formal risk assessments at various levels. The Finance risk assessment is comprehensive in scope, realistic, and assigns logical risk tolerances to its identified exposures, evaluated according to a matrix of likelihood and impact. Recent risk-related actions taking place in the past few years alone in this respect range from setting aside considerable funds for operating contingency matters as well as steps taken to protect the university in the event of adverse economic situations that Lebanon might be subjected to.

AUB as a whole relies on a motivated, effective and goal-driven Office of Human Resources that is putting in place streamlined mechanisms for performance evaluations, effective orientation programs for new employees (complemented by a newly-introduced onboarding program) and benefits that significantly enhance the value of the compensation packages of AUB Staff and Faculty.

The Facilities Planning and Design Unit and the Physical Plant Department work well together and make judicious use of the available funds to continuously improve the state, safety, and sustainability of the AUB infrastructure – new and existing. With current housing capacity limited to 13% of the student body, AUB is not a residential campus; however, investments are foreseen to create additional student housing (and parking) to accommodate current demand and future growth.

The Chief Information Officer advances a vision of radical change such that Information Technology becomes a transformative agent for AUB – becoming a "partner" rather than merely a "service provider." This view will allow Information Technology to engage in strategic efforts and projects that contribute to raise AUB's profile, while continuing to provide an excellent service to the AUB community, particularly the academic enterprise.

The Visiting Team found AUB to value strategic planning and institutional assessment as a means to advance its mission in both the short term and long term. The organizational structure allows the institution to adopt bold visions within the constraints of finances, geography, and compliance and maintains a commitment to shared governance and transparency.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

1. Clearly specify the accountability mechanisms of decision-making bodies in the upper administration (Board of Deans, Strategic and Financial Planning Steering Committee, and Executive Leadership Team) and other administrative units, which have not already done so.

2. Develop by-laws for the executive committees like the Executive Leadership Team, Strategic and Financial Planning Steering Committee, and Financial Planning Committee, or engage in a more systematic revision of governing structures and bodies at AUB. Ensure that assessment and accountability mechanisms are built within the bylaws of each committee. Executive Leadership Team to be formalized as a university committee with clear bylaws.*

3. Develop more venues for shared governance, with particular emphasis on a shared financial and resource plan assignment and implementation, and more direct involvement of stakeholders (e.g. faculty, students).

4. Link assessment of Key Performance Indicators of the academic and administrative units to the strategic plan of the university including the assessment of resources. Ensure that the Academic Strategic Plan is published as a reference document on AUB website.*

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard VI.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

    The integration of the facilities master plan with other planning initiatives offers a compelling model.

    AUB is fortunate to count on such a large number of competent, dedicated and passionate individuals that deeply care for the success of the university.

- **Suggestions**

    AUB should develop additional venues for shared governance around fiscal and physical resource planning with increased involvement of stakeholders.

    AUB should link assessment of Key Performance Indicators of the academic and administrative units to the strategic plan of the university including the assessment of resources.

- **Recommendations**

    NONE

- **Requirements**

    NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 8, 10, and 11

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 8, 10, and 11 in areas relevant to Standard VI.

Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituents it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

<u>Summary of Evidence and Findings</u>

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report, other institutional documents, and interviews with faculty, staff, students, and others, the team developed the following conclusions relative to Standard VII.

AUB has a clearly articulated governance structure with the Board of Trustees as the governing body, the president as the chief executive officer, and an administration composed of the provost as the chief academic officer, executive vice president for medicine and global strategy, vice presidents and chief officers, deans of faculties/schools, dean of student affairs, university librarian, department chairs, directors of centers and institutes, directors of academic support units, and directors of administrative units. Faculty, staff, students and alumni are also an integral part of the overall governance structure with various levels of active engagement, and there is a desire to increase the inclusion of staff in governance.

Institutional governance is guided by five sets of bylaws: Corporate Bylaws, Senate Bylaws, Bylaws of the Faculties, Bylaws of the University Student Faculty Committee, and Bylaws of the Student Representative Committee. Policies and procedures for faculty and students are described in the Faculty Handbook and Student Handbook, respectively. Policies and procedures for staff are described in the Non-Academic Staff Manual which is currently under revision.

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of AUB and is governed by clear Conflict of Interest policies. Among the committees of the Board of Trustees are:
- o The Trusteeship Committee regularly reviews the composition of the Board of Trustees, recommends suitable candidates, and assesses the efficacy of the Trustees. About every five years, an external consultant assesses the overall operation of the Board of Trustees to identify areas for improvement.
- o The Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees is the "penultimate body responsible for the quality of teaching and learning; it oversees the development and revision of academic policies, supports academic initiatives, approves proposals for new programs, and makes recommendations for faculty appointments, promotion, and tenure." The committee takes into account reports it receives from the provost.
- o The Finance Committee evaluates and assesses the university's operating and capital budgets, reviews requests for expenditures, and advises the Board of Trustees accordingly.
- o The Investment Committee manages the investment and reinvestment of university funds.
- o The Development Committee works with the university's Office of Advancement to find major donors and raise funds for strategic initiatives.

Although the Board of Trustees Corporate Bylaws state that the board will hold three meetings per year, the Self-Study Report outlines more frequent communication, with three full board meetings per year and two board committee meetings per year, a monthly teleconference with the Board of Trustees Executive Committee, and a weekly teleconference between the university President and the Board of Trustees Chair, as well as on-demand meetings. Meetings are held both in Beirut and in New York City. Such an active board is seen to be a benefit to the university. Corporate Bylaws assign responsibilities to the Board of Trustees beyond the "policy level" oversight suggested in the MSCHE criteria, and this model appears to be working well for AUB.

With the reinstatement of tenure, the Board of Trustees awarded tenure to the President, Provost, Executive Vice President, and academic deans prior to any faculty tenure awards. This is an appropriate action to take in such circumstances.

The President is appointed by, evaluated by, and reports to the Board of Trustees and, appropriately, may not chair the board. A review of the President's credentials indicates significant expertise in the medical field as well as administrative experience in hospitals and medical schools, although no direct experience in senior administration at the institutional level was evident. This does not seem to be a hindrance, as evidenced by AUB's recent accomplishments documented in the Self-Study Report and in this report.

The President formed the Executive Leadership Team comprised of the President, Provost, Executive Vice-President for Medicine and Global Strategy, Associate Vice-President for Administration, and the Special Advisor to the President to serve as a senior advisory group. Despite the fact that this group meets weekly and, among other activities, approves major capital projects before they are presented to the Board of Trustees, there is no formal documentation or defined accountability for the Executive Leadership Team which is highlighted in the Self-Study Report and has been identified as an area of improvement.

The University's administrative structure is well-documented with clearly assigned reporting relationships. University administrators have the appropriate experience and credentials to fulfill their roles in the organization and to assist the President in fulfilling his roles and responsibilities. As noted in the Self-Study Report, the Provost was appointed without an international search, instead relying on a consultation committee of administrators, trustees, students, alumni, and faculty. This and other administrative appointments led to faculty concern that were addressed between the faculty and the President. It is expected that, going forward, these processes will be more transparent.

Regular engagement with faculty and students was not directly addressed in the Self-Study Report. The description of shared governance indicates a strong collaboration across faculty, administration, students, and alumni. Shared governance is embodied in an elected Faculty Senate. Some strong examples of shared governance were noted by the Visiting Team including the University Research Board and University Student-Faculty Committee. Students are likewise pleased to be integral part of university governance through participation in university-wide committees. The staff, being members of a labor syndicate, have a different role in shared governance.

Surveys (e.g. Employee Satisfaction, HERI Faculty Survey) and outcomes of Key Performance Indicators are used for the overall assessment of leadership and administration; these should be

better documented. The Equity and Title IX Policy Working Group conducted a comprehensive review of their area in 2016-2017, resulting in revisions based on key recommendations and a review of best practices. In general, however, assessment of administrative units beyond the academic realm is not addressed in the Self-Study Report.

The Visiting Team observed that the governance structure of AUB, guided by well-crafted by-laws and led by an engaged Board of Trustees and an able administration appears to be operating effectively. It is important that the structure is set up to handle day-to-day operations while embracing the future together as AUB strives to become an even stronger and engaged community.

The Visiting Team views the Areas of Improvement identified by AUB in the Self-Study Report to be appropriate:

> 1. Develop guidelines for the assessment of members of the university administration, including senior administrators, deans, chairs/conveners of academic units, and directors of centers and institutes, and articulate clearly the link between this assessment and the strategic goals of AUB.

> 2. Develop more venues for shared governance, with particular emphasis on a more systematic and formal inclusion of staff in key committees and new strategic initiatives.

> 3. Enhance the culture of accountability across the university and engage in a sustainable and effective compliance program that includes a regular enforcement and revision of policies and procedures coupled with awareness sessions, and training activities.*

STANDARD VII

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Standard VII.

- **Significant Accomplishments, Significant Progress, or Exemplary/Innovative Practices**

  Shared governance at AUB appears to be supported well by stakeholders.

  The automation of policy management using PolicyTech software has facilitated the input, approval, and revision process for university policies and ensures that a single, up-to-date version of every policy is accessible to university constituents.

- **Suggestions**

  The lack of formal documentation and accountability regarding the Executive Leadership Team raises some concerns but is identified as an Area of Improvement in Chapter 6.

  Assessment of administrators and their units should be documented.

- **Recommendations**

  NONE

- **Requirements**

  NONE

REQUIREMENTS OF AFFILIATION #s 12 and 13

In the team's judgment, the institution appears to meet Requirements of Affiliation #s 12 and 13 in areas relevant to Standard VII.

Section D: Verification of Compliance

I. Affirmation of Continued Compliance with Requirements of Affiliation

Based on a review of the Self-Study Report and accompanying materials, interviews, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, the team **affirms** that the institution continues to meet all of the *Requirements of Affiliation.*

II. Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations

The Visiting Team **affirms** that the institution meets all accreditation-relevant federal regulations, which is based upon the review of the Self-Study Report, accompanying materials, and the Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations and the evaluation visit.

Section E: Verification of Data and Student Achievement

I. Verification of Data and Self-Study Information

The team **confirms** that data and other information provided by the institution are reasonably valid and conform to higher education expectations.

II. Student Achievement

After interviewing institutional stakeholders and visiting the institution's student achievement information available at its website, the team **confirms** that the institution's approach to its student achievement goals is effective, consonant with higher education expectations, and consistent with the institution's mission and that the student achievement information data available at its website is reasonably valid and accurate in light of other data and information reviewed by the team.

Section F: Third-Party Comments (if applicable)

Not applicable

Section G: Conclusion

The Visiting Team acknowledges and congratulates the AUB community for its commitment to the education of students of Lebanon, the region, and the world, its respect and collegiality, and its dedication to the self-study process. The Visiting Team thanks AUB community for hospitality, transparency, and engagement during our visit and in all interactions. We trust that the institution will be open to the ideas contained in this report, all of which are being offered by the Visiting Team as peer reviewers in a spirit of collegiality.

As a reminder, the next steps in the evaluation process are as follows:

1. The institution replies to the team report in a formal written Institutional Response addressed to the Commission.

2. The team Chair submits a Confidential Brief to the Commission, summarizing the team report and conveying the team's proposal for accreditation action.

3. The Commission's Committee on Evaluation Reports carefully reviews the institutional self-study document, the evaluation team report, the institution's formal response, and the Chair's Confidential Brief to formulate a proposed action to the Commission.

4. The full Commission, after considering information gained in the preceding steps, takes formal accreditation action and notifies the institution.