

Beirut Arab University: A Case Study

Mohamad Bassam Sukariyah

Lebanese University

January 2015

Beirut Arab University (BAU) is a Lebanese private institution for higher education affiliated with Alexandria University in Egypt. With more than 300 academic programs, it has established itself as a nationally and regionally recognized and respected university that provides a rich and rewarding environment to some 15,000 students per year. Its main and original campus is in Beirut and it also has branches and campuses in Debbieh, Tripoli, and Bekaa in Lebanon and in Alexandria, Egypt.

A Brief History of the University

BAU was established in 1960 by the late Egyptian president Jamal Abdel Nasser at the request of the Lebanese philanthropist group *Wakf Al Bir Wal Ihasan* (WABWI). At the time, higher education in Lebanon was dominated by two Westernized private universities, the American University of Beirut (AUB) and Saint Joseph University (SJU), both established in the late 19th century by Christian missionaries. AUB was and still is an American institution and SJU was and still is based on French educational models. The only state university in the country, the Lebanese University founded in 1959, was still a young institution at the time. The establishment of BAU aimed at creating a more balanced situation in the higher education landscape in the country through a promotion of Arabic and Islamic heritage and opening access to university to new groups of Lebanese (mainly Muslim) and Arab (mainly Palestinian) students who could not attend AUB or SJU either because of the foreign language barrier (English and French, respectively) or because of the high tuition fees.

A Brief Academic Overview of the University

BAU is one of the largest private universities in Lebanon in terms of student enrollment. Total enrollment in all of its branches in Lebanon and Egypt was 15,141 students in 2009/2010 academic year. As Table 1 shows, male and female students represented about 62% and 38%, respectively, whereas Lebanese and non-Lebanese Arab students represented about 43% and

57%, respectively. Furthermore, student enrollment in the Lebanon campuses reached 11,013 in 2007/2008 and dropped (mainly in the faculties of arts, Law & Political Science, Commerce & Business Administration, and Science) to 8,567 in 2009/2010.

Table 1. Student Distribution by Faculty, Gender, and Nationality, 2009/2010 Academic Year.

Faculty	Gender		Nationality		Total
	Males	Females	Lebanese	Non-Lebanese Arabs	
Engineering	1630	176	1253	553	1806
Architecture	307	159	403	63	466
Commerce & Business Administration	2572	1674	2422	1824	4246
Law & Political Science	2723	732	333	3122	3455
Arts	1322	1646	609	2359	2968
Health Sciences	77	224	220	81	301
Dentistry	86	129	181	34	215
Medicine	175	155	278	52	330
Pharmacy	94	314	383	25	408
Sciences	345	601	492	454	946
Total	9331	5810	6574	8567	15141

BAU currently consists of the following ten faculties arranged here chronologically by year of founding:

- Faculty of Arts, 1960
- Faculty of Law & Political Science, 1960
- Faculty of Commerce & Business Administration, 1961

- Faculty of Architectural Engineering, 1962
- Faculty of Engineering, 1975
- Faculty of Sciences, 1976
- Faculty of Pharmacy, 1986
- Faculty of Medicine, 1995
- Faculty of Dentistry, 1995
- Faculty of Health Sciences, 2008 (the Nursing Program began in 2005)

In 2005, the university adopted the credit hour system in all its faculties, and in 2006 it terminated the correspondence system in the faculties of Arts and Law. Tuition fees for undergraduate programs range from US \$50–\$70 per credit hour for a total of 120 required credit hours for a bachelor’s degree in Arts to \$300 per credit hour for a total of 215 required credit hours for a bachelor degree in Medicine and Surgery. These numbers show tuition rates until 2010; they may increase in the future, particularly in the medical and engineering fields. The expected duration of studies varies: from four years in the faculties of Arts, Law & Political Science, Commerce & Business Administration, Sciences, and Health Sciences, to five years in Engineering, Architecture, Pharmacy, and Dentistry, to six years in Medicine.

Since 1992, all programs and examinations at BAU have been conducted in English, except in the faculties of Arts and Law where the language of instruction varies depending on the courses taught. All university applicants are required to provide evidence of their English-language proficiency in order to be admitted. However, many students interviewed for this study¹ stated that even though many instructors speak good English in the classroom, they often speak it with an accent. Some students felt that this deprived them of role models for English proficiency, and slightly affected their understanding of classroom material.

The group of faculty members at BAU represents a unique mix of Lebanese and Egyptian scholars. Professors from Alexandria University are often “lent” to work at BAU, after a careful selection process, as some of the deans interviewed for this study noted. These visiting professors bring with them the traditions of a rich and longstanding Egyptian academic culture. But in order to maintain academic continuity in Lebanon and to foster stronger involvement with local communities and issues, BAU aims to increase the percentage of Lebanese faculty to 50%. I argue that the recent geographical expansion of the university outside of Beirut into North Lebanon and Bekaa will strengthen the need for more local academic staff. However, BAU

officials, faculty members, and students strongly believe that for the university to retain its unique qualities the academic collaboration between Lebanese and Egyptian professors has to continue.

University Mission and Vision

BAU is committed to preserving and promoting its heritage and its important ties with Arabic and Islamic civilization, in addition to fostering cultural and scientific collaborations with other Arab and international universities. BAU's core mission is "to achieve an outstanding standard of excellence in education, learning, and research whilst meeting the needs of our community and adhering to our academic values of intellectual freedom, integrity, and professionalism" (BAU, *Strategy*, 9). The university's vision is to be "committed to ensuring that the processes of learning, teaching and assessment evolve to cope with the requirements of lifelong learning and to create more demanding learners, with higher expectations and aspirations" (ibid.).

BAU officials note that what the university shares with other Lebanese institutions for higher learning is the goal of providing quality education and preparing competent graduates in domains of study that respond to existing and emerging social and economic needs in Lebanon and in other Arab countries. However, they portray BAU as different from other universities in the following ways:

- it targets and attracts students from middle-class families;
- it balances quality education and affordable cost;
- it offers a variety of programs across a broad range of fields and domains;
- it reaches out to students in various locations in Lebanon through its different branches and campuses;
- it is characterized by a tolerant, diverse atmosphere combined with appropriate guidance and supervision by university officials, thus reflecting the core values of Arabic-Islamic culture.

According to the vice-president of BAU's Supreme Council, given the denominational nature of the Lebanese political and educational systems, BAU attracts mainly Muslim students from the areas where its campuses and branches are located: Beirut, the Al-Kharroub region, Sidon, Tripoli, Akkar, and Western Bekaa. However, BAU students come from varied

backgrounds and the university doors are open to all qualified applicants regardless of their religious or national affiliations.

BAU's Major Strengths, Weaknesses, and Priorities

Realizing the need for change in response to international trends in higher education, and in order to better participate in the national and international marketplace for postsecondary education, in 2007 BAU's Strategy Committee conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the university's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. Based on input from administrators, faculty members, and students, a five-year comprehensive strategy was developed (see the report *Strategy 2007–2012*). It identified the following:

- **university's core strengths:**
 - commitment to excellence;
 - the existence of several programs qualifying as "top tier";
 - comprehensive array of programs with a potential to encourage more interdisciplinary research, instruction, and service;
 - dedicated and experienced faculty and talented and committed staff;
 - strong position within Lebanon and strong level of community support to the university;
 - a large community of alumni who show strong sense of loyalty to the university.

- **core weaknesses:**
 - low recruitment and retention levels of academic staff;
 - low recruitment and retention levels of students;
 - little emphasis on recruiting regional and international students;
 - need for continued strengthening of relationships with secondary schools and the local community;
 - heavy dependence on part-time and visiting lecturers in some faculties;
 - inadequate research culture and environment;
 - absence of a systemic approach to quality assurance;
 - inadequate library facilities, thus limiting academic development;
 - lack of facilities for student welfare/counseling/career guidance;

- insufficient sports facilities and other campus activities;
 - underdeveloped sense of belonging to BAU on the part of the university community;
 - weak public perception of BAU due to the absence of a public relations strategy;
 - absence of debate on issues of national and regional importance;
 - need for appropriate management and academic governance systems to encourage interdisciplinary research and learning.
- **BAU's current priorities are to:**
 - recruit and retain highly achieving students and highly qualified staff;
 - invest in BAU's academic expertise to diversify sources of income;
 - support BAU's strategy with a targeted approach for regional stakeholder engagement and communication;
 - increase enrolment of students from outside Lebanon;
 - achieve quality profiles, which demonstrate regional research excellence in some academic fields;
 - develop and implement a sustainable infrastructure development program throughout the university, including taking advantage of the development opportunity on the Debbieh campus;
 - promote active participation and involvement of BAU alumni and the wider community.

In interview, the vice-president of the Supreme Council emphasized that over the past five years the BAU administration has worked to maintain the institution's strengths and overcome its weaknesses. Recruitment and retention of top-ranking students have significantly improved in the last few years due to the application of more selective admission criteria and the availability of more scholarships to distinguished students. Faculty members "lent" from Alexandria and other Egyptian universities now have longer contracts that can extend for up to ten years, which improves retention of academic staff. New agreements with European institutions have fostered research collaborations. New sports facilities in the Debbieh campus and centers for community services have been established. The credit hour system allows

students more flexibility in selecting courses, which can encourage interdisciplinarity. During interviews, students and faculty members pointed to the administration's major efforts in the last five years to improve learning and teaching and to offer better extracurricular activities to students.

Geography and Space of BAU's Campuses

The university has significantly expanded over the last decade inside and outside its main campus in Beirut. Below is an overview of its current campuses and branches:

Beirut Campus

It is located at the south gate of the capital Beirut, in the Tarik el-Jadidah district, and houses the faculties of Arts, Law & Political Science, Commerce & Business Administration, Pharmacy, Medicine, Dentistry, and Health Sciences. The land covers an area of 41,107 square meters while the built area is 50,500 square meters. The Beirut campus is undergoing continuous renovation and renewal of its buildings, halls, and centers in an attempt to procure the best university facilities and services. Some of the renovation projects include:

- **the Jamal Adbul Nasser Hall** was rejuvenated with modern design and technology;
- **the Ali Rashed Hall**, a small seminar room located above the Jamal Adbul Nasser Hall, was equipped with new technology, especially for video conferencing;
- **two new Admission and Registration Offices** were established and equipped with the latest technologies for communication and Internet connection;
- due to an unprecedented demand in the Faculty of Dentistry, 75 well-equipped **clinics** have been established for both pre- and postgraduate studies;
- the construction of the **Assembly Building** in the university gardens housing various cultural activities such as art exhibitions and literary evenings. Easily accessible, with its metallic structure and glass frontage, the building represents symbolically the idea of transparency on campus.

Debbieh Campus

It is located 33 km from the Beirut campus and is built on a land area of 1,350,000 square meters, 400 meters above sea level. It has a complete infrastructure encompassing 9 km of roads,

pavements, electricity, phone and campus lights networks, two sewer-system stations, a power station, a maintenance building, a sports court, and a football pitch, in addition to the construction of the following buildings:

- **The Architectural Engineering Building:** four stories high, it has an area of 10,300 square meters and houses classrooms, administration offices, five studios, three computer centers, a library, and a spacious ceremony hall, which can accommodate up to 300 guests. The building was first used for academic purposes in 2006.
- **The Building of the faculties of Science and Engineering:** it has an area of 17,300 square meters and has six stories with administrative offices and classrooms, a studio, thirteen laboratories, four computer laboratories, a 660-square meter library, one auditorium with the capacity of 500 students, and two other auditoriums with the capacity of 225 students each. The building was used for academic purposes for the first time in 2008.
- **The Building of the Faculty of Science labs:** four stories high, has an area of 6,500 square meters and includes fifteen labs well-equipped for the needs of students from all majors as well as four computer labs. The building was first used for academic purposes in 2009.
- **Students' and instructors' residencies:** housed in four buildings: two for teaching staff and two for students. Faculty residencies have five furnished apartments in each building. As for student dormitories, one is for male students and includes 112 furnished apartments and the other one is for females and includes 66 furnished apartments. In the academic year 2010/2011, 125 female and 212 male students lived in residence, or an average of two students per room.

Tripoli Branch

BAU has acquired property in Basateen el-Minaa to act as a nucleus site that would help fulfill the university's policy of expansion in different parts of Lebanon. The site is 88 kilometers away from the main campus and spread over a land area of 15,540 square meters. Construction of the university complex there began in 2008 on a built area of 35,594 square meters. The complex comprises an administration building, a central library, stadiums, and four other buildings for the Faculties of Commerce & Business Administration, Architectural Engineering, Engineering,

Science and Health Sciences. The Tripoli branch opened its doors to students in the 2010/2011 academic year.

Bekaa Branch

BAU campus in Bekaa is located in the Jdita area. It is 45 km far from the Beirut campus and only 1 km away from Chtoora on the International Damascus Road. The land comprises eighteen realties of an area of 183,391 square kilometers. Its main frontage extends along 150 meters on the International Damascus Road and it lies 890 meters above sea level. It has a total built area of 2,000 square meters. The site has an Environmental Research Center and a club for alumni. The university is currently establishing a master plan for this new branch.

Alexandria Branch

The Alexandria branch in Egypt is also undergoing expansion: a new building acquired from Alexandria University was renovated to house all three faculties at the branch—Arts, Commerce & Business Administration, Law—and new stadiums, classrooms, laboratories, workshops, and a library equipped with the latest educational technology.

This branch opened in 1982 to respond to the needs of Arab students who could not travel to Lebanon due to the Israeli invasion. Since then, it has become another option for Egyptian and Arab students who live in Egypt and would like to study at a private university. Currently, around 5,000 students are enrolled. Egyptian students pay lower tuition compared with fees in Lebanon. Egyptian professors teaching there have better salaries than their colleagues in Egyptian public universities, but they receive less than faculty members at BAU's Lebanese campuses.

The Alexandria branch is not related to Alexandria University; it falls directly under BAU's authority with respect to administrative, academic, and financial matters. It has its own administrative body, appointed by BAU's president. This body supervises all curriculum requirements and ensures that the learning process is conducted in coordination with BAU's administration in Beirut where the faculty deans and councils supervise the implementation of academic syllabi, the hiring of instructors, and the administration of exams.

Decision Making and Participatory Processes

Main Levels of Decision Making

According to the university's current by-laws, the **Supreme University Council (SUC)** is highest in BAU's governance structure, acting in a similar manner as a board of trustees in other universities. It makes final decisions on endorsements by lower councils and final approvals of university operations, policies, regulations, budgeting, salaries, auditing, branching and construction, opening of new faculties, departments, or units, agreements with other universities and institutions, policies and plans for curriculum development, appointments of faculty members, vice presidents, and deans. The SUC is formed every year by a decree from the Egyptian Minister of Higher Education and is headed by the president of Alexandria University. Members of the Council, which meets at least once every two months, are BAU's president, secretary general, four members selected by the Alexandria University Council, and four selected by the Lebanese WABWI group, which maintains the position of vice-president of the Council.

According to SUC's vice-president, the Supreme Council attends mainly to strategic matters and generally approves recommendations made by the University Council as long as they are within the university's regulations and strategic priorities. Academic matters related to hiring, promotion, contracts, curriculum, degrees, and research are worked out at the academic levels (in faculty and department councils or academic committees) and are typically approved by higher authorities. Further, initiatives of the WABWI group (who is the owner of all of BAU's properties) to acquire new lands, construct new buildings, open new branches and campuses, and establish new faculties were all approved by the SUC without complications.

The **University Council (UC)** comes next in BAU's organizational structure. It is formed every year by the BAU president who is also its director. In addition, the UC is made up of two of the vice-presidents from Alexandria University, two representatives of the WABWI group, and vice-presidents, deans, and the university secretary general from BAU. The UC is largely in charge of administering and implementing the decisions made by the SUC, and planning and making proposals to the SUC. The UC makes decisions about hiring part-time instructors, setting the start and end dates of classes, approval of library regulations, and granting of university degrees.

Further, **BAU's president** is the top-level on-campus academic and administrative executive officer. He is selected from Alexandria University and appointed by the Egyptian Minister of Higher Education every four years (for a renewable term) based on three nominations

made by the SUC. The president oversees and implements the university strategic plans; has representational functions; suspends classes when necessary; nominates university vice-presidents, deans, and the secretary general; forms academic committees to review applications for the rank of instructor and to evaluate the research activities of applicants for the rank of associate and full professors;² presents the recommendations of the academic committees to the UC; appoints associate instructors and graduate assistants as well as terminates their employment; and appoints, promotes, and fires staff members based on the recommendations of the university secretary general.

BAU vice-presidents are nominated by the president and appointed by the SUC. They function mainly as executive officers of the university branches and may be assigned academic and non-academic functions as deemed necessary. Currently, there are two vice presidents: one for medical affairs and one for the Tripoli branch affairs.

The **university secretary general** is also a central figure in the leadership structure, appointed by the SUC every four years based on the nomination of the BAU president and in consultations with WABWI representatives in the SUC. The secretary general, who has always been from Lebanon, is the highest non-academic authority who supervises administrative and financial matters. He/she works with three deputies: for external, administrative, and student affairs.

The **faculty and department councils** constitute the next level of authority in the university's organizational structure. The faculty council, which deals with all academic, administrative, and financial affairs on a faculty level, is formed every year by the university president and is headed by the dean. Members of this council include department chairs and one representative faculty member from each department (a position rotated every year among different professors within the department) as well as at least two part-time instructors or experts from outside of the university appointed by the BAU president. The department council, on the other hand, looks into all academic, administrative, and financial affairs of the departments and is headed by the department chair. Members of this council include all full-time faculty and two local part-time instructors.

Participatory Process

Faculty members participate in university decision making through the faculty and departmental councils, but faculty elections are not held at any level. During interviews, deans and faculty emphasized that the department council is the most important academic unit in the university structure. According to them, at least 90% of the academic recommendations that it makes about the need for and the hiring of new faculty members, teaching and learning, curriculum content, research priorities, and testing and assessment are approved by higher-level councils. Students are not represented in any council, but according to university officials, they are sometimes invited to the meetings of department or faculty councils when issues that require their input are discussed. And the local community may be invited to participate in the appointment of two outside experts to the faculty councils.

As some deans stated during interviews, BAU's organizational structure is modeled after that of Alexandria University even though the latter is more complex in order to accommodate the much greater number of students. Decision-making and participatory processes at BAU appear to fit within a traditional, hierarchical structure of governance following established academic traditions at Alexandria University. The interviewed deans and faculty members noted the existence of both bottom-up and top-down processes. On the one hand, discussions about academic matters between faculty members are based on mutual respect for each other's expertise and professional commitment to BAU' goals. Department chairs, deans, and the BAU president also deliberate before making decisions and recommendations that will ultimately reach the SUC. On the other hand, policies and decisions made by the SUC and other higher-level councils are to be complied with and implemented by lower-level councils and academic and administrative staff.

Funding

Primary Sources of Funding

According to the vice-president of BAU's Supreme Council, 90% of the university's revenues come from tuition fees; the other 10% come from donations. Funding is allocated centrally, based primarily on tuition revenues. University documents do not provide specific numbers for a budget analysis, but I was able to obtain from university officials the following table detailing the 2009–2010 budget:

Table 2. BAU's 2009–2010 Budget

Revenues	Amount in \$
Tuition Fees	49,000,000
Other Revenues	1000,000
Total	50,000,000
Expenditures	Amount in \$
Salaries & Rewards	27,000,000
Running Expenses	13,000,000
Investment Expenses	15,000,000
Total	55,000,000

Faculty

Brief Description by Status

There were 850 teaching staff members at BAU in 2009/2010 academic year, distributed as follows: twenty-four appointed Lebanese full-time professors, ninety-four “lent” full-timers from Alexandria University whose appointment may last as long as ten consecutive years, nine full-time Lebanese instructors on a yearly contract, 108 visitors from Alexandria University who are appointed for one semester or less, 128 Lebanese part-timers, and 487 teaching assistants. About 42% of faculty in 2009/2010 had PhD degrees compared with only 24% in 2008/2009. However, according to the 2009/2010 yearly report, all teaching staff other than teaching assistants had doctoral degrees (N=363), while all teaching assistants held bachelor’s or master’s degrees (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Distribution of Teaching Staff at BAU by Status and Faculty Affiliation, 2009/2010 Academic Year.

Status	Appointed	Lent	Yearly Contract	Visitor	Hourly Contract	Teaching Assistants	Total	PhD Holders	Holders of other Degrees
Faculty									
Arts	4	2	3	6	34	11	60	49	11

Arts – Media Department	0	0	0	0	9	9	18	9	9
Law & Political Sciences	6	2	0	12	24	5	49	44	5
Commerce & Business Administration	11	0	1	7	4	28	51	23	28
Architecture	9	1	0	5	7	53	75	22	53
Engineering	20	10	1	16	13	73	133	60	73
Sciences	15	6	1	12	24	90	148	58	90
Pharmacy	7	1	1	7	2	46	64	18	46
Medicine	9	1	0	26	1	25	62	37	25
Dentistry	6	1	0	12	4	58	81	23	58
Health Sciences	7	0	2	5	5	37	56	19	37
Health Sciences – Nurses	0	0	0	0	0	34	34	0	34
Languages Center	0	0	0	0	0	13	13	0	13
Rehabilitation Services	0	0	0	0	1	5	6	1	5
Total	94	24	9	108	128	487	850	363	487

The majority of full-time faculty at BAU are from Egypt as are all deans and most department chairs. Only twenty-four Lebanese faculty were appointed in 2009/2010. This is in contradiction with the 2001 university by-laws, which had stated that efforts should be made over the course of five years to appoint more Lebanese faculty members and to reach a 50% rate of the total teaching staff. This goal was obviously not achieved. The 2006 by-laws repeated the same statement and set the same goal to be completed by 2011.

According to the SUC's vice-president, BAU has been actively recruiting full-time Lebanese faculty members since 1995 in order to strengthen the university's connections with local communities and to ensure academic continuity for students and programs. Even though BAU has improved their faculty members' salaries and benefits, top-ranking Lebanese graduates seem to be attracted to better salaries and benefits at other universities in Lebanon or abroad. Interviews showed that Lebanese faculty are happy with their salaries and benefits, but some are less happy about retirement plans, sabbatical leave, and health coverage. For example, at the end of their service, Lebanese faculty receive a lump sum at the rate of their final month's salary multiplied by the number of years served. They are paid full salaries for a three-month sabbatical and 50% of their salaries for a one-year sabbatical leave given that they are working on an approved research program. In-hospital treatments are covered at 75% and out-of-hospital expenses are fully covered at the rate of the National Social Security System, which is much lower than the actual cost charged in clinics and labs.

Appointment and Promotion

Faculty members at BAU are either appointed (must be Lebanese), "lent" or visiting from Alexandria University, or contracted on a yearly or hourly basis. The list of all faculty members and their status is determined every April. Based on the yearly teaching plan set by the SUC and on recommendations made by the department, faculty, and university councils, the SUC determines if the university needs additional academic staff. Alexandria University is then requested to submit the names of professors in relevant disciplines who are nominated for lending or visiting. These nominations are then reviewed and evaluated in order by department, faculty, and university council. Next, BAU's president makes recommendations to the SUC which gives final approval for the appointments. The appointment of "lent" professors can be renewed yearly for up to ten years and a minimum of two; visiting professors are appointed for one semester or less for intensive sessions. For "lent" or visiting Egyptian professors, their work at BAU counts toward ranking and promotion at Alexandria University.

The following process of evaluation and promotion applies only to Lebanese appointees: Lebanese faculty members with a doctorate degree may start their career path as instructors (equivalent to assistant professors in American universities) appointed for one year, with the possibility to be renewed for two more years. After that their appointment is either maintained or

terminated based on a report from the relevant department and faculty councils, and after approval from the UC and the SUC. To be appointed assistant professor (equivalent to associate professor in American universities) the candidate must have served as instructor for at least five years in addition to conducting and publishing creative research and/or carrying out excellent engineering construction projects in applicable disciplines. Demonstrated commitment and good performance are also required. For full professorship, in addition to publishing and research, good performance, and demonstrated commitment, the candidate must have served as assistant professor for at least five years and must have supervised master's or doctoral theses. Full professors have the opportunity to be selected to become department chairs and deans. If after seven years of teaching as either instructors or assistant professors faculty are not promoted, the BAU president can make a case to the SUC about terminating these appointments.

The promotion process can be described as follows:

- The eligible applicant submits to the chair an updated CV and a promotion folder with the following documents:
 - copies of research publications;
 - description of involvement in university and public service;
 - for promotion from assistant to associate professor: copies of master's and doctoral theses.
- The chair, in coordination with the dean, suggests reviewers from the list of members of the permanent scientific committees in Egypt.
- The BAU president selects three of these reviewers and submits their names to the dean.
- The dean then sends the candidate's promotion folder to the three reviewers.
- Each reviewer sends back to the dean his/her evaluation within three months.
- The dean forms a faculty promotion committee, which includes him/herself as well as the chair and one full professor from the department in which the candidate is applying. This is endorsed by the president.
- The faculty committee reviews the evaluations of the three reviewers, makes its own recommendation, according to the promotion criteria, and submits it to the president.
- The president presents this recommendation to the UC where a final recommendation is made.
- It is transmitted to the SUC for final endorsement.

- A notification letter is sent to the candidate.

For faculty members, retirement is mandatory at the age of 64. However, the appointment of full professors may be extended yearly for up to ten years past retirement if they are needed based on the recommendation of the relevant department and faculty councils after the approval of the UC and the SUC. No administrative functions are assigned after retirement age.

Curricula and Teaching

The number of credits an undergraduate student should take per semester varies from a maximum of 18 and a minimum of 12 in scientific faculties, and a maximum of 18 and a minimum of 9 in the humanities. Courses count between 1 and 6 credit hours; most count as 3. The total number required for graduation varies from one faculty to another. More specifically, the faculties of Arts, Science, Health Sciences, and Commerce & Business Administration require a total of 120 credit hours, Law & Political Sciences—138, Engineering—150, Pharmacy, Architectural Engineering, and Dentistry—180 to 182, and Medicine—204.

BAU does not offer any formal training to newly appointed Lebanese faculty members. Alexandria University, on the other hand, has a special training program for its new instructors covering educational and administrative aspects of university teaching. During interviews, many deans stated that similar training programs will be implemented at BAU as well. Faculty members are evaluated every year by the deans. This evaluation is based on research activities, number and quality of publications, committee membership, university and community service, teaching evaluation from students, and interactions with colleagues. The evaluation is first discussed with the concerned faculty member and then reported to the BAU president who in turn makes the appropriate recommendations concerning promotion and renewal of contracts.

Teaching loads vary from 12 to 18 hours per week depending on the number of assigned courses and regardless of academic rank. Further, faculty members are required to be present on campus from 8 am to 4 pm from Monday through Friday unless they are assigned off-campus duties. Course sizes vary from 200 students in some introductory courses to 25 in upper-level courses. The process of introducing new courses starts at the department council, then moves for approval of the faculty council and then to the president who requests a report from the

Academic Programs & Testing Committee. The president then makes a recommendation to the UC, which in turn reports to the SUC, which has a final say.

Research

Conducting and publishing creative research or engineering construction projects is one of the main requirements for promotion. To be promoted from instructor to assistant professor, the candidate must have at least six published papers of which a minimum of one must be a single-author paper and at least one must be published in a refereed journal; the other four may be published as conference proceedings. To be promoted from assistant to full professor, seven papers at least are required of which minimum two must be single-author and two at least must be published in a refereed journal; the other three may be published as conference proceedings. However, the same paper may count as both single-author and refereed journal publication.

In order to promote research activities among its faculty and students, in 2008 BAU founded the Research Projects and International Cooperation Center. It is independent from faculties and has the following tasks:

- to help elevate BAU's rank among the top universities in the region;
- to increase the amount and level of funding for industrially sponsored research and advanced development projects and partnerships with businesses;
- to establish and maintain links with other research institutions on national, regional, and international level in order to strengthen collaboration and improve opportunities for obtaining research funding.
- to develop the facilities, technology, and administrative infrastructure necessary to promote quality and competitive research and scholarship;
- to organize information days for staff members and students about funding providers and possibilities for grant applications;
- to establish an appropriate level of investment of internal funds for research that would result in increasing levels of externally sponsored research;
- to encourage departments to organize national and international conferences in collaboration with national, regional, and international institutions.

Faculty members interviewed stated that financial support is available to them to participate and present papers at regional and international conferences. BAU also supports

research by providing the needed infrastructure such as library facilities, electronic databases, and technological equipment. However, funding for research is available mainly through external local and international sources.

In June 2010, BAU published an elegant volume that includes an overview of scientific research activities conducted by its faculty members in all ten faculties between 2007 and 2010. During that period, 127 research papers were published, 226 were presented at conferences, thirty-five were accepted for publication, and thirteen research projects obtained funding from local, regional, or international sources. At BAU, most faculties have the authority to determine research areas and questions. Most of the research activities (80% of publications and 77% of conference presentations) took place in the faculties of Science, Architecture, Engineering, and Pharmacy.

Academic Freedom and Campus Life

Interviewed faculty members stated that there are no restrictions on what they teach, research, or do as long as they observe the university ethical guidelines and regulations. Even though regulations do not explicitly forbid political membership or activism, faculty members are aware that sensitive political issues are to be avoided in order to maintain a peaceful university environment. Furthermore, some of them indicated that the issue of political freedom is often not even raised given that the majority of BAU's Lebanese faculty members are not politically active and therefore not divided over political matters. Egyptian professors are not involved in Lebanese politics, but rather remain focused on their academic work.

Students

Campus and Academic Life

All interviewed students described the university application and admission process as clear, transparent, and fair. They are largely satisfied with their overall experience at BAU and view the academic climate there as positive, supportive, friendly. Many find the Lebanese-Egyptian diversity of faculty members to be academically and socially enriching. Students said they feel no barriers contacting their professors; one student described the relationship with professors as "paternal." They said that professors are very accessible outside of class, particularly during office hours. Students who have grievances go to their advisor first, but can also talk to the chair

or the dean who usually are responsive and understanding. I argue that students are largely satisfied because they feel that the money they pay for their education affords them a better service and they expect their complaints to be met with positive response.

However, some students thought that the number of credit hours required per semester (18 in most programs) in order to graduate on time is too much. This overload, they argued, sometimes prevents them from spending adequate time on the required readings and assignments. Students also reported that the predetermined sequence of courses that they have to follow if they plan to graduate without delay, leaves little room for making their own course selections.

Student opinion was divided about the advantages and disadvantages of moving some faculties from Beirut to Debbieh. Some found the new campus in Debbieh, with its natural beauty of green mountains overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, conducive to learning and to a more active and tolerant social life. They described the campus as quiet, relaxing, and inclusive. Moreover, it offers better sports facilities. Other students agreed about the natural beauty of the new campus, but argued that it is too quiet and isolated; one student said it was like a monastery. There is almost no interaction with the external social world and food choices and social activities are limited. The area surrounding the Beirut Campus, on the other hand, is lively and offers access to various bookstores, restaurants, cafés, and social life. In other words, in Beirut students have more options. Furthermore, some students proposed that the university shuttle transportation between the two campuses needed improvement.

Students are not formally involved in any decision-making structures at BAU. They are not represented in any of the university councils even though occasionally they may be invited to participate. Elections for a student council used to be held in the past, but they were terminated more than twenty years ago in an effort to avoid frictions and tensions among students. However, students can have an impact through their evaluations of courses and instructors at the end of every semester. These evaluations are taken into account when changes in course curricula and in teaching assignments are proposed.

Student interviewees see BAU as a good place for social life, despite differences in regional and religious belonging. As one might expect, students tend to get together with others who share a similar background. However, the university atmosphere is also conducive to positive interactions and mutual respect between students of different backgrounds and it is not unusual to find social circles of mixed affiliations. Further, given that upper-level classes are

smaller and that students spend more time together working on projects and activities, students form closer connections and the university becomes the main context for their social life. Thus the majority of interviewees observed that their most important social relationships have been forged on campus. Interestingly, some students also felt that the ambition to qualify for university scholarships and prizes creates a climate of competitiveness among peers in some programs.

This generally positive atmosphere does not, however, mean that conflicts between students do not exist. Some BAU students belong to Lebanese political parties, and when tension intensifies among conflicting political groups outside the university, a small individual conflict can escalate into widespread clashes and group hostility. This is what happened in 2007 when violent clashes took place on and around the Beirut campus. The interviews with students revealed that outside university groups were largely responsible, and some professors do not rule out the possibility that a third, suspicious party might have played a role in provoking both parties to aggravate the existing conflict and deepen their division. Since then, university officials have worked more diligently to maintain a conflict-free atmosphere. Political activities are put on hold in order to avoid frictions and tensions. Given the tense political climate in Lebanon, students understand that they are expected to maintain order and tranquility by avoiding any public debate about sensitive issues. In his address to the new cohort of students at the Tripoli campus, BAU's president explicitly advised them not to engage in any political activity that may hinder their studies. Instead, he encouraged them to participate in sports or artistic and environmental clubs, which would promote cultural interactions. Students at BAU have access to a variety of extracurricular activities, including sports (soccer, handball, ping pong, volleyball, basketball, aerobics, Thai boxing, archery, chess, and swimming), arts (music, folk dance, theatre), and social/cultural clubs (the Environmental Protection Club, Rangers team, astronomy club, Heritage and Exploration Club).

Financial Aid and Scholarships

BAU provides direct support to students in financial hardship in the form of tuition fees deductions. In addition, students benefit from the following scholarships, prizes, and distinctions:

- undergraduate scholarships:

- four annual scholarships awarded to students ranking highest in the four branches of the Lebanese Secondary School Certificate; these students can also benefit from these scholarships during their undergraduate study as long as they achieve a cumulative GPA of 3.33 or higher;
- one outstanding BAU student in each degree program who scores a GPA of 3 and higher at the end of each term and is taking no less than 15 credits is exempted from paying tuition fees in the subsequent semester; the second- and third-ranking students also qualify for a discount on tuition of 60% and 40%, respectively.
- postgraduate scholarships:
 - two scholarships are offered annually to BAU master's students with the highest GPA with a minimum of 3 ("very good") on the undergraduate level; the scholarships are in the form of a 50% reduction of the program tuition fees provided that the qualifying students achieve the same GPA every year.
- President's Honor List for students with a semester GPA of 3.8 and higher;
- Dean's Honor List for students with a semester GPA of 3.5 and higher;
- the Jamal Abdel Nasser award for academic distinction: awarded to the students who rank first in each department or faculty and who achieve the highest score and an average GPA of 3 and higher during their undergraduate studies.

Post-Graduation Plans

Most students say that an university diploma from BAU will enhance their job opportunities in Lebanon and other Arab countries especially in the engineering and medical fields. The success rates of BAU students in colloquium examinations required to join professional associations in medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy are very high and impressive.

Students do not receive formal advising about their post-graduation plans. However, advisors, faculty members, department chairs, and deans do their best to connect students with potential employers. A job fair is arranged annually in the Spring semester where students and employers can connect and exchange information. The BAU Alumni Association organizes cultural, professional, and social activities that connects students and potential employers in an informal manner. Further, BAU is in the process of establishing a career development center in order to assist students in their post-graduation plans.

University Governance and the Ministries of Higher Education in Lebanon and Egypt

BAU and the Lebanese Government

As a private university, BAU has a relative autonomy from the Lebanese government. However, like all private universities in the country, it is required to obtain state approval for any new program or campus branch in order to ensure that the degrees it offers will be accepted within the Lebanese system.

BAU and the Egyptian Government

As mentioned earlier in this report, BAU is affiliated academically with the Alexandria University in Egypt. Thus, it is connected to the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education, which appoints its president and the members of its SUC. The deans interviewed for this study pointed, however, that the Egyptian ministry does not interfere in BAU's academic and administrative affairs.

Local, Regional, and Global Dynamics and Relationships

BAU and Other Lebanese Universities

BAU is dedicated to cooperating with the other universities and institutions of higher learning in Lebanon among which it holds a significant rank. Cooperation includes meetings between administrators with the goal to strengthen students' opportunities in training and job prospects, interacting with professional unions, conducting lectures, collaborating in scientific committees, and attending the annual meetings of the deans of different faculties. Some specific activities include:

- BAU president's meetings with his Lebanese counterparts to enhance mutual relations and to seek new avenues for cooperation;
- attendance of all the meetings of the League of the Lebanese Universities as an active and founding member who shared in the election of the Committee Board of Directors where the BAU representative took over the tasks of the Secretariat of the Fund;
- organizing several conferences and meetings in collaboration with the Lebanese University and other private universities in the country;

- cooperation with most of the Lebanese universities in the field of scientific research;
- cooperation with the National Council for Scientific Research in Lebanon and participation in the Council's specialized committees.

The University and the Local Community

The Center for Consultation at BAU was established in 1998 to foster links between the university and all sectors of Lebanese society. It deploys the resources available at BAU and offers research, consultancy, and test services to organizations in the private and public sectors.

It specializes in the following areas:

- technical and academic consultations;
- specialized training courses;
- laboratory testing and experimentation.

The Consultation Center has been accredited by the Lebanese government to test imported medicine and by several international institutions (listed below) to provide education and training. It offers a range of regular courses in various specialties, but particularly in basic sciences, languages, medicine, and engineering. These courses are designed for both university graduates and organizations with the aim to update their knowledge and skills. The Center awards the following international certifications:

- Computer Certificate (ICDL), issued by UNESCO;
- MCITP, MCSA, MCSE & MCSA certificates issued by the Microsoft IT Academy;
- CCNA, A+, CCNA, CCNP & SECURITY, issued by the CISCO Networking Academy;
- SCSA certificate, issued by the Sun Academy;
- ORACLE Academy certificate;
- CPA, CFA, CMA & CIA certificates issued by Becker, Stalla, IMA & PRC under the supervision of Morgan International Group.

BAU and Regional and International Universities and Institutions

BAU maintains active collaborations and partnerships with several regional and international universities and institutions, such as:

- cooperation with the Cultural Bureau of the American Embassy in Beirut, which led to several meetings with students from BAU's Beirut and Debbieh campuses and the offer of scholarship programs for graduate and postgraduate degrees;
- cooperation with the Cultural Bureau of the French Embassy, which included contributions to the university's Language Center and attendance of the Bureau's year-round events;
- cooperation and coordination with Al-Fikr Al-Arabi Institute for the development of scientific activities in Arab culture;
- collaboration and coordination with regional ministries and professional unions on various occasions and meetings involving all professions and specializations;
- participation in the meetings of the regional office of the World Health Organization to develop an action plan entitled Country Cooperation Strategies;
- cooperation with the Agency of Francophone Universities:
 - participation in the Francophone Conference of the Presidents of Universities in the Middle East;
 - participation in the career guidance fair for francophone universities;
 - participation in the General Assembly of francophone universities;
- Cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI):
 - attending EMUNI's General Assembly and participating in the election of its president, deputies, and executive board;
 - nominating BAU as the only Arab university to offer summer courses at EMUNI; a course on Islamic architecture was included in the first summer school program in 2009;
 - collaboration between fourteen universities in nine countries during the First Research Market organized by EMUNI via video conferencing.

BAU and Regional and International Organizations

BAU participates as an active member in the following regional and international organizations and unions:

- The Union of Arab Universities
- The Union of the Islamic World Universities

- The International Union of Universities
- The Agency of Francophone Universities
- The International Union of the Presidents of Universities
- The Arab Organization of the Administrators Responsible for Admission and Registration in the Universities of the Arab Countries
- The League of the Lebanese Universities
- The Union of Euro-Mediterranean Universities (EMUNI)
- Euromed Permanent University Forum (EPUF)
- International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)

Connections with Organizations for Quality Assurance and Accreditation

In its continuous efforts to ensure the quality of its programs and to be in line with recent academic and professional developments, BAU established in 2007 the Academic Development and Quality Assurance Center, which specializes in:

- developing undergraduate and postgraduate curricula;
- establishing cultural and research cooperation agreements and exchange programs with Arabic and international universities;
- publishing a scientific journal at BAU;
- developing community projects in cooperation with other Lebanese universities, Lebanese authorities, and service and industrial institutions in the country;
- developing relationships between the university and international groups and institutions;
- obtaining quality assurance of undergraduate and postgraduate curricula and teaching plans at BAU in line with international educational systems.

According to BAU's president, the goal of the university in the near future is to receive international accreditation for all its programs. All programs have completed self-assessments in preparation for quality assurance and accreditation by international agencies. The following programs have already contacted such agencies:

- the Royal Institute of British Architects visited BAU's architectural engineering program in October 2010 on an exploratory basis;

- the chemistry program is in correspondence with the Canadian Society for Chemistry;
- the physics program is in correspondence with the Australian Institute of Physics;
- the law and political sciences programs are in contact with the Egyptian Agency for Quality Assurance.

Conclusion

In 2010, BAU celebrated its Golden Jubilee, reflecting on fifty years of achievement, progress, development, and expansion. University officials are proud of BAU's accomplishments, but they are aware of the many challenges and demands facing the higher education system worldwide, including an increasing demand for knowledge and skills.

BAU is committed to strengthen its core intellectual disciplines, open new channels to scientific understanding, and ensure a strong and focused regional presence. Its efforts are concentrated on strategic issues such as expanding its bases in Lebanon (Debbieh, Tripoli, Bekaa) and in Alexandria, Egypt; developing and maintaining an academic culture that values and rewards quality teaching and learning; developing local and international partnerships and alliances; promoting outcome-related research in affiliation with local and international partners, which contributes to national and international innovation; maintaining close interaction with industry and the community while making positive contributions through its Community Services & Continuing Education Center; and strengthening the support structures including technology and other infrastructure to enhance research and student learning.

Certainly, BAU has come a long way academically, administratively, and in terms of geographical expansion. However, more efforts are needed to involve faculty members and students in the structure and processes of decision making and the distribution of resources. Providing faculty members with continuing professional development and identifying and acknowledging excellent teaching practices will ensure that faculty are highly qualified. Reducing teaching load and course sizes will raise levels of research productivity and commitment to the university's mission and goals. Attracting more and qualified Lebanese faculty members and improving their retirement and health plans will also help BAU reach its goals for academic continuity and stronger connections with the Lebanese community. Further, as was stated in the university's *Strategy 2007–2012* report, a Career Development Center is needed to assist students in their post-graduation plans and job search strategies, and to provide

them with information and guidance services. Finally, stakeholders such as students, faculty and staff members, active alumni, donors, and local and regional partners all have the right to be better informed about BAU's finances and budgeting.

Notes

1. This report is based on the findings from a variety of data collected in 2010. I conducted interviews with: key BAU administrators including the university president, the vice-president of the Supreme Council, the university secretary general, and the deans of the faculties of Arts, Law & Political Science, Commerce & Business Administration, Science, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, and Engineering; faculty members from all ten faculties; and with students (six individual interviews and one focus group) from all faculties. Research also included site visits to the Beirut, Debbieh, and Tripoli campuses and consultation of the following official documents (made available to me by university staff): BAU's annual reports for academic years 2007/2008, 2008/2009, and 2009/2010; BAU's Fourth and Fifth Basic Lists (By-Laws) from 2001 and 2006; the 2009 university handbook; the 2010/2011 undergraduate catalogue; BAU's *Strategy 2007–2012*, volume 1 of *Scientific Research at BAU, 2007–2010*. I also consulted the university's website at: www.bau.edu.lb.

2. BAU documents refer to three academic ranks: instructor, assistant professor, and professor, which are respectively equivalent to assistant, associate, and full professor in American universities.

References

Beirut Arab University (BAU). N.d. *Strategy 2007–2012*. Accessed Jan. 5, 2015.

http://www.bau.edu.lb/Library/Files/Uploaded%20Files/BAUStrategyFinal_01Aug2008_r.pdf.

بشور, منير (1997) التعليم العالي في لبنان في المسار التاريخي، في التعليم العالي في لبنان. إشراف عدنان الأمين. بيروت: الهيئة اللبنانية للعلوم التربوية.