

**SUMMARY OF THE
STRATEGIC PLAN
OF
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
2010-2015**

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Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan

i. The Aspiration

The Aspiration of AUST is to become a major contributor to Lebanese Higher Education by implementing a credible and distinguished academic curriculum delivered by qualified faculty members who believe in student centered education. The University aspires to be recognized (nationally, regionally and internationally) as a respected comprehensive American styled university which strives to graduate universal citizens who are competent in their field of major and who are highly skilled communicators.

To achieve this aspiration, AUST shall focus on developing strong academic programs, recruit students with strong backgrounds, strengthen its faculty corps, improve its research facilities and deliver a balanced core of university requirements in the various fields of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. In addition, AUST shall prioritize its relationships with the professional bodies and widen its network of cooperation with regional and international universities.

ii. Assessment

Developing a strategic plan requires a clear assessment of the present conditions and of what is desired in the future (during the 5 year period of the plan). One needs to know “where I am now” and “where do I want to go”. The process of going from the present situation to the desired situation needs to be defined within a plan that considers the various internal university functions as well as the outside facts and factors that may contribute to this transition.

The mechanisms of assessment shall be developed in consultation with the faculty, staff, and students (where feasible).

iii. Why a Strategic Plan?

The educational scene in Lebanon is changing rapidly. It is, therefore, important to study one's own potentials in light of the changes that are occurring. Moreover, the international financial, economic and communication scenes are dictating new givens on institutions everywhere. Realizing that no university is an island, AUST sees that the study of the new realities in Lebanon, the Middle East and the world would help position the Institution properly in the tumultuous seas of competition and changes and therefore consolidating the steps and actions that are required to ensure proper growth and improvement –all in the context of the University's mission, goals and objectives.

The strategic plan shall be the road map developed internally that will provide an understanding of the points of strength, points of weakness and the courses of action to be taken to achieve the changes desired

I. Preamble

American University of Science and Technology was initially established as a university college and was licensed by the Lebanese Government to offer BA, BS, MA, MS and MBA degrees in the late 1990s. In 2007, the Institution was chartered as a university as by Decree # 677/2007.

University education in Lebanon began in 1865 when the Syrian Protestant College –the present day American University of Beirut – was established by Presbyterian missionaries from the United States of America. The French Jesuits followed ten years later with the Université St Joseph (USJ). The university scene remained divided between AUB & USJ until 1924 when American Junior College for Girls was established also by the Presbyterians. Public university education began in the early 1950s with the establishment of the Lebanese University; Beirut Arab University followed and the Higher Education scene was believed to be fully and adequately served by the aforementioned institutions for many years to come.

During the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) conditions on the ground necessitated the opening of branch campuses for existing institutions while associations, entrepreneurs and

even individuals entered the fray of higher education. By 2000 the number of tertiary education institutions licensed by the Lebanese Government exceeded forty.

AUST was one of “the new universities” in Lebanon that was met with opposition and resistance from “the older universities”. From the onset however, AUST decided to chart for itself a unique course that was believed to bring it respectability and recognition locally, regionally and internationally. In time, and with great efforts, the negative attitude of many older institutions subsided and it is hoped that the opposition will completely be relegated to the past as the AUST graduates prove their worth in the market. In fact, the market is proving to be a fairer judge than the older universities because it has practically totally overcome earlier prejudices (engendered by graduates of “older universities”) after experiencing the good product of AUST and thus became a supporter of the Institution.

AUST is presently in three locations in Lebanon: Beirut, Zahle and Sidon. All three campuses are affected by political and financial turbulences that the Lebanese scene is subjected to offence a foremost concern is how to steer the Institution to a safe harbor in case of local or regional turmoil.

In 2007, and after close to fifteen years of operation, AUST found itself in front of new givens dictated by the 2006 Israeli-Hizbollah war. There were serious concerns that enrolment will recede and that faculty and staff members will have to be reduced. Fortunately however, the fears were not warranted and enrolment did not drop. Consequently, confidence in the prevailing “system” increased and there was general satisfaction and faith in the course of action- especially academic and financial- that the University was following.

The international financial crisis that began in 2007 appeared -to many- to have missed Lebanon. This may have been true as far as the banking and construction sectors were concerned but it was certainly not true when many Arab and European tourists stayed put and opted not to vacation outside their countries. The effect of this decision was catastrophic to many enrolled students who worked in restaurants (and the like) in the summers and saw that they were laid off and thus could not raise enough money to pay their tuition fees. Still however, an enrolment drop did not materialize because the

recruiting efforts more than balanced the loss in student numbers incurred by the financial downturn.

Today, AUST appears to have withered the storm but turbulences never cease in Lebanon and the Middle East.

As an institution of young age it was very necessary to get the university community to collectively think about the following.

1. Who are we?
2. What do we want to become?
3. How do we get there?
4. How do we measure our success?

The four questions were to be discussed and analyzed by the faculty, staff and administrators and a composite picture was to be drafted as the strategic plan for the years 2010-2015.

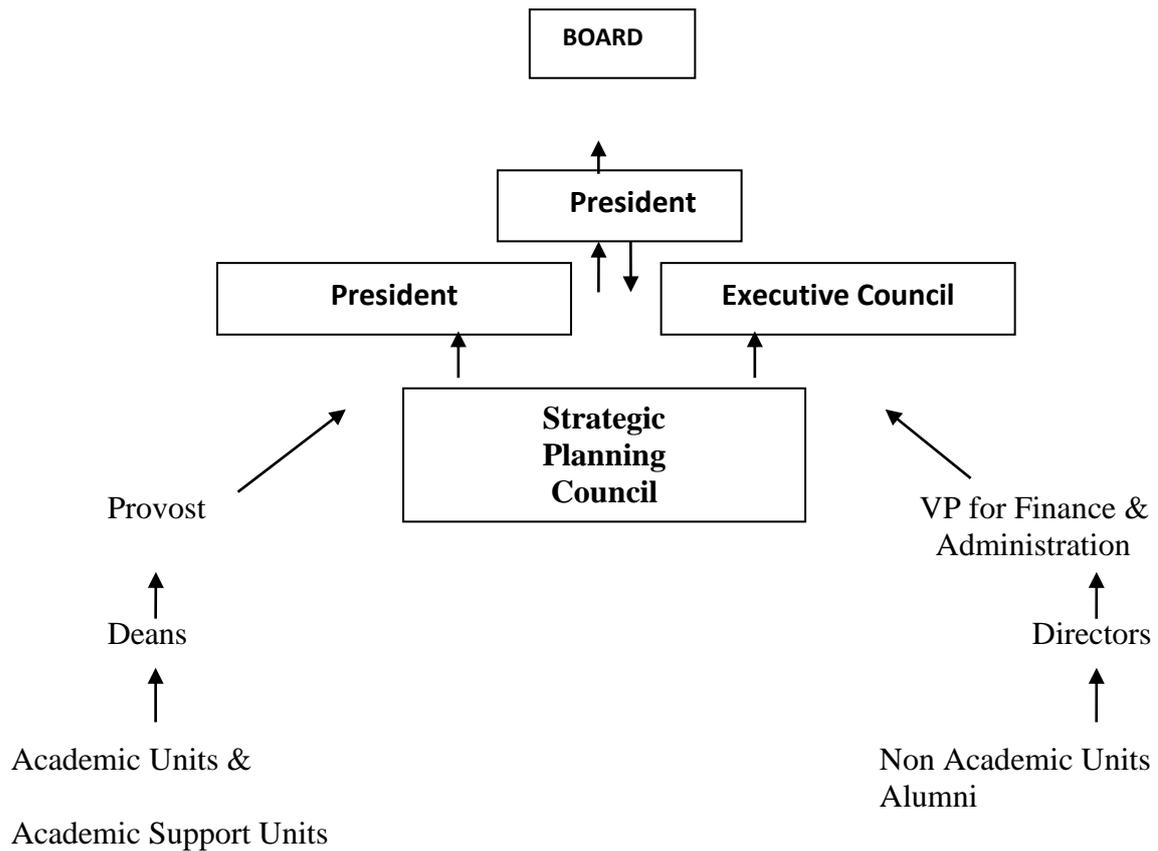
Approach & Planning Process

A strategic Planning Council was formed from the various components of the Institution including the Alumni, as important stakeholders in the future of the Institution.

The Council was co-chaired by the Provost and the Vice President for Finance and Administration and it had faculty representations from the four Faculties through the Deans as well as representatives from the Staff and Alumni. In addition, the Dean of Students & Admissions and the Registrar were appointed to the Council and the Librarian was co-opted to attend when discussions regarding the Library were taking place.

The members of the Council were to bring to the meetings the results of the deliberations of their respective units regarding the questions at hand. The Council coordinated the various reports and presented its findings and deliberations to the President who subjected all recommendations to the approval of the Executive Council which finalized the recommendations as they were taken to the Board by the President for final approval.

Schematically the approach was as follows:



II. AUST's Commitment

AUST reflects the concerns of its founders that American –style education should be within the reach of all qualified students. Hence, tuition fees are kept at a minimum level while providing financial aid to needy students without compromising the requirements for growth and excellence in academic delivery.

Quite simply: AUST is committed to provide very good value American-styled education at very affordable costs that do not jeopardize the academic process or curtail the adherence to the University's Mission.

Note: The various stakeholders of the University believe that the Commitment of the Institution is still valid and will probably remain valid in the foreseeable future.

The fact that some majors at AUST cost 50% and 75% less than their counterparts in “older institutions” was perceived by the stakeholders to engender two opposing effects:

- a. Students may join AUST because of the cost factor
- b. Students may shy away from AUST because they link the lower cost with a lower educational value.

All stakeholders believed that despite the young age of AUST, the market has favorably judged the graduates. Therefore, the gaining perception is that no trade off is taking place and that students are joining AUST to take advantage not only of the lower cost but also of the quality of education offered.

i. AUST’s Mission

The University’s Mission as developed by the Executive Council and approved by the Board was judged to be still valid.

The strategic Planning Council deliberated on whether changes should be incorporated on AUST’s Mission Statement and it was concluded that no changes are necessary.

Here below is the Mission Statement:

AUST reflects the concerns of its founders that American-styled university education should be within the reach of all qualified students. Hence, tuition fees are kept at a minimum level while providing financial aid to needy students without compromising the requirements for growth and excellence in academic delivery.

The American University of Science & Technology seeks to:

- Promote the search for the truth through the pursuit of knowledge and the application of its derivatives.
- Provide men and women from Lebanon, the Middle East, and the rest of the world with the opportunity to seek higher education (without discrimination

as to religion, gender, color, national origin, or socioeconomic background) in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and respect for the particularities of one's own culture and customs.

- Offer American-styled educational programs comparable with similar programs offered in the U.S.A. and focused to the needs of the geographical region that it serves.
- Instill in the minds and the hearts of its students the principles of good national and international citizenship so that they may become the agents of social justice, catalysts for universal peace and promoters of human rights.
- Ensure an intellectually rich atmosphere of academic pursuit dominated by responsible freedom and respect for the rights of others.
- Develop the student's analytical, critical, creative, and communication skills across the curriculum and in para-academic activities.
- Strive to become a model for the use of high technology in education in the region.
- Avail the students with social, cultural and educational programs and activities that will support and complement the traditional classroom teaching and learning processes.
- Work on graduating ecologically aware students who value the ecology of their countries and strive to ensure its preservation for future generations.
- Be a model of the pursuit of excellence in higher education in the region that it serves.

ii. AUST's Goals

Based on consultations with the members of the various units of AUST's community, the Strategic Planning Council developed the following goals for AUST:

1. Recruit, enroll, educate, and graduate students from recognized high schools in Lebanon and the Middle East. Make available to the enrolled students all possible requirements for success while underlining the development of analytical and innovative thinking, leadership traits, and entrepreneurial undertaking.
2. Recruit faculty members who are proficient in their fields and who are educators in addition to classroom teachers and researchers. Emphasis in the recruitment should be on American and European trained terminal degree holders with a proven record in teaching and research. Priority will be given to qualified Lebanese nationals who want to return to Lebanon to serve.
3. Recruit staff members who are university graduates with excellent communication skills in English, French and Arabic. Staff members are also to be computer proficient and, where necessary, well versed in technology.
4. Nurture a research environment and provide the means and policies for faculty involvement in research which will become a Sine Qua Non condition for academic promotion.
5. Enhance and strengthen the image of AUST with the public through engaging the public in special courses and events designed to further the academic proficiency of the general public and to bring the University closer to the public's attention. This is to be accomplished through a Continuing Education Program and through social and cultural events to which the public will be invited.
6. Develop closer and tighter relationships with international universities by increasing their numbers and by strengthening the programs that AUST shares with them.

AUST is believed to have gained quick recognition and respectability because of the contribution of its international partners. Efforts to increase, diversify and strengthen the international network was deemed by the Council as of paramount importance.

7. Improve and upgrade all aspects of information technology at AUST so as to be compatible with the academic process that is closely related to cutting edge IT.
8. Seek regional and program accreditation from international agencies (preferably US agencies) to complement the accreditation accorded by the Lebanese Government.

III. AUST & Its Environment

AUST is presently in three geographical locations in Lebanon. All three locations are sensitive to security turbulations that may threaten the good running of the academic process. This is an additional challenge that universities in stable countries are usually not concerned with. The facts are however, that because of the heterogeneous nature of the Lebanese landscape –religious and political- and because Lebanon lies on a dangerous fault line that is prone to regional wars at any time, proper planning in faculty recruitment is imperative in preventing unexpected shocks and shortages that are likely to obstruct, derail or , even possibly, stop the academic process.

Like nay university, AUST faces continual challenges that are normal for any institution that us on the move. Seven challenges were identified and discussed by the various groups. The results are summarized below.

i. Student Challenges

The Lebanese parents believe in private education. Lebanon is probably the only country the world where the number of students in the private schools compared to the public school is 2:1. This strong belief in private education is a positive factor in the recruitment of students to AUST. Still however, the Lebanese parents and high school graduates opt for the older-better known- universities ; an

option that leaves the new universities (AUST amongst them) as third or fourth choice institutions in case the older ones do not accept the applicants in question. As a normal consequence, the typical applicant to AUST is not from the upper percentages of his/her class in school.

AUST subjects all applicants to placement exams in English and Mathematics thus ensuring that the accepted applicant has the basic minimum requirements necessary in a college classroom. The desire and wish however, is to have AUST be the #1 choice institution for the parents and for the high school student.

The Strategic Planning Council deliberated on the various studies presented and arrived at the following:

- a. Student recruitment should be qualitative and quantitative. This means that the recruitment should reach the schools that are recognized as “better” schools and should see a total increase in the number of schools reached.
- b. Student recruiters should approach the top 20% of highschoolers in the “better” schools and present them with incentive packages to attract them to AUST.
- c. A strong outreach campaign that targets school directors is to be initiated with the purpose of familiarizing the directors with the physical facilities of AUST and the comparable cost advantage that their students will reap if they join AUST.
- d. Engage in aggressive recruitment campaigns in Jordan and the Guff Region.
- e. Organize special summer programs for accepted high school applicants so as to fill in any gaps in English language, Mathematics, note taking and use of the computer.
- f. Advertise the programs that AUST is a proven leader in more effectively because these programs receive students who perceive AUST as a first choice institution (clinical Laboratory Science, Fashion Design, Forensic Science...).

In the past few years the profile of the typical AUST student has been slowly changing due to the confidence that the market has shown in the graduates and also due to the public outreach programs and events that the University had executed with the general public in mind.

Improvement is still desired and possible. In the next five years, a system of qualitative and quantitative monitoring of the incoming students will be applied on a semester basis.

Being a university where more than half the students work on a full time or part time basis in order to pay their tuition fees, any increase in tuition fees poses a great challenge to the enrolled student as well as to the incoming student with limited means. The Strategic Planning Council (SPC) recommends that every increase in the cost of the credit hour should be accompanied with an increase in the financial aid budget so that part of the increase levied on the working student will be absorbed by a greater allocation of financial aid. Furthermore, the SPC sees that diversification of the sources of financial assistance will increase the amount received per student and the number of students who may qualify for financial aid. The SPC urges the concerned bodies to work out a plan to assure that financial aid does not continue to be solely dependent on student fees but rather to be buttressed by sources from outside the University such as donations by individuals, foundations, earmarked scholarships...etc.

One last challenge that faces AUST's enrolled students may come from a deteriorating security situation that hinders free movement and normal access to the university grounds. In this eventuality, AUST should be ready for non classical solutions that may be perceived as unorthodox and questionable. It is therefore advisable to plan for such emergencies and always assume that they shall happen tomorrow. Hence, faculty members are called upon to increase and diversify the evaluation criteria of the student's performance so that at any time an appreciable percentage of the evaluation of the student's mastery of the subject matter is available. In addition, faculty ought to devise new ways and means of evaluation and of delivery of subject matter that do not necessarily include a teacher and student in a classroom at AUST.

ii. Strategic Challenges

Discussions of the various committees dealt with this topic from the angle of the position of AUST among the (almost) fifty institutions of higher education that are licensed in Lebanon.

Strategically, AUST has positioned itself through the years – and as a result of its performance- in mid position between the “older” universities and the “new” universities. As such, AUST does not seem to be in an enviable situation since the “new” universities begrudge the fact that it has moved up the scale while they are still in the lower steps while the “old” universities are suspicious and worried of this new entity that has moved closer to their ranks and is charging much lower tuition fees (50%-75% less than some). Hence, it is not surprising to see that AUST finds itself alone in its struggle because of envy from one side and fear from the other.

In such a situation, what should be the course of action of AUST? This is the question that was thoroughly discussed and dissected among the committees and the various answers presented were practically identical.

In short, it was recommended that the present path seems to have brought the University to levels of respectability similar to those attained by the older universities through many many years of work; therefore, this path should be pursued with improvements where possible. As to the fees issue, it was decided to keep the fees low as per the wishes of the founders and as per the Mission of the Institution without having an acceptability complex as this relates to the older universities. It was also believed that it was far more important to provide good education at an affordable price than having a few more acceptances from older institutions since the job market and time will eventually solve the issue of acceptability.

It was also recommended that the policy of AUST not to enter into competition where the market allows it is a good and wise policy. Consequently, AUST is to offer majors that are needed but no other university had taken it upon itself to cater for the existing need (such as majors in fashion Design and Forensic

science). Furthermore, AUST is not to avoid competition except when the market's needs have not been fully met (such as in the Business major).

There were issues that the committees deemed necessary to tackle in order to inch AUST still higher on the scale and to prevent a backward slide. Foremost amongst these issues were the improvement of the parking situation and the improvement of the physical facilities. These two issues will be dealt with separately under the topic of "Physical Facilities".

The strategic position of AUST on regional and global scales was not tackled except from the angles of recognition from countries and from foreign universities as these may relate to student recruitment and to the equivalence of degrees held by AUST graduates in foreign countries. The Strategic Planning Committee saw in the previous networking efforts with foreign universities something to emulate, strengthen and increase and it was reported that the quick acceptance of AUST at the international level was largely due to the international network that began taking shape as of 2003.

Consequently the SPC urged the Administration to pursue this path and to increase the number of cooperating universities to 50 by the end of 5 years provided these cover diverse geographical locations in the world.

As to the recognition of AUST degrees, it was noted that all the degrees awarded by AUST are approved and recognized by the Lebanese Government. Most Arab countries have signed agreements of reciprocity with the Lebanese Government and as such they will recognize what is recognized by the Lebanese Government. Still however, there are countries like Saudi Arabia that insist on sending visiting teams before they recognize the equivalence of AUST degrees for Saudi nationals and more effort is required to bring about this issue to a happy end. The SPC recommends that during the next 5 years no case like KSA should remain untackled and the Administration is quite ready to engage fully in the necessary efforts to bring this issue to an end.

The strategic positioning regarding recruitment of students from outside Lebanon was deemed very closely related to the security situation prevailing in Lebanon.

Nevertheless, it was recommended that special short summer programs be offered for foreign students with priority enrolment given to universities with which AUST has signed agreements of cooperation and exchange.

iii. Financial Challenges

AUST is totally funded by student tuition. There is a real concern that as the cost of living gets higher, the University will see itself obliged to raise tuition fees. The bigger concern is the one related to security...what will happen if the situation deteriorates and there is a sudden drop in student enrolment?

The Committees saw that, given the unstable and unpredictable security situation, AUST should carve for itself a niche of financial security by working on establishing an endowment from fund raising and from any accrued excess in the budget.

The Strategic Planning Council sees that a 100% tuition driven university is not a safe option given the security conditions that have reigned over Lebanon for 35 years. It recommends to the Administration that a Development Office (DO) be established with the task of raising donations to the Institution. The Council sees that the DO should report to the President who is the Chief money raiser and developer. A plan is to be drafted by the President's Office that will establish the suggested Development Office with a 5 year scheme to change AUST from 100% student driven to 90%-85%.

At present, AUST is indebted to the commercial banks for about \$18,000,000 and will need a further loan of approximately 14-18 million US Dollars to construct and furnish the new building in the area of the basketball court and its immediate surroundings. With this amount of debt the challenge of AUST is not to resort to any raises in the tuition fees (and thus keeping the wishes and directives of the founders paramount in the planning process) and still be able to run efficiently and it is believed that with good budgeting and wise spending a plan could be implemented to pay the debt while keeping tuition fees raises to a minimum.

The real challenge –and nightmare- however is what will happen should the numbers of students decrease if the security conditions deteriorate!?

iv. Security Challenges

Perhaps the security situation in Lebanon is the one single factor that haunts all the University constituencies and which has a direct relationship on all the challenges that face the Institution. Despite the fact that the Lebanese have put the civil war behind them, the demographic and religious distribution of the Lebanese engenders constant turbulence which makes long range planning almost impossible.

Lack of security means decrease in the number of students which leads to less income which means budget cuts and consequently the potential implementation of the provisions of the budget becomes threatened in all its tributaries relating to growth, faculty recruitment ...etc.

The geographical positioning of the Beirut campus will easily be affected by any circulation curtailment that may take place along the (civil war) dividing lines. Consequently free movement of students and faculty will be seriously affected and the normal running of the academic process will become jeopardized.

It is therefore always wise to plan for the worst because it seems that the normal is the anomaly and the exception is the normal in Lebanon –and it has been so for some 30 years now. AUST needs to develop means and methods that will guarantee that enrolled students are continually evaluated and that instructors will be able to issue a grade in emergencies that may arise. In the next year there shall be meetings and discussions to draft a formal procedure for such eventualities.

v. Governance Challenges

AUST began as a family managed and administered institution. The owners of the buildings and grounds are the family members and the top management team is comprised of the President and two of three Vice presidents belong to the founding family.

Changing the governance in a family business is usually not without risks. The family however has agreed- willingly- to have a governing Board and has agreed to incorporate in the procedures and policies articles that empower the Board to elect and appoint the President and to approve the appointments of Vice Presidents and Deans.

Still however, and despite all the measures that have been taken and implemented, there is a serious existential worry that a family owned business may face the future of many family businesses that collapse with the coming of the third generation. The various committees have discussed this issue in great detail especially because the founder –the present president- may at any time choose to retire thus leaving a vacuum that the Board has to fill. The SPC has commended the steps made by the owners to empower the Board and to institutionalize the management operation but at the same time it has opted not to get involved in this issue directly while recommending that the Board be proactive and vigilant as of now.

vi. Staff Challenges

Five issues were considered by the various groups:

- a. Recruitment and retention
- b. Salaries and benefits
- c. Working load
- d. Promotions
- e. Security conditions

The profile of the AUST staff member has been steadily improving but there is always room for improvement. The various committees have recommended that all new staff members are to be computer literate and where the use of computers is imperative they should be proficient. They also recommended training sessions for individuals who are already hired and are computer illiterate (some of the parking attendants and workers). Training sessions are also to become obligatory for those who do not speak or understand English.

The salaries of staff workers were judged to be in line with the salaries that are paid in comparable institutions and for comparable positions. The benefits were also found to be in line with the prevailing laws in Lebanon, namely the Labor Law, to which all staff members adhere.

The working loads were also found to be in line with the provisions of the Lebanese Labor Law. The SPC commended the University for going beyond the provisions of the Law providing extra help in cases of hospitalization and/or death.

The issue of promotions monopolized a good part of the discussions of the various committees because there are no clear rules and criteria for promotions and it was believed that this issue needs to be improved so as to regulate and standardize procedures of promotion in rank and raises in salaries. The SPC took note of the procedure followed in 2009 to award salary increases and indicated satisfaction with the newly implemented system of recourse to the immediate supervisor for input while implementing measures to reduce nepotism and prejudice. The SPC believes that the issue of promotion and salary raises is one that should be followed in the next 5 years until it is well regulated and defined.

The nightmare of deteriorating security conditions has also dominated discussions because staff members worry about being away from home during troubles and the university needs to have a quasi normal staff support in such times. The SPC has sieved the various worries and recommendations and has come up with its own recommendations that the HR Department and representatives from the various academic faculties convene to come up with a plan that guarantees the smooth sailing of services in difficult times. Care is to be exercised so as to ensure that no unnecessary risks be taken and at the same time no unfounded fears to be exercised.

vii. Faculty Challenges

Five issues were discussed regarding the challenges that face the faculty body and they were:

- a. Recruitment of Faculty
- b. Salaries & Benefits
- c. Course Loads
- d. Promotions
- e. Security Conditions

Starting with the inalienable right of faculty members to practice their profession in an atmosphere of freedom, the concerned units reevaluated the Board Policies that deal with Rights & Responsibilities and with Faculty Affairs and they agreed that the Policies and By-laws are satisfactory and do not need any changes. These units then proceeded to discuss the five items mentioned above and came up with the following recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee:

- a. Recruitment of faculty members as spelled out in the Faculty By-laws is quite adequate whether in prioritization or in the involvement of the departmental faculty members. Advertising vacant positions, receiving applications, prioritization of the applications until a short list is produced and finally recommending three names to the Provost for negotiations was deemed still adequate. The only new input that will be added to the existing procedure is the emphasis on recruitment through specialized journals since it was believed that the Chronicle for Higher Education may not cater to specific majors as adequately as specialized journals.

Recommended also, was effecting a sizeable increase in the number of dedicated full timers who are terminal degree holders (in contrast with part timers with full loads). The SPC dealt with this issue and has recommended that at least 15 new full timers with terminal degrees be recruited in the next five years.

- b. The salaries, compensations and benefits were discussed thoroughly and it was believed that the salaries of faculty members who were recruited when AUST

began operation are usually within the accepted means with a few that are considerably higher.

The SPC recommends that a salary scale be drafted for full timers and of part timers with flexibility to digress from this scale (up to 20%) in cases of need and rarity of specialists in the field. It was also suggested that the part timers scale take into consideration seniority in rank.

The fringe benefits, however, were seen as lacking and therefore the issue should be handled in such a way that will assure fairness to the faculty and to the Institution. The overriding feeling was that salaries may be high but the lack of fringe benefits makes them effectively low if reasonable fringe benefits are factored in. The administration was requested to deal with this important issue because it affects the faculty recruitment process, the general atmosphere in the University and the reputation of the Institution in Lebanon and outside Lebanon. The SPC took note of the fact that the Administration has the faculty's financial security in mind and that within the scope of this plan (5years) it will discuss the feasibility of implementing a collective medical insurance for faculty, subsidy for children's education and the implementation of a retirement plan.

The issue of faculty offices and the possibility of having individualized private offices was discussed but no recommendations were made. It should however be mentioned that the new building facility will have private offices for faculty. These will be assigned with prioritization as to professorial ranks and administrative positions.

- c. The issue of course loads for full timers proved to be one of great concern. Lengthy discussions ensued and the results that came as recommendations to the SPC asked that the Board Policies be adhered to and that the present moratorium allowing exceptions be discontinued as soon as feasible.

The launching of AUST was not a well studied launch and it not proceed according to a set and well studied plan. AUST began operation when there was a severe shortage of qualified faculty in Lebanon. Those who walked in seeking

appointments and were qualified were contracted with high salaries and high teaching loads. Their contracts saw provisions for high annual percentage increases and in a few years the figures were considerably higher than other salaries in Lebanon or the USA. Now that expertise is available and faculty can be recruited as per the approved loads for full timers, the University shall appoint new faculty members in alignment with the Policy.

Should a sudden and quick implementation of the Policy on existing full timers be carried out, the University will be paying very high salaries as per the ranks of the existing faculty. It should be noted that reducing the loads will be welcomed but reducing salaries is never a pleasant issue. Consequently, the University shall keep the salaries unchanged and shall gradually work on reducing the loads by using a combination of strategies that will reduce loads for administrative appointments, for involvement in research and for special academic assignments. The beginning shall be by affecting a gradual decrease of course loads for Deans and Directors, followed by Chairs and then Coordinators. Five or six years will effectively remedy the situation.

- d. There are Board approved promotion criteria which stipulate the existence of a Peer Review Committee. AUST, however, does not have enough faculty members in the higher professorial ranks to form this committee. Recourse to outside expertise and consultation was resorted to and in the two cases that were submitted for promotion, the rank change was granted.

Since some sort of visibility in research is required for promotion in rank, some argue that there is little time for research given the high teaching and advising loads and this may be true at present but once loads are decreased to within the confines of the Board rules this argument shall cease to exist.

Arguments about funds for research have been also submitted to the Strategic Planning Council and this is a fair request that will be dealt with in budget allocations.

AUST has an embryonic research age but it also has the intent and determination to walk the path. The next 5 years shall see the policies that support research activated and implemented with a special dedicated budget.

IV. Goals: Objectives and Actions

In developing the strategic plan for the next five years, AUST has identified certain strategic goals that it would like to attain. To arrive at these goals, AUST has set objectives within each goal that is to be achieved and it has defined the actions to be pursued to reach the objectives. There are nine identifiable objectives that AUST sees itself called upon to fulfill in the next five years and they are:

1. Improving the Faculty Corps
2. Improving the learning and teaching educational process
3. Increasing the emphasis on research
4. Improving the physical facilities
5. Raising the competence of staff members
6. Diversifying its academic offerings
7. Intensifying and widening the scope of its public engagement and outreach
8. Extending and strengthening its cooperation with international universities
9. Identifying a special niche in Lebanon's educational and social picture

i. Faculty

- a. Recruit highly qualified faculty members with terminal degrees
- b. Offer competitive salaries and fringe benefits that will provide AUST with a competitive edge in hiring and retention of faculty members.
- c. Develop and implement policies that will reduce attrition of good faculty members and enhance their retention
- d. Develop policies and procedures to identify and reward outstanding teachers and researchers
- e. Provide support for holding academic conferences and for attending them outside AUST
- f. Maintain diverse corps

ii. Educational Process

- a. Ensure that the educational process is student centered
- b. Strengthen the depth and breadth of academic majors
- c. Pay particular attention to weak students
- d. Foster an atmosphere inquisitiveness
- e. Develop international experience opportunities
- f. Focus on education and learning vs. pure teaching
- g. Assist the education process with a strong cultural program
- h. Maintain and respect the Founders wishes of good education at reasonable cost

iii. Research

- a. Emphasize the importance of research in support of education
- b. Develop the necessary policies that will promote research
- c. Encourage interdisciplinary research
- d. Encourage joint research with faculty members from cooperating universities
- e. Allocate a special budget for research
- f. Make research visibility requirement for promotion in rank
- g. Encourage faculty members to seek research funding
- h. Emphasize applied research for solving specific issues pertaining to Lebanon

iv. Physical Facilities

- a. Provide faculty and students with modern facilities that support the educational process
- b. Provide administrators, faculty and staff with proper offices
- c. Support classroom learning with audiovisual and electronic systems
- d. Enhance cultural life with theater and lecture facilities
- e. Support the sports life of the university community with closed playgrounds
- f. House the new library in suitable intelligent facilities
- g. Maintain and embellish the gardens and the building facades constantly
- h. Make available parking areas to all members of the university community

v. Staff

- a. Recruit highly qualified staff members with good computer and communication skills
- b. Develop policies that will attract and help maintain good staff members
- c. Provide staff members with opportunities of growth and retooling
- d. Develop a system to encourage and reward staff members

vi. Academic Offerings

- a. Diversify and increase the academic offerings
- b. Focus on new majors that Lebanon and the Middle east are in need of
- c. Seek to provide each major with an edge
- d. Strengthen all academic offerings with ties with other universities
- e. Offer professional technological certificates in the Continuing Education Program
- f. Diversify the international universities to include all continents
- g. Foster and promote joint research activities

vii. Public Engagement

- a. Draft a yearly intensive program of public engagement
- b. Engage all faculties and support units in the Public engagement program
- c. Project AUST as an institution that cares about the public good
- d. Develop outreach and support programs for the public
- e. Attract the public to the university grounds through cultural and educational programs

viii. International Universities

- a. Increase the number of universities with which UST cooperates
- b. Work on making agreements with international universities a two street
- c. Engage the administrators, faculty and students of cooperating universities with activities and conferences at AUST

- d. Diversify the international universities to include all continents
- e. Foster and promote joint research activities

ix. Special Niche

- a. Identify a special academic area which AUST will work on to become a center of excellence
- b. Support (a) above by all means possible

V. Strategic Initiatives for the Next Five Years

With aspiration to become a leading contributor to tertiary education in Lebanon and the Middle East and a highly respected institution in Lebanon where young age is not a reason for lack of experience but rather for trying harder to achieve, certain strategic initiatives were identified which if well and successfully pursued will help AUST to leap frog into achieving its aspiration. These strategic initiatives need to be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the constituencies of the Institution especially the faculty, the academic administration and the staff and students where feasible.

Five main strategic frameworks were identified and these are summarized in the following items 1 to 5 and later detailed as 9 Strategic Initiatives with the process that will be followed.

AUST is to:

1. Develop plans for strengthening, increasing, and empowering the faculty corps by recruiting highly qualified terminal degree holders and setting the necessary plans and system that will reduce attrition and at the same time guarantee a good retirement conditions for retirees.
2. Improve the University's record on diversity among faculty, staff and students

In brief, the record of AUST is quite good on the issue of diversity since hiring and recruiting are done with total disregard to all factors except qualifications. Still however, once could improve the record within the givens and the apprehensions that may be dictated by security conditions.

3. Improve the infrastructure and the physical facilities

No one building of the nine contiguous buildings of AUST was built to house classrooms and laboratories. The university needs new buildings designed for specific educational purposes with the supporting infrastructures which range from the parking spaces, gardens sports courts, theaters, studios, laboratories to top of the line phone system, IT....

4. Develop and improve a far reaching outreach program that is academic, educational and cultural with emphasis on the involvement of the alumni as stakeholders and the immediate community around the campuses (as possible and desired feeders and supporters).

5. Strengthen and extend the network of international universities with which AUST cooperated so as to derive maximum advantages for the young students involved as well as for the faculty involved.

Strategic Initiatives and Processes

Initiative 1.

Live up to the University's motto: "Commitment to Excellence" in learning, teaching, research and services".

To achieve this initiative as well as its promise and commitment AUST shall:

- a. Strengthen its full time and part time faculty corps by recruiting and hiring highly qualified terminal degree holders and setting the necessary conditions and system that will reduce attrition and, at the same time, guarantee good retirement conditions for retirees.

- b. Direct the class situation so that student involvement is maximized; and effect a definitive shift to student centered learning with emphasis on critical thinking and analysis.
- c. Engage the faculty in a regular process of updating and improving curriculae so that they are compatible with those adopted in leading US universities without losing sight of the specifics of Lebanon and the region, where applicable.
- d. Maintain the Liberal Arts core and make sure that it is multicultural instead of being Judeochristian centered.
- e. Study the possibility of requiring one foreign language as part of the Liberal Arts core.
- f. Make visibility in research (especially applied research) a Sine Qua Non condition for promotion.
- g. Pursue IACBE accreditation and investigate the possibility of submitting the computer science program and the CCE program for accreditation.
- h. Strengthen the existing “weak student” help program and analyze its effectiveness.
- i. Propose new majors that are needed in the country and region.
- j. Develop a system of awards for excellence in teaching and research as well as for public service.
- k. Develop and implement a training system for staffers and another one for workers.

Initiative 2.

Improve and strengthen the internal participative governance of the University.

AUST shall prioritize participative management through:

- a. Invigorating the faculty councils and requiring a minimum of one meeting per month with minutes to be circulated to the College constituencies.
- b. Including staff representation in the faculty councils
- c. Including student representation on faculty councils and waiting for Board approval for implementation as this is directly related to the politico-security situation in the country.

- d. Institutionalizing the faculty meeting as a body for the collective voice of the faculty and activate the positions of Faculty Representative and Secretary; coordinating with the Board the implementation of the attendance of the Faculty Representative of the Board meetings.
- e. Formalizing the formation of student clubs with faculty mentorship so as to promote leadership and further student engagement in various activities.

Initiative 3.

Develop a systemic and coordinated recruitment and advising program to cover Lebanon and choice international locations.

AUST shall institute an enrolment management program which will:

- a. Widen the scope of the student recruitment process in Lebanon so as to include all the area of the Lebanese Republic and involve alumni of AUST in the recruitment process in their old schools.
- b. Involve AUST faculty members in recruiting prospective students to their programs both inside and outside Lebanon.
- c. Create financial incentives so as to attract highly qualified students from high schools
- d. Establish training programs in the summer that precedes (first semester) enrolment so as to acquaint new students with the requirements of college life.
- e. Offer free Intensive English courses for accepted new students especially for students coming from international locations and from public schools.
- f. Offer new international students a complete package of services that start at the airport and include close academic advising and follow up
- g. Establish specific cultural and touristic programs for international students and a mentorship (big brother) program by Lebanese students.

Initiative 4.

Build, maintain and operate a state of the art new building that does honor to the name of the Institution.

The University shall construct two adjacent buildings on a plot that it owns.

This new construction shall:

- a. Attempt to create a quasi paperless academic community by resorting to advanced IT in every aspect possible.
- b. Include computerized systems to record student and faculty attendance without disturbing the classroom.
- c. Network the business computer center with centers of financial services.
- d. Update the computer facilities and the IT services so that they remain at all times at the cutting edge of technology.
- e. Provide administrators, faculty members and staffers with proper intelligent offices.
- f. Develop 4-6 smart classrooms with the necessary technology including ability for international conferences.
- g. Build a technologically advanced theater (300-400 person capacity) to serve the academic process.

Initiative 5.

Extend the network of AUST with international universities and create an outreach program that complements the educational role of AUST. Starting from the premise that no university is an island AUST shall.

- a. Develop a Continuing Education program geared to adult individuals.
- b. Develop a yearly cultural program for the immediate community of AUST that will familiarize parents with the various aspects of the Institution.
- c. Study the feasibility of instituting an evening college within the Continuing Education Program.
- d. Make of AUST a lighthouse and a beacon for theater performances in the areas where it functions.

- e. Increase the member of International Universities with which AUST cooperated and invigorate the exchange of students and faculty in both directions.

Initiative 6.

Establish an Alumni Association that will support the various functions and mission of the university. Reaching the alumni and making them real and active stakeholders in the future of the university by:

- a. Drafting a Constitution and Bylaws for an alumni association that will work and operate in cooperation with the development office of AUST.
- b. Establishing branches for the Alumni Association in the Lebanese cities and countries where there are sizeable numbers of graduates.
- c. Encourage the Alumni association (via its branches) to organize activities so as to raise funds for financial aid as well as other projects.
- d. Develop a complete database for all alumni (and others who qualify to join the Association) and keep them informed and updated on AUST news and plans.
- e. Study the possibility of guaranteed admissions to sons and daughters of Alumni while observing a non-discriminatory policy.
- f. Establish yearly homecomings
- g. Discuss the possibility of inviting the President of the Alumni Association to the Board meetings ...and in what capacity.

Initiative 7.

Devise and implement a plan to contribute to the greening of the Lebanon and to instill respect for the environment.

- a. Orient students to the importance of re-greening Lebanon
- b. Organize student clubs for the greening activities
- c. Develop a yearly calendar for the planning trees and for organizing workshops in high schools with the sole purpose of affecting a national awakening.

Initiative 8.

Develop the information technology sector so as to become synonymous with AUST.

- a. Incorporate IT in every course possible across the curriculum
- b. Implement et changes that will reduce paper use
- c. Emphasize the use of IT in communications between the various university constituencies especially between students and faculty.

Initiative 9.

Establish coordinated long range plans that will be road maps for development and growth.

- a. Establish an academic LRP that will chart the path of growth so as to include curricular reviews of existing programs and feasibility studies for implementation of new programs.
- b. Establish physical facilities LRP that will accompany the changes dictated by the academic LRP.
- c. Establish a financial LRP that will accompany the changes dictated by the academic LP and the Physical faculties LRP and insure that the University budget involved allocations for faculty and student research.

VI. Assessment of Progress

There shall be qualitative and quantitative indicators for following and assessing the progress of the goals, objectives and strategic initiatives.

In the next five years there shall be:

A. Surveys

- i. Faculty Surveys
- ii. Staff Surveys
- iii. Student Surveys
- iv. Alumni Surveys
- v. Employers Surveys

B. Tracking of Progress (quantitative and qualitative) in:

- i. Faculty hiring
- ii. Student recruitment
- iii. Networking with international Universities
- iv. Faculty research
- v. Faculty fringe benefits
- vi. Faculty teaching loads
- vii. Greening efforts
- viii. Diversity (students, faculty and staff)
- ix. Faculty councils
- x. Development efforts
- xi. Physical facilities and IT
- xii. Outreach and continuing education