

SHARED GOVERNANCE AT THE LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

I- Definition

Shared governance is a value system as well as a set of policies and procedures based on a culture of inclusiveness and participation embodied in procedures that allow faculty, staff, and students to actively participate in the decision-making process at the University. Thus, the institution's system of governance involves the involvement of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular and proper communication among them. It is to be approached in the spirit of balancing participation in decision making with accountability.

II- Structure of Shared Governance

The shared governance structure consists of established governance bodies including the Board of Trustees (BOT), the President's Cabinet (PC), the Council of Deans (CD), The Faculty Senate, the Staff Advisory Council, the Student Council, the academic and administrative councils and committees that are elected by faculty and staff to represent them at the department, school and university levels. Additionally, shared governance is guided by academic public regulators of higher education in Lebanon and the USA, accreditation associations, donors and alumni. The composition, mandate, and communication lines of such bodies should be established to avoid any confusion or gaps in the operations. In addition, faculty at large can participate in shared governance through the general faculty meetings. Staff and students participate through their various offices and organizational structures. Other constituents, particularly alumni, have their role to play as well.

III- Process of Shared Governance

The Faculty Process

The Faculty Senate has the prerogatives to make recommendations on all faculty-related issues. Faculty councils and committees play a major role in governance in the academic process. School Deans individually and through the CD headed by the Provost, are considered the guardians of academia. Thus, on questions of faculty status, as in other matters where the faculty has primary responsibility, the PC and the CD should work together with the Faculty Senate in ways that are truly collaborative and mutually respectful and supportive. As per Personnel Policy, any amendments related to faculty matters and contracts should be circulated to the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Welfare and Promotion Council for their feedback. The approval of any changes will require the positive recommendation of the

Council of Deans, the Provost, and the President. Amendments to the Faculty Bylaws are to be voted on by the Faculty at large.

The Staff Process

The LAU Staff Advisory Council (SAC) shall participate in matters related to staff members and to the University Governance. The Staff Advisory Council proposes recommendations on staff-related matters, in close coordination with HR. The approval of SAC proposed changes will require the positive recommendation of HR, VPHRUS, and the President.

The Student Process

LAU campus and University student councils shall contribute to governance at LAU in multiple ways, including shaping student life at the university. Elected students serve, and are voting or advisory members of key university committees including but not limited to the University Student Council, the Campus Student Council, the Campus Life Council, the Academic School Councils as student representatives, the University Councils such as the Library, Financial Aid, Admission, Curriculum and Integrity. The student councils should make policy recommendations in collaboration with other governing bodies with regards to student related policies and procedures in many areas of their education, as well as, recommendations on the budgets allocated to tuition fees, financial aid, student clubs and other student organizations.

As the largest constituency of the university and with the most at stake, LAU students provide a much needed perspective in the shared governance model. LAU, known for its student centeredness and student empowerment, can and should be at the forefront of prioritizing student governance in Lebanon and the MENA region.

IV- Periodic and systematic review of Shared Governance

So that the shared governance culture is embraced by all the constituencies at LAU, proper implementation marked by good reciprocal communication, transparency and collaboration ought to be adopted. The ultimate source of shared governance is the written University and School documents, such as, bylaws, policies and procedures. Thus, for the purpose of continuous improvement, a periodic and systematic review of the structure and process of shared governance should be implemented. It is recommended that the President forms a University Shared Governance Committee composed of all LAU constituencies, to follow up on the implementation, assessment, and improvement of the shared governance process at LAU.