



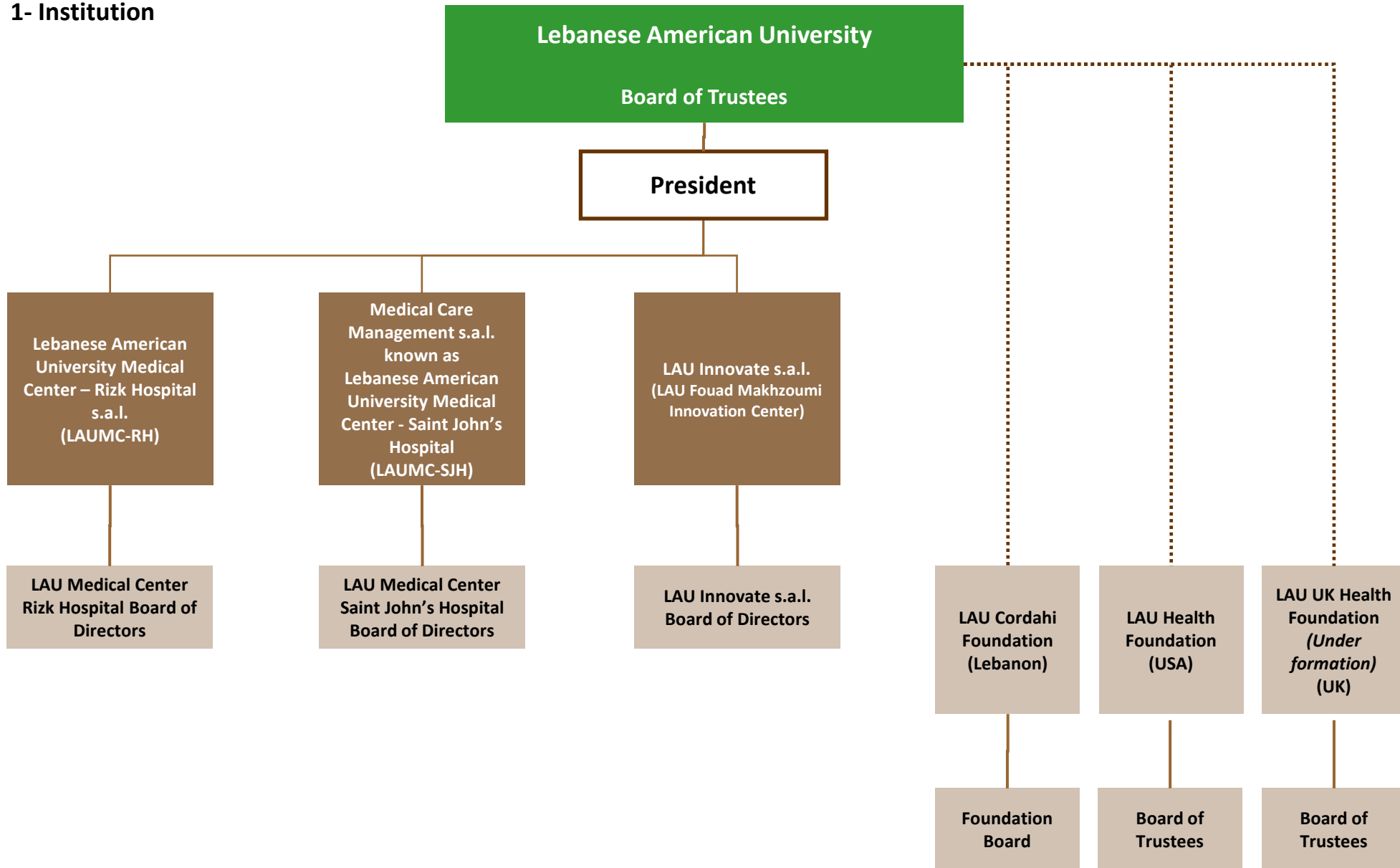
# COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION SELF-STUDY

SUBMITTED TO THE  
NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION  
OF HIGHER EDUCATION (NECHE)

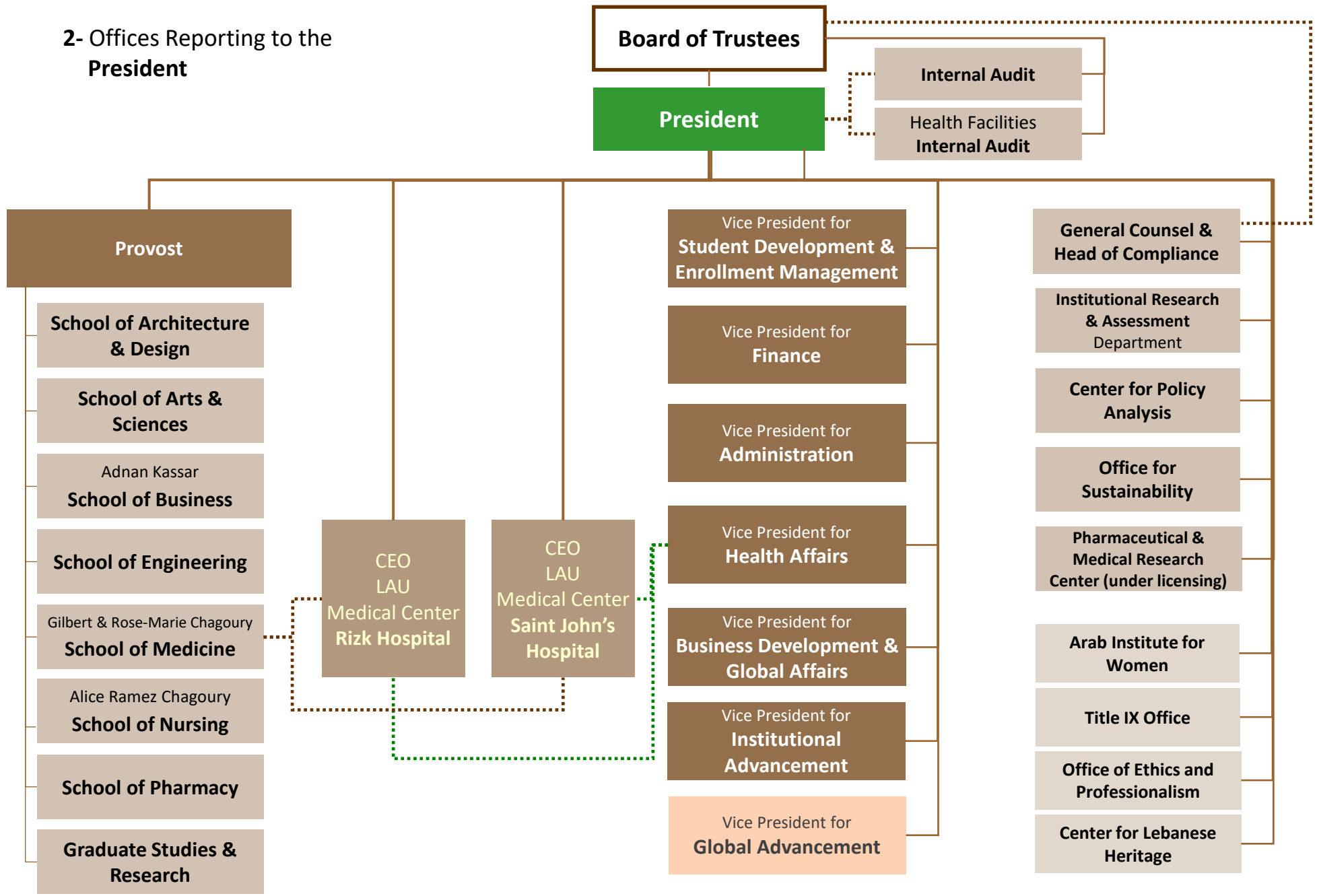
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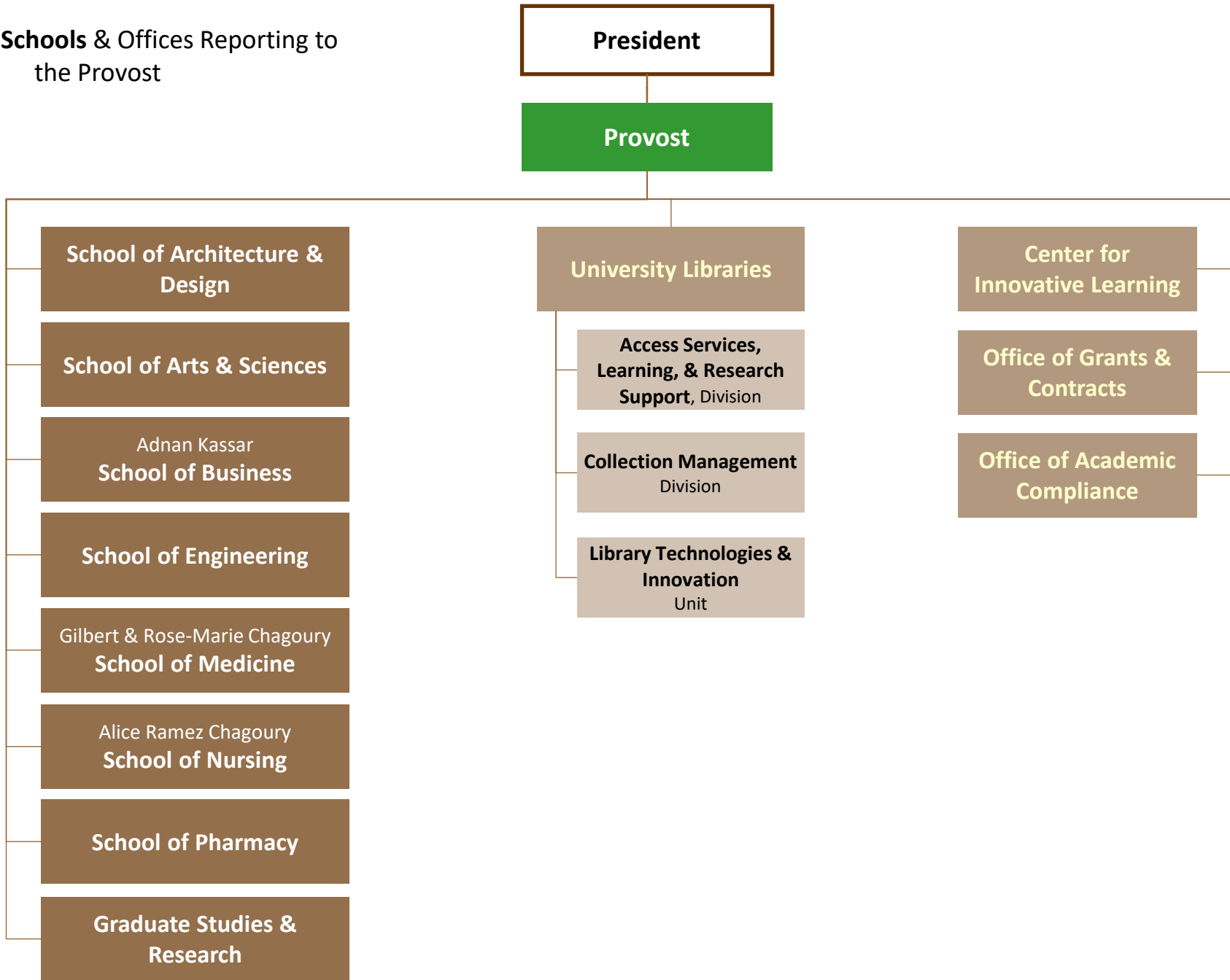
# 1- Institution



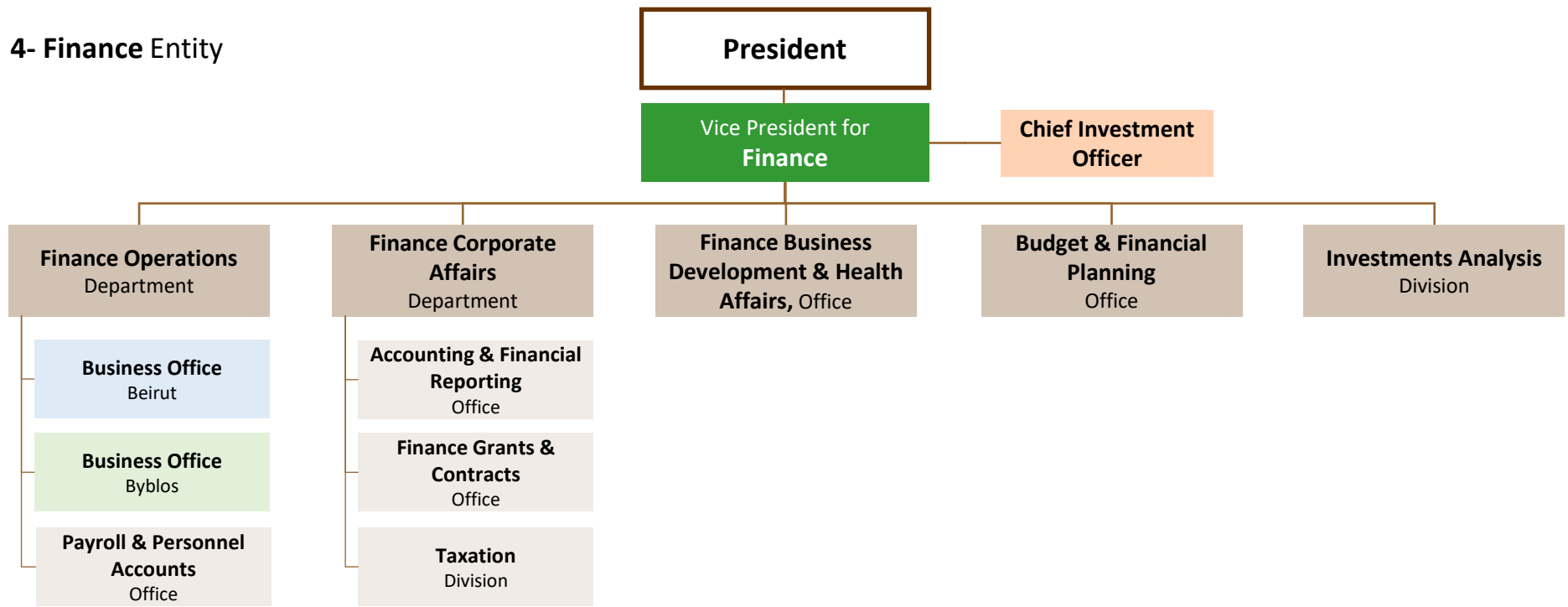
## 2- Offices Reporting to the President



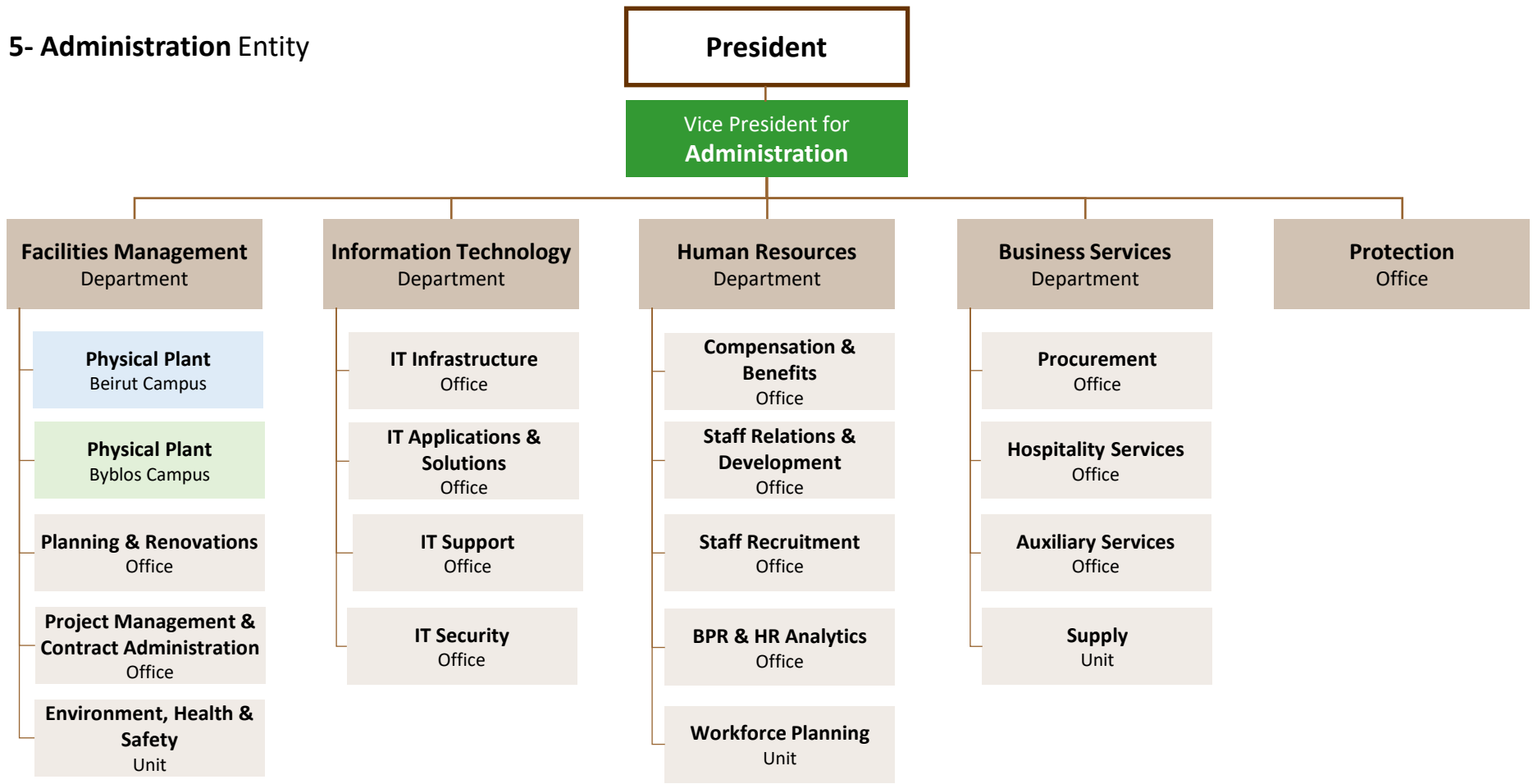
### 3- Schools & Offices Reporting to the Provost



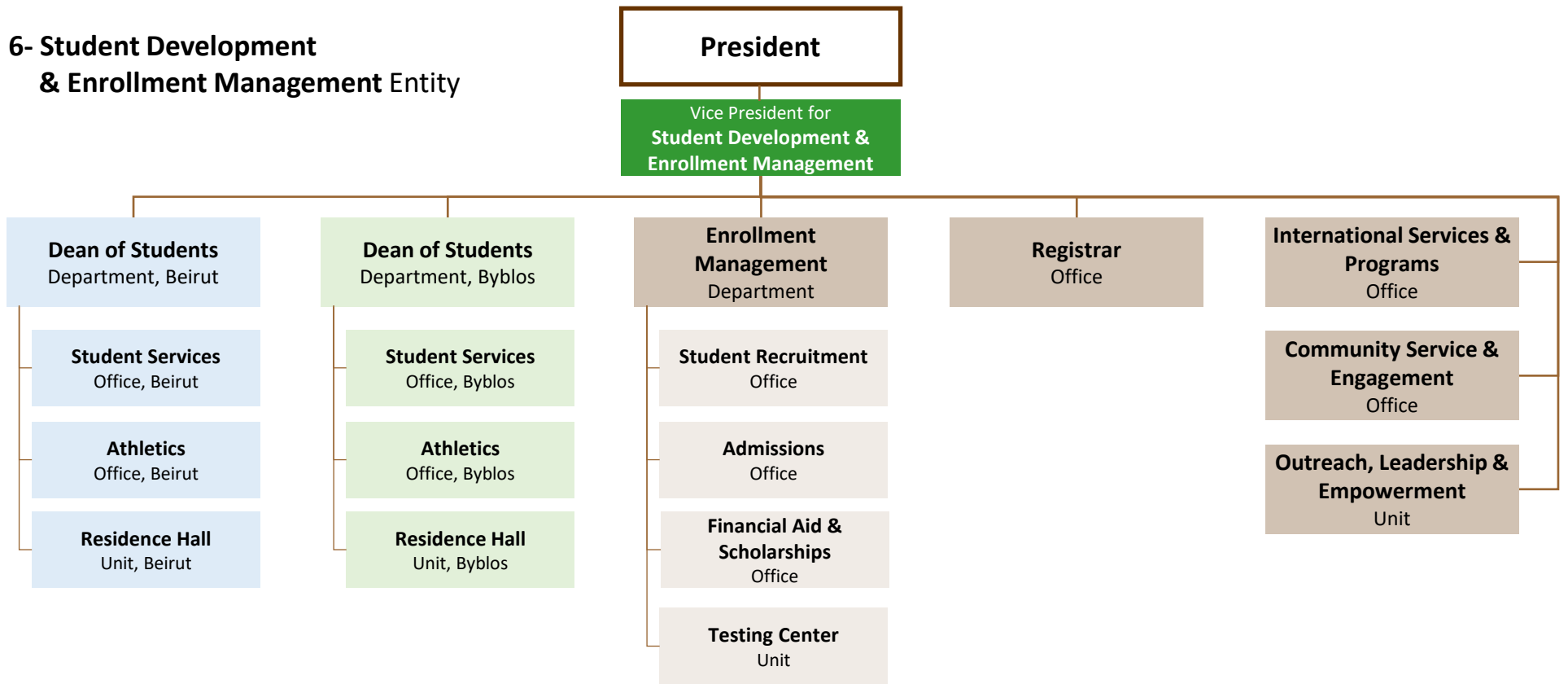
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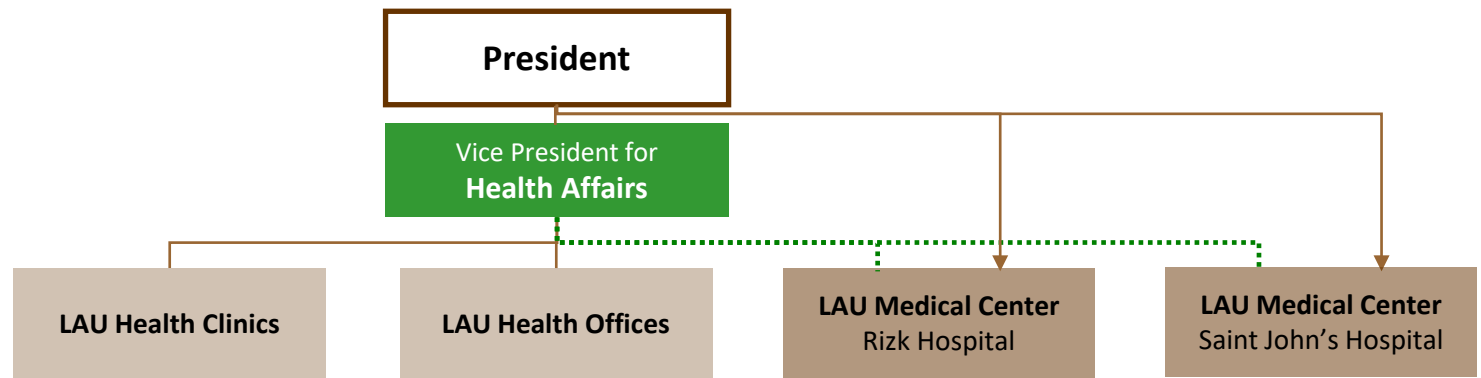
# 5- Administration Entity



## 6- Student Development & Enrollment Management Entity

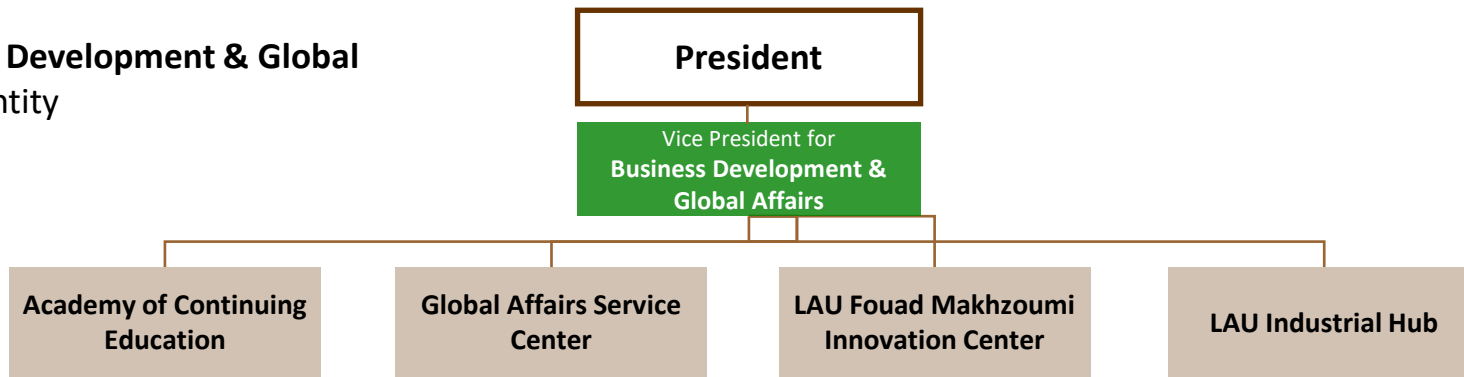


## 7- Health Affairs Entity

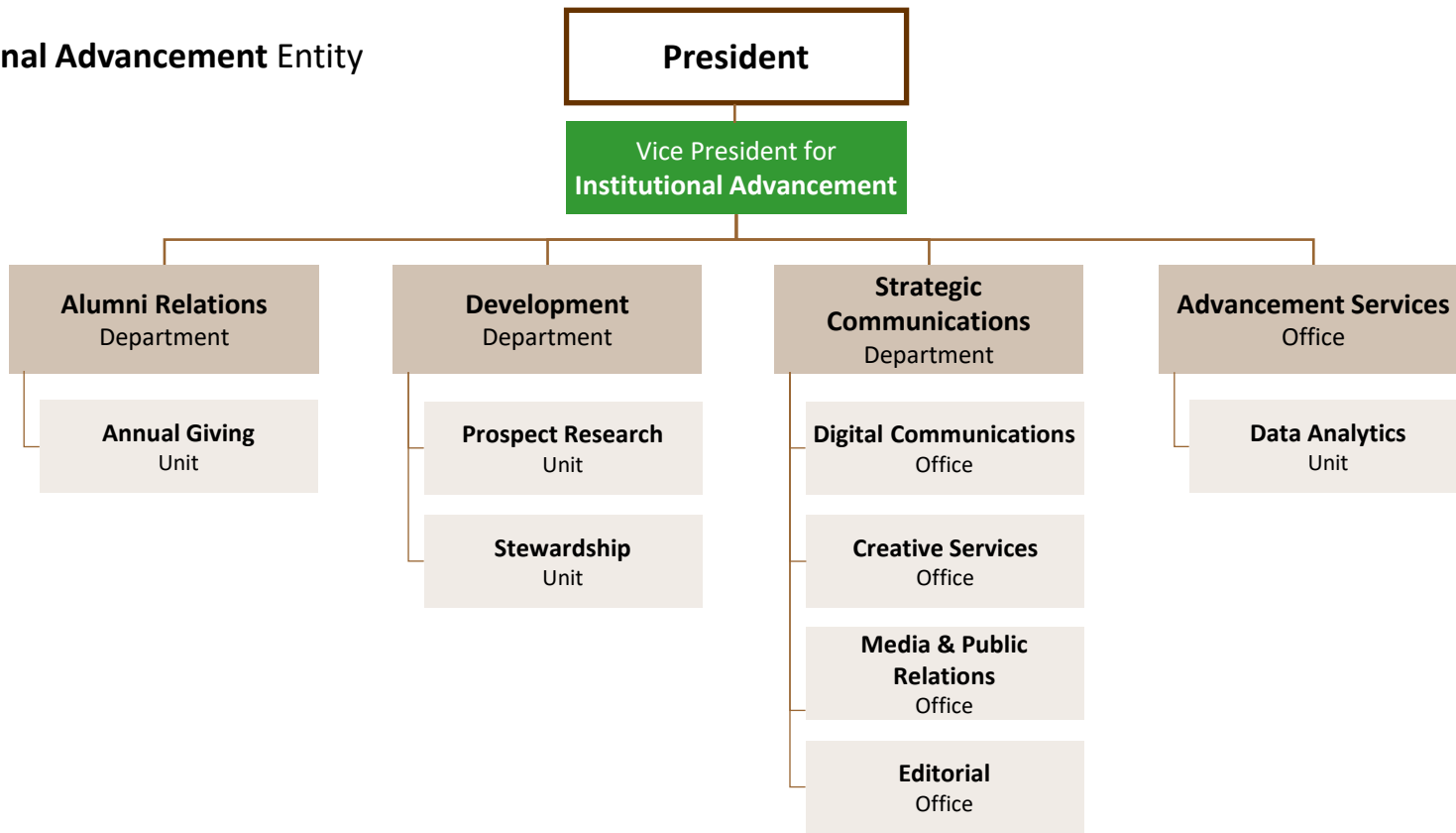




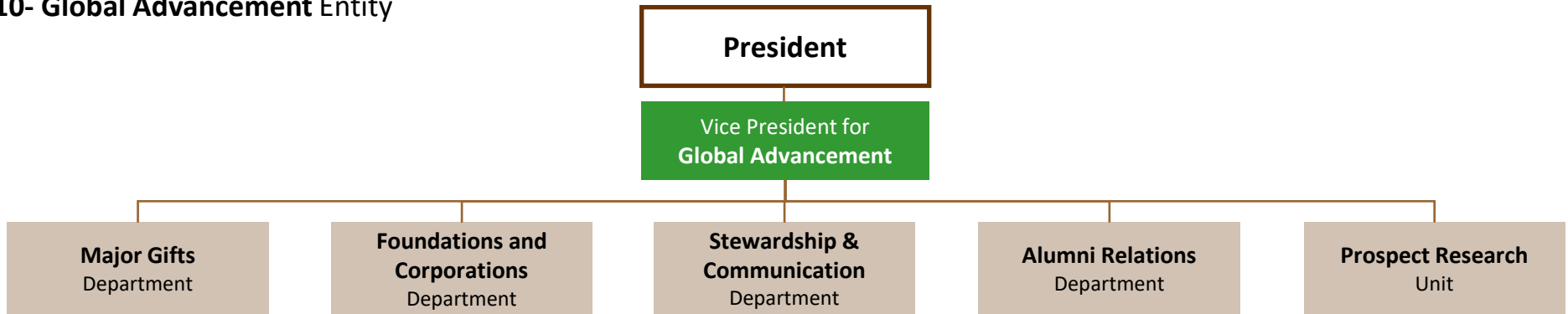
## 8- Business Development & Global Affairs Entity



## 9- Institutional Advancement Entity



## 10- Global Advancement Entity



# LAU COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION SELF-STUDY 2024

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## Institutional Characteristics Form

## Table of NECHE Actions, Items of Special Attention, or Concerns

Date of Commission Letter	Detailed Actions, Items of Special Attention or Concerns	NECHE Standards Cited in Letter	Self-Study Page Numbers
May 27, 2020	<i>maintaining financial stability with emphasis on achieving its financial goals as they pertain to hospital operations;</i>	7.4 7.5 7.14	pp.62-69
	<i>embarking on a strategic planning process to address the period beyond its current strategic plan SPIII 2017-2022;</i>	2.3 2.4	p. 9 p. 12 pp. 14-20
	<i>transitioning to a more research-active faculty and assessing the impact of this transition on student learning outcomes.</i>	6.20 8.6 8.8 8.10	pp. 35-36 p.56 pp.78-87 pp.95-99
April 19, 2023	<i>meeting its goals for enrollment, with attention to the University's graduate and online programs, and assessing the effectiveness of its financial aid strategies;</i>	Students, Statement of the Standard 7.10	pp.47-49 pp.67-68
	<i>enhancing the institution's liquidity and financial stability, including an update on its plans to diversify revenue through fundraising and other activities outside of Lebanon;</i>	7.4 7.5 7.6 7.14	p.24 pp.62-69
	<i>ensuring sufficient faculty and staff to accomplish its mission.</i>	3.12 4.22 5.17 6.2 7.1	p.15 p.26 p.39 p.57 p.61

## Introduction

The Lebanese American University (LAU)'s comprehensive self-study 2024 is the product of significant time and the effort of individuals and offices across the institution. Planning for the self-study started soon after the official letter was received from NECHE in May 27, 2020 and proceeded in earnest during AY 2022-23, particularly during late Fall 2022 and throughout Spring and Summer 2023, continuing during Fall 2023, when the bulk of the data was compiled and analyzed and the different sections of the self-study were drafted. The self-study underwent various stages of writing, revising, and editing, as will be elaborated below. The official NECHE letter of April 19, 2023 was considered and addressed during revisions of the Standard narratives as it requested that the institution address additional areas of emphases. The table of NECHE actions in the previous section displays all the items of special attention listed in the two above-mentioned NECHE letters.

A Steering Committee comprising individuals from the various academic schools and offices/departments across the university was formed in Fall 2022 and completed the bulk of the work in evaluating, documenting, and ultimately writing their respective sections over the past 18-24 months. Each Steering Committee member (except for the Chair and Deputy Chair) chaired at least one Standard Committee or Subcommittee. The Steering Committee met monthly throughout Spring and Summer 2023 and as needed during AY 2023-24. The complete list of the names and titles of all members of the Steering Committee and Standard Committees and Subcommittees is found at the end of this section.

The Department of Institutional Research and Assessment (DIRA) supported the process throughout with the provision of institutional data and its interpretation. Drafts of the Standard narratives were shared for feedback with the Steering Committee, faculty at large, staff, alumni, and students. The draft was also presented to the President's Cabinet (PC) and the Council of Deans (CD) for their review and input. The report was then compiled per NECHE guidelines and submitted to the Provost, Dr. George Nasr, and to the President, Dr. Michel Mawad, for final review. Finally, in line with NECHE required procedure, public notice of the upcoming visit and an opportunity for public comments was made on our website in mid-August 2024, more than 10 weeks before the visit date.

As was the case with our previous self-studies and interim reports, going through the process was a great learning experience. This substantial undertaking of preparing the self-study was approached with a spirit of transparency and honed through LAU's now institutionalized practice of self-reflection and assessment. It was particularly encouraging to see through the process that we are now, as an LAU community, very attuned to the culture of accreditation as one of evaluation and continuous improvement. NECHE accreditation has transformed LAU irreversibly away from a mere "quality assurance" paradigm into a "collaborative assessment" paradigm where quality is not seen as a static end state but rather a dynamic interaction of experiences, practices, and methodologies that enable us to describe, assess, and project progress effectively.

We were able to keep to our schedule and to our planned self-study timeline while changes in leadership of various units of the institution were taking place, including the successful launch and conclusion of a Presidential Search, and in the context of various external and situational challenges in Lebanon during the past few years. Acknowledging that the pursuit of quality is an ongoing practice, we took the opportunity to use the comprehensive evaluation self-study process as we have always done, to take stock of our strengths and weaknesses as well as to plan for the future.



## **List of Self-Study Steering Committee and Standard Committees Members:**

### **Steering Committee:**

Chair: George Nasr, Provost

Deputy Chair: Rula Diab, Assistant Provost for Accreditation and Academic Operations

Standard 1 & Standard 3 Chair: Haidar Harmanani, Professor, Dean, School of Arts & Sciences (SoAS)

Standard 2 & Area of Emphasis 2 Chair: Michel Khoury, Dean, School of Engineering (SOE)

Standard 3 (included with Standard 1)

Standard 4 Subcommittee 1 Chair: Rony Khnayzer, Associate Professor, Chairperson, SoAS

Standard 4 Subcommittee 2 Chair: Walid Marrouch, Professor, AKSOB, Assistant Dean, Graduate Studies & Research (GSR)

Standard 4 Subcommittee 3 Chair: Annie Lajinian-Magarian, Senior University Registrar

Standard 5 Chair: Abdo Ghie, AVP for Enrollment Management

Standard 6 Chair: Rima Bahous, Associate Professor, Assistant Dean, SoAS

Standard 7 Chair: Jordan Srour, Assistant Provost for Educational Resources and Innovation

Standard 8 Chair: Diane Nauffal, Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Assessment

Standard 9 Chair: Sami Baroudi, Professor, SoAS

Area of Emphasis 1\* Co-Chairs: Charles Abou Rjeily, VP for Finance and Tony Zreik, Vice President for Health Affairs

Area of Emphasis 2 (included with Standard 2)

Area of Emphasis 3 Chair: Samer Saab, Dean, GSR

\*Areas of Emphases are in line with the May 27, 2020 Letter

### **Standards Committees:**

#### **Standard 1: Mission and Purposes**

#### **& Standard 3: Organization and Governance**

Haidar Harmanani, Professor, Associate Dean, SoAS – Chair

Ghassan Dibeh, Professor, Associate Dean, Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB)

Lamis Karaoui, Clinical Associate Professor, Assistant Dean, School of Pharmacy (SOP)

Abdul Nasser Kassar, Senate Chair, Associate Professor, AKSOB

#### **Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation**

#### **& Area of Emphasis 2: Embarking on a strategic planning process to address the period beyond [our] current strategic plan *SPIII 2017-2022***

Michel Khoury, Dean, SOE – Chair

Roy Kanbar, Associate Professor, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, SOP

Silva Karkouljian, Associate Professor/Director of MBA Program, AKSOB

Melissa Plourde Khoury, Associate Professor, School of Architecture & Design (SArD)

Sima Tokajian, Professor, SoAS

#### **Standard 4 Subcommittee 1: Assuring Academic Quality, Undergraduate Degree Programs, General Education, The Major or Concentration**

Rony Khnayzer, Associate Professor, Chairperson, SoAS – Chair

Caesar Abi Shdid, Associate Professor, Associate Dean, SOE

Reine Azzi, Lecturer, LAC Coordinator, SoAS

Hani Dimassi, Associate Professor, SOP

Said Ladki, AKSOB

**Standard 4 Subcommittee 2: Graduate Degree Programs**

Walid Marrouch, Professor, AKSOB, Assistant Dean, GSR – Chair  
Chadi Abou Rjeily, Professor, SOE  
Barbar Akle, Associate Provost for International Education and Programs  
Mohammad Mroueh, Professor, Chair, SOP  
Sandra Rizk, Professor, SoAS

**Standard 4 Subcommittee 3: Transfer Credit and Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit**

Annie Lajinian-Magarian, Senior University Registrar – Chair  
Rita Doumit, Associate Professor, Clinical Coordinator, School of Nursing (SON)  
Jimmy Issa, Associate Professor, Chairperson, SOE  
Hussein Hassan, Associate Professor, SoAS, Director of Academic Compliance

**Standard 5: Students**

Abdo Ghie, Assistant VP for Enrollment Management – Chair  
Jad Abdallah, Dean of Students  
Dina Abdul Rahman, Director of International Services  
Nancy Chedid, Clinical Assistant Professor, Director of Student Affairs, School of Medicine (SOM)  
Robin Taleb, Associate Professor, Assistant Dean, SoAS

**Standard 6: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship**

Rima Bahous, Associate Professor, Assistant Dean, SoAS – Chair  
Tamina Rizk, Clinical Assistant Professor, SOM  
Maroun Daccache, Associate Professor, Chair, SARd  
Salpie Djoundourian, Associate Professor, Associate Dean, AKSOB  
Mazen Tabbara, Associate Professor, SOE

**Standard 7: Institutional Resources**

Jordan Srour, Assistant Provost for Educational Resources and Innovation – Chair  
Camille Abou Nasr, Assistant VP for Information Technology  
Charbel Aoun, Assistant VP for Human Resources  
Michel Chahine, Assistant VP for Finance-Operations  
George Hamouche, Assistant VP for Facilities Management  
Giselle Pempedjian, Senior Instructor, SoAS  
Yasmine Taan, Associate Professor, Chair, SARd

**Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness**

Diane Nauffal, Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Assessment – Chair  
Samar Aad, Assistant Professor, AKSOB  
Imad Btaiche, Professor, SOP  
Maha Habre, Clinical Assistant Professor, SON  
Leila Issa, Associate Professor, Program Coordinator, SoAS  
Dani Tannir, Associate Professor, Program Coordinator, SOE

**Standard 9: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure**

Sami Baroudi, Professor, SoAS – Chair  
Maya Farah, Associate Professor, Chair, AKSOB  
Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss, Title IX Director  
Joseph Stephan, Assistant Professor, SOM, IRB Director  
Salim Tannous, AVP for Strategic Communications (StratCom)

**Area of Emphasis 1: Maintaining financial stability with emphasis on achieving [our] financial goals as they pertain to hospital operations**

Charles Abou Rjeily, Vice President for Finance – Co-Chair

Tony Zreik, Vice President for Health Affairs– Co-Chair

Dr. Sola Bahous, SOM Dean

Mr. Roy El Metni, Director of Finance for Business Development & Health Affairs (BDHA)

**Area of Emphasis 2: Embarking on a strategic planning process to address the period beyond [our] current strategic plan *SPIII 2017-2022* - included with Standard 2 Committee**

**Area of Emphasis 3: Transitioning to a more research-active faculty and assessing the impact of this transition on student learning outcomes**

Samer Saab, Dean, GSR - Chair

Guy Assaker, Professor, AKSOB

Wissam Fawaz, Professor, SOE

Diane Nauffal, Assistant to the President for Institutional Research and Assessment

Sama Sleiman, Associate Professor, Chair, SoAS

## Institutional Overview

LAU has a long history as an institution that seeks to provide a solid liberal arts-based education. Established as the first school for girls in the then Ottoman Empire, the institution is proudly celebrating its Centennial during the current year 2024. Our [Centennial website](#) is devoted to the special events, memories, and initiatives marking our first century, and this [online timeline](#) illustrates key events in our history. LAU became a junior college for women in the 1920s, and then in 1955, the College was chartered by the Board of Regents of the State University of New York. In 1974, the College became co-educational and assumed a new name: Beirut University College, which it kept until it took its current name in 1995: Lebanese American University. The protracted Lebanese war threatened the very viability of the institution, but LAU managed to rise to the occasion and faced the challenges with the support of faculty, staff, and students, guided by the spirit of its founders. By the early 1990s, the university had two campuses in Beirut and in Byblos. Up to the early 1990s, program offerings were mainly majors in the Schools of Arts and Sciences and Business. Engineering, Architecture, and Pharmacy were added in the 1990s, and Schools of Medicine and Nursing were established in the 2000s. In 2009, a teaching hospital was acquired and LAU was first granted accreditation by NECHE (NEASC at the time). Finally, a New York Academic Center (NYAC) was added in 2013.

Due to its roots, LAU was for a long time the “University of Choice” for women’s education in Lebanon and the region. Its transition to co-education transformed its reputation to that of an institution that is student-centered, and the percentage of Lebanese students relative to total enrollment increased during the 1980s; whereas Lebanese nationals numbered under 45% in the mid-1970s, they now stand at 80%. Regional enrollment now counts for about 10%, and the remaining 10% come from other parts of the world. Lebanese students belong to the mosaic of 17 different religious denominations that comprise the country. Many of our Lebanese students come from middle class families and from private secondary schools that provide the quality education needed to join LAU; however, for at least the past decade and particularly during the past five years, LAU has increased its merit and need-based student scholarships with the aim of being more inclusive and catering to students from various regions and backgrounds in Lebanon.

In August 2004, the new university President at the time, Dr. Joseph Jabbra, committed himself to creating a university-wide strategic planning process that focused on the sustainability of the institution through building on our strengths while working to develop new opportunities for excellence. Twenty years later, we have embarked on our fourth Strategic Plan (SPIV), and the university has institutionalized planning and shared governance that includes not only faculty but also staff and students. A culture of innovation has been nurtured in teaching, scholarship, and community engagement, and the School of Medicine and medical centers are now part and parcel of the university. Our SPIV embraces the following major pillars: Enhancing our scholarly footprint and visibility, educating for impact, innovating for learning, and advancing beyond boundaries.

In line with its long tradition of planning for all contingencies, LAU was able to successfully shift the vast majority of its classes to online and hybrid modes during the local political unrest in Fall 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic at the time. As an attestation to the quality and success of those initiatives, in November 2020 the Commission accepted our distance education review report, granting LAU approval to offer all courses and academic programs via distance education through Spring 2022. A year and a half later, in March 2022, in response to LAU’s distance education progress report submitted in January 2022, the Commission granted the University general approval to offer distance education programming within the scope of its mission. Since then, we have expanded our online offerings to six programs.

As the term of the current President Dr. Michel Mawad nears its completion by the end of September 2024, the University has embarked on a comprehensive, transparent, and rigorous Presidential Search that was completed successfully with the announcement in June 2024 of the appointment of Dr. Chaouki Abdallah as the next President of the University. Dr. Abdallah, Executive Vice President for Research at Georgia Tech since 2018, has extensive administrative experience including serving as Provost for the University of New Mexico (UNM) for 7 years and as President for UNM prior to moving to Georgia Tech. He has a world-class academic reputation and serves on many academic, philanthropic, and industry boards, and brings to LAU an immense international network. President Mawad has expressed his full support for Dr. Abdallah and his desire to work closely with him to ensure a successful transition.

Today, as it celebrates [the past 100 years](#) and looks ahead to its next century, LAU is better known than ever before nationally and internationally for its effective and innovative teaching, the accomplishments of its students and alumni, its dedicated and talented staff, faculty scholarship, and ongoing service to the wider community. Continuing in our long tradition of planning for all contingencies, we will remain proactive, resourceful, and innovative in securely protecting our future viability in a country and region facing chronic economic and political challenges.

## Standard One: Mission and Purposes

### Description

The Lebanese American University (LAU) is an inclusive institution of higher education that serves the people of Lebanon and beyond. Established initially in 1835 by the Presbyterian missionaries as the *American School of Girls*, LAU evolved from a two-year college, *American Junior College for Women* (1924), to a four-year college, *Beirut College for Women* (1950). The Beirut College for Women was chartered by the *Board of Regents of the State University of New York* in 1955. The institution underwent a major transformation in 1975 when it became the co-educational *Beirut University College* (BUC), offering multiple undergraduate degrees. The institution became the *Lebanese American University* in 1995. Today, LAU comprises the *School of Arts and Sciences*, the *School of Architecture and Design*, the *School of Business*, the *School of Pharmacy*, the *School of Engineering*, the *School of Medicine*, and the *School of Nursing*. The University spans two campuses in Lebanon and includes two university hospitals and an academic center in New York City.

The Lebanese American University (LAU) is a student-centered community that positions itself as a blend of a thriving undergraduate education rooted in the liberal arts tradition and a rising research institution devoted to excellence in creating, applying, and disseminating knowledge. LAU is committed to a signature education that promotes sustainability, critical thinking, and creativity. LAU offers traditional disciplines that are coupled with a novel interdisciplinary liberal arts curriculum that aims to educate the whole person with a commitment to citizenship and public service. The University balances its commitments to teaching and research to ensure the formation of well-rounded students and future leaders in a rapidly evolving world. LAU continues to pursue innovation in pedagogy by providing experiential learning that ensures lifelong engagement and digital skills.

Historically, LAU's mission statement was long, detailing descriptions of the institution's founding, curricular emphases, unique culture, and services. It also included an explanation of what LAU stood for and what it intended its students to become. In 2004, the University underwent the first comprehensive, university-wide strategic planning process. As part of the strategic planning process, the university revised the mission to deliver a clear message about its identity. The revised mission was approved in September 2005.

In 2011 and as part of the University's second strategic plan, LAU revised the mission statement to emphasize citizenship, resulting in the current [mission statement](#):

Lebanese American University is committed to academic excellence, student centeredness, civic engagement, the advancement of scholarship, the education of the whole person, and the formation of leaders in a diverse world.

The mission was formally adopted by the University on May 3, 2011, and the mission statement was reflected in the last comprehensive evaluation NEASC accreditation self-study in 2014.

LAU's [mission statement](#) appears in several institutional publications as well as on the university website. It provides direction to academic entities at the institution in curricula, activities, and student learning. This is best exhibited by the schools' own missions, which are all in line with the above mission.

Drawing on the institution's statement of purpose, LAU aims to seek truth, to respect human dignity, and to promote equity, diversity and inclusivity. LAU is committed to academic excellence and scholarship while promoting social justice and democracy. Driven by its mission statement, LAU aims to provide students with a contemporary education based on innovative approaches. The University aims to attract, develop, and retain diverse and qualified students who are supported by faculty who excel in teaching and research. LAU strives to develop students who are citizens of a complex world, sharing a deep appreciation of peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

Building on the mission statement, the current Strategic Plan SPIV: 2022-2027 tackles the challenges that LAU has faced due to the prevailing economic meltdown and the ensuing political instability. The Strategic Plan recommends four strategic objectives on engagement, learning, and research under four major pillars. It allows the University to continue to fulfill its academic and social mission and sends a clear message regarding its values and identity as an institution. SPIV is discussed in detail in Standard Two.

### Appraisal

The Lebanese American University mission is clearly and concisely stated. It reflects LAU’s beliefs and philosophy in educating the whole person in a diverse world with a focus on academic excellence, student centeredness, civic engagement, leadership, and research. The University’s leadership uses the mission as the basis for planning.

Although the mission has been regularly reviewed during every accreditation cycle, the review has been anecdotal. The involvement by the stakeholders has been limited to the senior administrators as well as to a select group of faculty. On May 18, 2023, the university approved a formal review process that 1) defines all pertinent stakeholders, 2) specifies the review timeline, and 3) delineates the review responsibility across the University. Consequently, the mission was assessed in 2023. Most of the stakeholders indicated that they were aware of the mission statement (72.12%), the majority of whom agreed with it (97.03%). The detailed percentages among the different LAU stakeholders are shown in Figure 1.1. The review process and detailed report can also be reviewed in the Standard One electronic workroom.

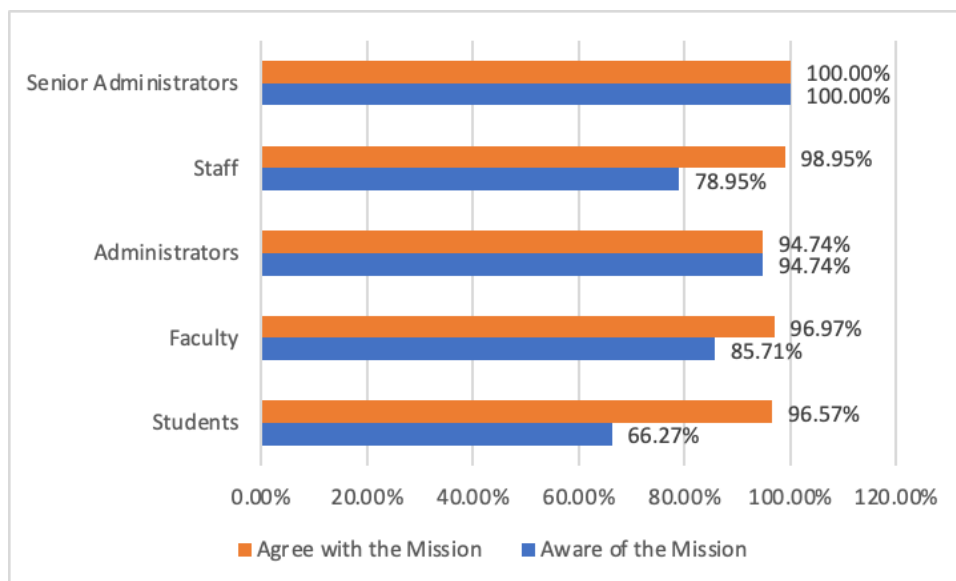


Figure 1.1 LAU Stakeholders Mission Awareness and Acceptance

The LAU mission is accomplished through the missions of its various schools, thanks to a hierarchical relationship among these missions: LAU sets the overall vision, and each individual school aligns its mission to complement and contribute to the achievement of that overarching goal. This alignment ensures a cohesive and unified approach within the educational institution, fostering a sense of unity and a shared purpose among its various components. We conducted a mapping of the Schools' mission to the LAU mission, which clearly illustrates the consistency, particularly when it comes to academic excellence, student centeredness, and civic engagement. The complete report is available in the Standard One electronic workroom.

To continue achieving its mission, the Lebanese American University regularly recruits research-active faculty who are also excellent educators. The students' profiles continue to improve while the graduates continue to excel at all job levels with many occupying leadership positions in major companies. Programs are regularly assessed and evaluated to ensure they stay relevant.

The Lebanese American University continues to support and introduce initiatives that highlight its distinctive character and reflect the needs of society as iterated in the mission. For example, a new [Liberal Arts and Science \(LAS\)](#) program, coined LAU Insignia, was introduced in 2021. The new LAS program provides a signature education that builds on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the fifth industrial revolution. The LAS realizes that ending poverty and other deprivations must align together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. More details on the LAS are provided in Standard Four. In addition, the Nutrition Program is the only dietetics education program with a concentration in *Interprofessional Education (IPE)* while the *Pharmacy Program* has been recognized by ACPE for its noteworthy practices on IPE. All these issues have a profound impact on the challenges that the society will encounter over the next decade and are at the heart of the LAU mission statement.

### Projection

- ✓ On May 18, 2023, the university approved a formal review process of the mission as outlined in the above appraisal. As a consequence, the mission was assessed in 2023 as discussed in the above appraisal. The mission will be regularly assessed every 5 years.
- ✓ As a follow up to the appraisal of the stakeholders' awareness of the mission, the University will re-introduce the mission to all stakeholders through awareness campaigns, as well as during students' orientation and faculty onboarding. These campaigns will also involve the University communication arm, [Strategic Communications \(StratCom\)](#), as well as the [Office of the Provost](#) and the [Office of the Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Management \(SDEM\)](#).



## Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

### Planning

#### Description

LAU has a long history of strategic planning, having recently embarked on the implementation of our fourth 5-year institutional Strategic Plan, [SPIV 2022-2027](#). Strategic Planning is utilized as the core decision-making tool within all of the schools at LAU. While each school homes in on specificities distinct to their respective programs and may employ various modalities in their strategic plan, all school strategic plans align with fundamental aspects of and strategies used to develop the university strategic plan. In the process of developing school-specific strategic plans, priorities, budgets, and resources are considered and often reevaluated. Each school ensures the successful implementation of its strategic plan by assigning champions and conducting regular follow-ups and annual evaluations.

Our [fourth Strategic Plan SPIV \(2022-2027\)](#) encompasses a set of strategic objectives that aim to drive engagement, foster learning, and advance research. These objectives have been translated into practical and actionable steps, forming four key pillars: Pillar I - Enhancing Scholarly Footprint and Visibility, Pillar II - Education for Impact, Pillar III - Inspiring Innovation, and Pillar IV - Advancing Education beyond Boundaries. To ensure the effective execution of the strategic plan, a comprehensive schedule was developed, outlining specific timelines and allocation of essential resources, including financial, human, facilities, and technological resources. This process involved close collaboration with key stakeholders such as the IT, Enrollment, Center for Innovative Learning (CIL), Facilities, and Finance, with crucial contributions from faculty through surveys, SWOT analyses, the Council of Deans (CD), and the President's Cabinet (PC). The strategic plan SPIV 2022-2027 underwent a thorough review and ultimately received final approval from the Board of Trustees in September 2022.

Despite the deteriorating economic situation over the past few years particularly during 2019-2022, SDEM was able to successfully maintain stable numbers of applicants and enrollment, due to synchronized team work between SDEM and LAU Schools and to a significant increase in the financial aid and scholarship budget. In addition, the Dean of Students Office (DOS), [Outreach & Civic Engagement \(OCE\)](#), [Office of International Services and Programs](#), [Athletics Department](#), and the Career Services unit offer a wide range of student services and co-curricular experiences, with the aim of providing students' guidance, advising, mentorship, civic engagement, leadership and professional development opportunities, as well as a wide range of services in a safe environment. More details are provided in Standard Five.

[The Department of Institutional Research and Assessment \(DIRA\)](#) plays a vital role in supporting the institution's mission and goals, as well as the expectations of its stakeholders – students, faculty, staff, governing bodies and external constituents. It provides decision-support data and analysis needed in planning and policy-formulation processes, accreditation and institutional effectiveness activities at all levels and across all entities of the university. DIRA ensures the institution is on track to meet its defined targets by developing a clear plan each year. DIRA's annual plan outlines the specific activities that need to be undertaken to fulfil its responsibilities effectively. These activities include conducting comprehensive research studies, gathering and analyzing relevant data, evaluating programs and services, assessing student outcomes and supporting strategic planning initiatives. Furthermore, DIRA safeguards the integrity and consistency of data across LAU's databases. By ensuring the purposefulness of its activities, DIRA actively contributes to the institution's growth and success.

Human Resources (HR) at LAU actively collaborates with key units within the university to develop both short-term and long-term staffing plans. Moreover, HR receives a skeletal plan for staff training and development based on performance appraisals. One of the pivotal activities driven by the strategic plan is the recruitment and retention of highly qualified personnel. This process is guided by identified needs and a Staff Retention Framework, which has been approved by the Board of Trustees (BOT) and was developed in 2023.

DIRA uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to support LAU's continuous improvement and quality enhancement efforts. It provides statistics and trend analysis on admissions, enrollment, degrees conferred and student success indicators such as retention, progression, completion, and employability. This information is publicly available on the [DIRA website](#) and in its annual publications, including the [LAU Fact Book](#), Facts and Figures Booklet and the LAU Facts Brochure. To ensure quality outcomes, DIRA benchmarks LAU's performance on a range of performance indicators with that of its peers.

Information Technology (IT) continuously measures the effectiveness of its planning of major projects and IT services. Major projects always start with a project plan. During project execution, a working team meets regularly to assess and manage the project and the plan. Typical issues faced during team meetings are related to coordination between the departments requesting the project and the implementation team. Satisfaction with IT services provided is measured through surveys and help desk tickets reviews. The latest LAU strategic plan, SPIV, outlines the need for increased use of technology in teaching and learning, specifically in the classrooms.

Additionally, IT reports every 6 months through the VP of administration the latest state of IT. This includes accomplishments as well new projects based on LAU users' needs as well as projects of a technical nature needed to sustain its services at LAU. Planning for academic computing facilities is done at the school level and budgets set according to the schools' computing needs. In general, 20% of specialized computing facilities and 16% of general computing facilities are upgraded per year to yield a full upgrade every five or six years respectively. The IT planning process is flexible enough to accommodate the unpredictable influences of change and opportunity and to be on par with the fast-changing information technology sector.

The Finance department at LAU emphasizes institutional effectiveness and planning through a rigorous risk assessment and management approach that informs decision-making, aligns mission and strategic goals with financial processes, and addresses overdependence on tuition by actively pursuing diversified revenue sources. In response to Lebanon's economic crisis, LAU successfully adopted a dollarized tuition system and offered discounts and scholarships to maintain enrollment and offset the costs to students. The finance department monitors budgets, prioritizes capital projects, and employs creative retention packages for staff. LAU's adaptability in accounting and reporting routines, focus on financial sustainability, and proactive financial management demonstrate their commitment to stability and growth in a challenging operating environment. More details on financial planning and evaluation are provided in Standard Seven.

The senior leadership of the various Administration areas is engaged in planning and coordinating strategic projects, issues and priorities. In its endeavor to substantially improve the planning process at LAU, Facilities Management (FM) is keen on active representation and participation in most of the university planning committees (e.g., UPC, SPOC, NECHE steering committee, CFC, etc.).

## Appraisal

Since LAU's last NECHE Comprehensive self-study of 2014 and respective Interim Report of 2019, LAU has made progress and improvement in its academic planning efforts as described in the Description section. Each of the various schools has already completed at least one strategic plan and are moving into subsequent plans. These plans align with LAU's SPIV accordingly. In developing the 4 pillars of LAU's SPIV, each pillar's team crafted an engagement strategy to ensure that views and concerns of stakeholders across the institution were well reflected in the strategic plan of the university. In addition, every school has a liaison to follow-up and report on the implementation of LAU's SPIV on a semesterly basis or as need be.

"Achieving multiple accreditations" was a goal in SPII 2011–16 that emphasized the importance of institutionalizing assessment across all academic, administrative, and support entities in the university. LAU achieved this goal and continued to maintain or acquire additional accreditations throughout the implementation of LAU's SP III. Moreover, with SPIII the role of assessment became more fine-tuned through the goal of "Improving Assessment Systems" that was achieved through the accomplishment of new school-based evaluation systems, with major improvements to course evaluation rubrics to emphasize the importance of teaching as part of LAU's core mission, improvements in faculty evaluation by adopting assessment technologies that evaluate the learning process and students' performances in internships across Lebanon and abroad, and improvements in the course evaluation process with emphasis on teaching effectiveness, which was utilized as one of the criteria for the "Teaching Excellence Award" and in faculty annual evaluations and promotions.

In developing the four pillars of LAU's SPIV, each pillar team crafted an engagement strategy to ensure that views and concerns of stakeholders across the institution were well reflected in the strategic plan of the university. Additionally, broad coordination efforts took place in planning processes that address common goals that intersect across disciplines, ensuring horizontal alignment and consistency in strategic initiatives across schools. To further strengthen alignment and implementation, LAU proactively established the Strategic Planning and Oversight Committee (SPOC), which plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the strategic plan's progress, ensuring the achievement of goals and upholding accountability. Regular biannual reports are compiled, consolidating the progress made by each pillar team, and subsequently reviewed within the CD by the designated members of the SPOC. Every school has a liaison serving on the SPOC, providing regular updates and reports on the implementation of LAU's SPIV on a semesterly basis or as needed. SPOC puts together annual progress reports outlining achievements of tasks against the milestones set under the 4 Pillars of SPIV. An executive summary of the latest report illustrating the progress of SPIV goals and action steps during the March 2023-May 2024 period is found in the Standard Two electronic workroom.

In addition to proactive planning, DIRA demonstrates agility by being responsive to the institution's emerging needs. An example is the introduction of an innovative [Sustainability webpage](#), which serves as a comprehensive platform dedicated to promoting and advancing sustainability initiatives undertaken by LAU. By showcasing LAU's sustainability projects and fostering a culture of environmental consciousness, the website now actively contributes to the promotion and advancement of sustainability at the local and global levels.

Despite the enormous planning efforts, the 2020 worldwide pandemic and the locally-erupting political and financial crisis in Lebanon have entailed consequent variations in some schools' and departmental plans, as well as in university strategies and priorities, dictating equivalent changes in facilities plans, resulting in substantial disruptions and delays to planned and on-going projects. However, FM managed to react in a timely manner by improvising feasible interim solutions to

arising setbacks, and often succeeded in mitigating the majority of the ensuing delays and adapting to the university's new priorities and strategies; to that effect FM has worked very closely since 2019 with other university constituents in an effort to re-prioritize the Capital Plan and the Capital Budget and accordingly modified its projects' master schedule in order to re-align it with the University's Financial Plan.

## Evaluation

### Description

LAU's mission, values, and vision are evaluated and revised every 10 years, a process that has been recently adopted by the university. More details are provided in Standard One. Most academic programs, where applicable, have attained or are in the process of attaining professional accreditation, specifically when the program is newly launched, which ensures the regular and systematic evaluation of these programs. For academic programs where professional accreditation is non-existent, a program review system is in place for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Standards Four, provides more detailed descriptions of program review and assessment policies.

Faculty productivity is a measure of faculty performance in the areas of teaching, research and service. Evaluation of faculty productivity is conducted on a yearly basis by department chairs and deans of schools based on criteria adopted by the CD. When they apply for promotion in rank and/or for tenure, faculty undergo comprehensive peer evaluation internally and externally through outside referees, based on teaching, research and service at the level of the school and then at the institutional level. Staff evaluations are conducted on a yearly basis by the immediate supervisor/director/VP. Results impact promotion and merit increases. Staff, however, do not formally appraise the performance of their supervisors, although they have other informal means of doing so.

Additionally, the Career Fair portal, the networking events with employers and fresh alumni members, the one-on-one meetings with the various HR or professional administrators of the various sectors of employers, the Career Services professionals at SDEM and within the various schools receive detailed feedback from employers about LAU graduates which is reviewed and evaluated. Extremely successful stories about LAU graduates are highlighted on the LAU website and articles are published in the various LAU publications. In the libraries, an array of appraisal tools and instruments are used on a monthly and yearly basis as discussed in Standard Seven.

To ensure effective retention strategies, HR engages in regular reviews of the HR study, closely monitoring the job market and participating in compensation surveys. These activities inform the development of retention plans that uphold internal and external equities. HR's involvement in the Job Assessment Committee (JAC) further supports this process. The JAC evaluates new organizational structures and restructuring plans, integrating them into the university's salary scale, career ladder, and grading grid. The overarching objective is to establish LAU as the preferred employer in the country. To involve staff in the governance of the university, HR incorporates input from the Staff Advisory Council when updating plans for services and benefits. These plans are then submitted to the President's Cabinet for approval, ensuring alignment with the university's overall vision and strategic goals.

DIRA provides support for student learning outcomes assessment, including course and program assessments and co-curricular assessments. DIRA assists in the development and implementation of student satisfaction surveys such as course evaluations, exit, alumni, and employer surveys. DIRA facilitates the provision of accurate data to ranking agencies, enabling LAU to evaluate its

performance and compare it with higher education institutions at the national, regional and international levels. The insights gained from these rankings inform LAU's planning, policy formulation and transition towards becoming a more research-focused institution.

### **Appraisal**

In addition to LAU's full accreditation from NECHE, an integral goal of each of the seven schools at LAU is the obtainment of professional accreditation when applicable. As of Fall 2020, LAU became a member of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) with respect to programs listed in the School of Architecture and Design (SArD) — Fine Arts, Fashion Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design and Islamic Art. The Bachelor of Architecture program was accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) as of 2019 and is officially recognized by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication as equivalent to the Diplôme d'Etat D'Architecte (DEA), thus allowing our graduates to join architectural practices in France and the European Union. Within the School of Arts and Sciences the BS in Computer Science program is accredited by the Computing Accreditation Commission of ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) and the BS in Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program has been granted candidacy for accreditation by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) in the US. As the first step in a four-year accrediting process, the candidacy by ACEND grants current and future students the same rights of a fully accredited program.

As of 2016, the Adnan Kassar School of Business has been awarded the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation. In 2021, the school earned the Accreditation Commission for Programs in Hospitality Administration (ACPHA). Within the School of Engineering, the Bachelor of Engineering programs in Civil, Computer, Electrical, Industrial, and Mechanical Engineering are accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET and by the Federation of Arab Engineers. The Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine (GRMCSOM) has one MD program which obtained a provisional accreditation from the Turkish Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Medical Education Programs (TEPDAD) in September 2021. As of 2013 the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program in the Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing (SON) has been accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The School of Pharmacy is a full member of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP). The Doctor of Pharmacy program at LAU is the only one outside the United States of America that is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). Hence, Pharm.D. graduates are eligible for licensure as pharmacists in most U.S. states and provinces. Moreover, in February 2023, ACPE granted the program continued accreditation, which extends until June 30, 2031, representing the customary eight-year cycle between self-studies. Lastly, the Postgraduate Year One Pharmacy (PGY1) Pharmacy Residency conducted by LAU School of Pharmacy and the LAU Medical Center-Rizk Hospital, Beirut, Lebanon, is accredited by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP).

Student recruitment strategies are continuously reviewed in this locally fluctuating environment with the aim to attract qualified students, deserving and needy students, and students with challenges. In addition, all student services entities are regularly assessed using annual surveys NS exit questionnaires in coordination with DIRA. These services are adjusted as needed to accommodate changing needs (see Standard Five and Standard Eight).

Evidence-based decision-making and assessing progress towards goals and performance measures with a focus on the effectiveness of academic programs are ingrained in LAU's culture. Students' perspectives are an integral component of the evaluation and decision-making processes. As part of

the implementation of SPIV, DIRA spearheaded an action item that involved students actively participating in the evaluation of course evaluation questionnaires and the course evaluation process. This collaborative effort resulted in notable outcomes, including the development of a specialized questionnaire for assessing internships and the introduction a mid-term evaluation. These initiatives were taken to support instructors improve their course delivery and enhance the overall students' educational experience, aligning with the objectives outlined in SPIV. Samples of all surveys are provided in the Standard Two electronic workroom.

In order to foster institutional buy-in for SPIV, a survey was conducted to gather feedback on the plan's objectives from various stakeholders. This initiative aimed to engage stakeholders and raise awareness about SPIV throughout the institution. By involving the entire institution in the process and seeking their perspectives, a collaborative approach that fosters support and alignment with plan's goals is ensured.

Where applicable, LAU utilizes standardized assessments allowing it to compare its performance in teaching, research and services with other institutions nationally and globally, providing valuable benchmarks for evaluating its own effectiveness. Indicators generated by various ranking agencies related to teaching, research, and [employability](#) as well as national and international licensure rates, surveys like NSSE and SAT scores, among others, contribute to the comprehensive evaluation of performance. More details are provided in Standard Eight.

The three-year IT plan is updated annually based on constituent needs channeled directly to the IT department or through the various councils and committees including the University Planning Council (UPC), the University Library and Information Resources Council (ULIRC), the Council of Deans (CD), the President's Cabinet (PC) and the IT infrastructure items in the capital projects. The IT plans are updated twice per year as part of the board reports.

Despite the severe crisis in the country's political, economic, and monetary systems, LAU has been able to navigate through the challenges. Over the past two years, the university faced significant financial pressure due to the country's economic crisis and the impact of the pandemic. To maintain a stable operating environment, LAU had to make substantial draws on its endowment, which was crucial at the time. Fortunately, the exceptional performance of the endowment in FY 2020-2021 helped offset the impact of these draws. A significant milestone for the university was the full dollarization of tuition during FY 2022-2023, even with significant discounts. This shift played a crucial role in LAU's positive financial and cash flow performance. As a result, the university's overall financial standing is sound, with a relatively sizeable endowment and net assets, as well as manageable short-term liabilities. LAU's financial stability is gradually being restored through improved operating performance and positive investment results. More details are provided in Standard Seven.

Even though important progress was witnessed on many fronts, especially regarding projects and space management procedures, the development of needed FM procedures on access control, asset disposal, safety, energy management, and capital budgeting procedures, is essential and remains a main concern; the process of updating FM processes and procedures is in progress in tandem with the near-implementation of an Asset Management software, an initiative which is long overdue but delayed due to the mentioned crisis situation which affected the university plans. Furthermore, the development of departmental evaluation schemes and assessment plans is seen as a vital initiative that needs to be completed and implemented during the upcoming year.



HR measures the effectiveness of its planning through four major means: 1) the assessment of project plans, 2) surveys used to determine customer satisfaction, to highlight possible problematic areas and to benchmark against market standards, 3) internal audits and 4) feedback from university-wide committees such as the Staff Advisory Council, the University Insurance Committee, and the University Planning Council. Since 2015 a new automated staff performance management system has been implemented. The new system is based on goal setting as well as evaluating staff performance on a number of measurable outcomes. In 2018, a new staff grading system was developed based on market survey of pay and compensation. The study defined new staff categories to accommodate the University's growth.

Finally, a second strategic plan for the libraries was developed, covering the 2023-2028 period. The plan aims to make the libraries a hub for lifelong learning in all its forms meeting the needs of today's students, increase faculty engagement with the libraries and improve research services for the community, as well as bring the value of the libraries to the broader community. A copy is provided in the Standard Two electronic workroom.

### **Projection**

- ✓ As some of the school-specific plans near completion, each school is responsible for ensuring a continuation is in place for the next cycle of strategic planning, with an oversight by the CD. The CD and SPOC will conduct regular reviews of SPIV implementation and effectiveness.
- ✓ HR will set strategies for staff retention for 2024-2027, will conduct a review of the 2018 HR Study, and will update all organizational charts and corresponding job descriptions within the next 3 years.
- ✓ LAU has commonly used [trend analysis](#) as an approach to assess performance improvements over time, primarily due to the absence of comprehensive national and regional databases that provide reliable information. Acknowledging the limitations of trend analysis, LAU is advocating for the development of reliable national databases. To support the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in this endeavor, DIRA assistance will be provided.
- ✓ Facilities Management (FM) will update the University Capital Plan, develop new procedures, processes and guidelines to include university construction, capital budget preparation, space and furniture, lab safety procedures, key procedures, critical systems assessment & related emergency response procedures
- ✓ FM will also update the existing university Master Plans to re-align them with updated university strategic plans, implement the asset management software and engage in the planned university sustainability projects, and devise a plan of action for streamlining the lately-initiated standardization process of its activities between the University and its affiliated sister institutions and Medical Centers, locally and internationally.

## Standard Three: Organization and Governance

### Governing Board

#### Description

Chartered by the Board of Regents of the State University of New York, the Lebanese American University is governed by a Board of Trustees (BoT), whose powers and duties are set forth in the [University Bylaws](#). The Board consists of a minimum of 5 and no more than 39 members, as set forth in Article IV of the [Constitution](#). BoT members should have a record of good or notable performance in their profession and who are willing to serve and contribute to LAU's development.

At least two-thirds of the Board must be United States citizens, including at least one resident of the State of New York. The Board elects its members in three classes with three-year terms to ensure continuity of membership. The President of the University, a representative of the Worldwide Ministries Division of the PCUSA, the General Secretary of the Synod and the Chair of the Faculty Senate serve as ex-officio members without voting privileges. Each trustee may serve a maximum of two consecutive terms, and may be reelected after a one-year hiatus.

The BoT utilizes its unique position to conduct an annual appraisal of the President and to elect a new president. The election process for a new president is described in the [University Bylaws](#). The term of office for the President is for four years subject to a formal review after three years by a committee of the Board. Appointment for additional terms of up to four years per term may be made by agreement of a majority of the voting membership of the BoT.

The Board is charged with ensuring that the purpose of the university is met and has the responsibility for all policy and strategy for the entire university and its subsidiaries. As such, it approves the University plans, budget, expenditures, inter-fund transfers, changes in fees, and the acquisition of major assets. It also acts on all investment recommendations.

There are ten standing BoT committees (see Table 3.1). Each committee consists of at least three trustees. The standing committees facilitate the work of the Board by maintaining appropriate channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community. They are responsible for overseeing the business of the university, monitoring its solvency as well as its financial status, and reviewing all university policies and procedures through meetings and assessment of regular administrative reports. The Executive Committee meets regularly and may exercise all the power vested in the Board but its decisions remain subject to review and control by the Board. The role and responsibilities of each standing committee are detailed in the pertinent charter; all charters are provided in the Standard Three electronic workroom. Board meetings are held twice a year in Beirut and New York on a pre-set date agreed upon in advance to periodically review the institution's success in fulfilling its mission. After their bi-annual meeting, the Office of the Legal Counsel minutes all resolutions and circulates them to concerned constituencies for follow-up. The different Board committees report back during the next meeting to ensure implementation of action items.

#### Appraisal

The Lebanese American University has a clear and well-defined governance structure that manages the routine business of the University. The [University](#) and [Faculty bylaws](#) clearly describe the authority, responsibilities, and relationships among the governing board, administration, and faculty.



According to a faculty survey that was conducted in June 2023, most respondents (74.23%) said they felt they are encouraged to participate in the governance structure through their departments, schools, university, or senate. Moreover, 95.43% of the respondents indicated that they have been involved in the University governance system.

Standing Committee	Administrative Officer Assignment
Nominating Committee	President
Planning & Finance Committee	Vice President, Administration and Vice President, Finance
Audit Committee	Director of Internal Audit of LAU Director of Internal Audit of LAU Medical Centers
Investment Committee	Vice President, Finance
University Advancement & Relations Committee	Vice President, University Advancement
Academic Affairs Committee	Provost
Health Services Committee	Vice President Health Affairs, General Counsel (Co- secretary)
Student Development & Enrollment Management Committee	Vice President, Student Development and Enrollment Management
Legal & Compensation Committee	General Counsel
Strategy Committee	President, Provost, and the Vice President, Business Development and Global Affairs

Table 3.1 Standing Committees of the BoT

The University has well-defined processes for decision-making. Policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness. The governance system is effective with councils holding regular meetings (94.25%), conducting meetings according to best practices, and dealing with issues that are within their councils’ purview. Close to 66% of the faculty are well-informed of the discussions being conducted at the Senate level while 96.94% of the faculty participate in the governance structure through pertinent School or University councils and confirm the existence of open communication channels between them and the administration for the betterment of the university.

Students are represented in School Councils while the Senate Executives are regularly invited to the Council of Deans (CD) and President’s Cabinet (PC) for discussions, and new faculty are introduced to the university governance system and structure through a well-established onboarding process that includes an orientation session and the assignment of faculty mentors. Faculty are introduced to LAU bylaws, procedures, and policies.

The Board of Trustees oversees the business of the university and monitors the quality and integrity of the operation. The Board oversees the operation through specialized committees that tackle every aspect of the operation from finance and academic affairs to audit and strategy. The chair annually reviews the president’s performance and shares the results with the Board. Since the current president, Dr. Michel Mawad, who has been serving in this capacity since September 2020, will step down at the end of September 2024, the University led by its Board has embarked on a comprehensive, transparent, and rigorous Presidential Search that was completed successfully with the announcement in June 2024 of the appointment of Dr. Chaouki Abdallah, Executive Vice President for Research at the Georgia Institute of Technology, as the next President of the University.

The BoT ensures the representation of the public interest in its composition and reflects the areas of competence needed to fulfill its responsibilities. As such, membership includes a range of competencies that reflect the breadth of operations of the University and to effectively perform its governance function. The Board members have expertise in academia, medicine, government, finance, business planning, strategy, governance, and hospital management. As LAU expands into new areas, or as the environment changes, the Board is committed to responding by recruiting board members with the necessary competencies.

The *General Counsel* ensures that two-thirds or more of the board members, including the chair, are free of any personal or immediate familial financial interest in the institution, including as employee, stockholder or shareholder, corporate director, or contractor. Every year, the General Counsel circulates a *Conflict-of-Interest* attestation to all board members.

The Board systematically develops, ensures, and enhances its own effectiveness through orientation, professional development, effective self-assessment, and regular evaluation including an external perspective. An induction process occurs at the beginning of each member's initial term, involving presentations by the President and her/his senior management team covering all aspects of the University's operations. All Board members are members of the *Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)* and can access a large repository of information on university operations and governance.

The BoT performs regular self-assessments through interactions with the Chair of the Board. At present, it is the practice of the Chair to contact each board member once every 6 months (outside the regular board meetings) to discuss the individual's involvement with and contribution to the University. The Board will consider the efficacy of external assessment.

There is no formal review process for the Board's policies and procedures. An anecdotal self-review and reflection is often performed, although the last time the Board formally reflected on its structure and performance was in 2004. Trustee attendance at board meetings averages 100 percent, with most trustees demonstrating engagement by serving on at least one standing committee. The Executive Committee of the Board may hold exceptional meetings when urgent matters arise.

The work of the Board is primarily carried out through its standing committees, of which each Trustee is a member of at least one. The committees meet regularly providing rich opportunities for professional development, chair leadership, and deepening understanding of the University and its operations. Committee meetings frequently involve presentations from third party institutions and consultants.

The Board consistently holds bi-annual meetings which involve visiting both campuses in Lebanon as well as both hospitals and the New York Academic Center. Typically, presentations from LAU staff and faculty highlight the opportunities and challenges facing LAU.

The Board establishes ad hoc committees to respond to university emergencies. For example, the Board established in 2020 a *Strategy Committee*, in response to the Lebanese economic meltdown and to the dramatic changes in higher education because of the pandemic. The Committee became a standing committee in 2022. Furthermore, the Board established a *Financial Oversight Committee* to provide rapid assessment of emerging events that could impact the sustainability of the University. The Board also prudently safeguards the endowment to ensure the availability of resources during crises such as the economic one the country has recently experienced.

Finally, the Board regularly reviews LAU's systems of enterprise risk management, external audits, regulatory compliance, internal controls, and contingency management through the Board's standing and ad hoc committees. *Enterprise risk management* is assessed through the *Financial Oversight Committee* and the *Planning and Finance Committee*. External and internal audits covering financial statements, risk register, and systems and controls are reviewed by the Audit Committee. Regulatory compliance is overseen by the Legal and Compensation Committee. Contingency management is reviewed by the Financial Oversight Committee, the Planning and Finance Committee, the Executive Committee, and the Investment Committee (in respect of the endowment and cash holdings). A priority is placed on multi-year forecasting and scenario analysis.

## Internal Governance

### Description

The Academic operation of the University is led by the *Provost*, the *Chief Academic Officer* of the University, who chairs the *Council of Deans* (CD) that includes all academic deans and assistant and associate provosts. As outlined in section VIII-k of the [University Bylaws](#), the Council of Deans is an advisory and recommendatory body to the *Provost* and the *President* on academic programs, processes and procedures, and on administration of academic services and other university affairs.

The *Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Management* leads the student service programs of the University including student recruitment, entrance exams, admission, registration, financial aid, retention, student life, graduation and student housing. The *Vice President for Finance* leads and overall financial functions of the University. The *Vice President for University Advancement* devises and carries out programs of fundraising and relations with alumni. The *Vice President for Administration* leads and supervises the Human Resources, Facilities, Planning, and other University services. Dr. Mawad's senior leadership team has also undergone a number of changes since he took office in 2020. For instance, the president has established several new positions, including the position of *Vice President for Health Affairs* who leads the overall healthcare affairs and businesses affiliated with the University, and the position of the *Vice President for Business Development and Global Affairs*, who develops strategies and execute plans that achieve clearly defined business-development objectives.

The *University Planning Council (UPC)*, chaired by the President, serves as the University's collective think tank, bringing all University entities together including the Provost and Vice Presidents, the General Counsel, the Deans, the Deans of Students, the Assistant Vice Presidents, the Director of University Institutional Research, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Staff Advisory Council, and the Vice President of the University Student Council. The UPC meets quarterly to discuss and provide advice to the President on all matters relating to long and mid-term planning and strategic and conceptual University directives and goals.

The University has seven schools: *the School of Arts and Sciences*, *the Adnan Kassar School of Business*, *the School of Engineering*, *the School of Architecture and Design*, *the School of Pharmacy*, *the Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing*, and *the Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine*. Each school is led by a dean who reports directly to the provost and who serves on the *Council of Deans*. The deans provide overall direction and leadership for their schools, and are assisted by associate deans, assistant deans, and departmental chairpersons.

Faculty participate in the governance of the University through School Councils, University Councils, and the Faculty Senate. Each school has a faculty governance structure that provides faculty with a

degree of operational independence. The faculty exert direct control over students' admissions, curricular matters, including the approval of new courses and programs while fulfilling a recommendatory function in other areas such as faculty recruitment, and tenure and promotion. Details of each school's governance structure are outlined in their respective bylaws. All School bylaws are available in the Standard Three electronic workroom.

In each school, there is an administrative council that includes the dean, the associate and assistant deans, and the chairpersons. The administrative council provides a medium for communication and consultation among the school's administrators. Schools also include various councils and committees that deal with curricula, planning, admission, faculty research and development, and promotion. Routine matters are handled through the schools' council structures, but other important issues are often considered by ad hoc task forces. Department chairpersons play an important governance role through day-to-day administration, programs planning, and as a channel for information and concerns between faculty and the schools' administration.

University councils include faculty senators, and elected faculty members representing each distinct school. There are seven university wide councils including the *University Library and Information Resources Council*, the *University Council*, the *University Research Council*, the *University Admissions Council*, the *University Curriculum Council*, the *Faculty Welfare and Promotion Council*, and the *University Council for Financial Aid*. University council members represent the Schools, the Faculty Senate, and the students. The schools' full-time faculty as well as the Faculty Senate elect their representatives to the University Councils. Student members of Councils are elected by the students.

The Faculty Senate is a central, elected body to provide faculty representation from all schools of the University. The Senate is composed of 34 members equally allocated between the Beirut and Byblos campus and representing all schools. The university councils, their mandate, composition and terms are specified in the [Senate Bylaws](#). The Senate acts as a nonbinding body and communicates the non-academic needs and faculty welfare issues of the university faculty to the Council of Deans, the President's Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees. The president, provost, and deans are nonvoting ex-officio members of the Senate. The Chairperson of the Senate assists the Provost in preparing the agenda of the faculty meetings. The Chair of the Senate represents the Senate in its relations with the president, provost, and is an ex-officio member of the BoT.

Staff members of the university have an elected [Staff Advisory Council](#) representing all university offices. The Council serves as an advisory body and a forum for LAU staff to voice their concerns.

Finally, there are two student councils, one in Beirut and the other in Byblos, that oversee the interests and benefits of students according to the university policies. Students also have representatives on pertinent university councils. The two councils combined constitute one overarching Student Council with clear [bylaws](#).

### **Appraisal**

The governance system is effective at all levels and across the University. In fact, it has responded well to the recent financial meltdown in Lebanon as well as to the COVID pandemic. The Board is ushering in the need of the University to adapt to the recent transformation in the higher education landscape by promoting online initiatives. The Board is also aware of the importance of diversity and the item is high on its agenda.

A high-functioning senior leadership group shares the responsibility for monitoring the various university divisions. The President's Cabinet (PC), consisting of the Provost and Vice Presidents, meets weekly. The PC is the top consulting and advisory body to the President on all matters affecting the university's strategic and executionary priorities. The CD forms a cohesive leadership team that also meets weekly to discuss academic matters, and it often reviews and revises University academic procedures, approves new programs and initiatives, and reviews strategic plan progress. Academic administrators are regularly reviewed. Chairs are reviewed annually by the faculty of the pertinent departments while assistant and associate deans are reviewed by the dean. The Provost initiates the deans annual review process. Feedback is shared for continuous improvement.

Throughout the recent financial meltdown in Lebanon that started in 2019, the University leadership continued to support the academic process to ensure that the University employs needed administrators, faculty and staff to achieve its mission. For example, the University recruited a dean for the School of Pharmacy in 2021 and 49 new faculty in 2023. After freezing staff hires for two years, the University resumed normal recruitment activities in 2023. The University also developed various retention measures that aim at retaining faculty and staff including additional salary dollarization, improvement in the health package, and partial reinstatement for benefits such as dependents' schooling. More details on financial measures are found in Standard Seven.

The Faculty Senate meets regularly and looks at issues of general interest to the faculty. The Senate has been instrumental in ensuring faculty financial welfare during the current economic meltdown. With regard to faculty teaching load, some faculty expect a bigger role in policymaking leading to some mismatch between the faculty's expectations and the advisory role stipulated in the bylaws.

The University Planning Council (UPC) aims to bring together all University entities when dealing with long and mid-term planning and strategic and conceptual University directives and goals. The UPC is a large entity as it is composed of PC and CD members as well as the General Counsel, the Deans of Students, the Assistant Vice Presidents, the Director of University Institutional Research, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate, the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Staff Advisory Council, and the Vice President of the University Student Council. According to the University bylaws, the UPC should meet quarterly; however, the meetings have not been regular and the most recent UPC meeting was held in Summer 2023. Moreover, regular meetings between the two senior leadership bodies at the university, the PC and the CD, are crucial for efficient planning and coordination. Two joint PC-CD meetings were held in AY 2022-23 but none so far in AY 2023-24; there is a clear need for more regularly scheduled PC-CD meetings.

University Councils meet often in order to process university business. The effectiveness of these councils is accomplished through self-reflections and self-assessments. For example, in Fall 2020 the *University Research Council* and the *University Graduate Council* presented a joint proposal to merge the two said councils, mainly to improve efficiency. The proposal was endorsed by the CD and received favorably by the Faculty Senate and endorsed by the faculty at large, with more than 80% of the participating faculty voting in favor. The two councils were consequently merged into a single council, the *University Graduate and Research Council (UGRC)*. The Faculty Bylaws were amended to reflect this change and were approved by the Board in March 2021.

The *University Financial Aid* and the *University Admission Council* also underwent a similar discussion and process and were merged as of Fall 2023. The proposal was first put forth by the said councils and then discussed at the Council of Deans. The proposed mandate was endorsed by the CD and submitted to the faculty at large for voting; 84% of faculty voted in favor. The resulting necessary

changes in the Faculty Bylaws and any related policies were then submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval. The original proposed mandate and the result of the faculty vote in favor of the merge are included in the Standard Three electronic workroom as an example. Importantly, all such changes related to University Councils require faculty approval, as indicated in the two above instances.

The University has shown resilience during its leadership transition which happened at difficult times. President Mawad and Provost Nasr have been instrumental in steering the University in the right direction while ensuring faculty and student retention. Enrollment soared during these difficult times, and the University managed to retain most of its faculty and staff. Furthermore, The University has recruited aggressively and expanded its research expenditure.

Finally, the University has been empowering students through regular elections, [student councils](#), and through participation in the school's governance system.

### **Projection**

- ✓ As mentioned in the appraisal, the University Planning Council (UPC) is not meeting regularly and is not currently functioning as an efficient planning body; a review of the University bylaws in relation to the UPC composition and mandate is therefore in order and will be undertaken during AY 2024-25.
- ✓ In addition, more regular PC-CD joint meetings between the VPs and the Academic Deans are recommended to ensure alignment of priorities and tasks; the President will call for these strategically important meetings at least once every semester as of AY 2024-25.

## Standard Four: The Academic Program

In 1955, LAU awarded its first associate's and bachelor's degrees as a four-year college-level institution chartered by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. The degrees awarded were Associate in Arts and Applied science, Bachelor in Arts, and Bachelor in Sciences. The degrees of Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Architecture, Bachelor of Interior Architecture, and Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy were offered at LAU in 1993. Starting 2010, BS Nursing was launched and students were admitted to the program. In 2019, the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design was launched to replace the Bachelor of Arts in Interior Architecture which was phased out.

LAU is a student-centered university and its educational mission is achieved by offering 33 undergraduate majors in addition to 37 minors and 3 diplomas. LAU offers education through seven schools: School of Architecture & Design (SArD), School of Arts & Sciences (SAS), Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB), School of Engineering (SOE), Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine (SOM), Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing (ARCSO), and School of Pharmacy (SOP).

All academic programs are designed and thoroughly reviewed to abide by Lebanese higher education laws, as dictated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in Lebanon. In addition, all academic programs meet the requirements of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. All academic programs are described and updated annually in the [Academic Catalog](#) and on the [university website](#). Special programs that lead to diplomas as well as language programs in intensive English and special Arabic are also administered by the university. Irrespective of their majors, students must complete the English sequence of Academic English courses to ensure adequate collegiate-level written and oral communication skills in the English language.

The various schools at LAU have aligned their academic plans and/or strategic plans to the university [Strategic Plan](#). The assessment plan of each program typically results in a periodic review and amendment of the program. Following a shared governance academic structure, the process is initiated at the faculty level in the host department then approval is sought from the School Academic Council (SAC) or equivalent in specific school, the University Curriculum Council (UCC), and the Council of Deans (CD). Typically, programs are reviewed every five years unless otherwise specified. The COVID-19 pandemic, the financial crisis that started in Lebanon in October 2019, and the 2020 Beirut Port explosion have affected academic planning and the ability to collect data especially in laboratory courses and courses that required hands-on or in-person assessment components.

Each program has its own mission, program educational objectives, and student learning outcomes that are published on the department website. The assessment plan maps the courses in the program to the learning outcomes based on performance criteria. Some programs have their institutional processes whereas others may use outcome-based specialized accreditation processes. The Provost's Office, working with the various deans and concerned entities, provides faculty lines and necessary resources for all programs delivery and assessment. Professional programs at LAU in the various schools are accredited by reputable accrediting bodies; further details of program accreditation were provided in Standard Two.

The [Center for Innovative Learning \(CIL\)](#) was established in 2016 under the Office of the Provost. CIL serves as a hub for faculty development in teaching through the Faculty Fellow Program and series of workshops organized. In addition, the center provides access to cutting-edge teaching tools and



recording equipment for the various teaching modalities. Learning from the covid-pandemic era, a variety of new instructional methods are currently being used in many courses. Debates, student presentations, roundtable discussion, flipped classroom research projects, case studies, and others became common learning activities in classrooms. The CIL has also led the conversation on the use of Generative AI in academia. This includes the completion of a detailed guidance document on effective AI use which should be available to faculty in Fall 2023. Assessment of student learning is based on projects, homework, writing and research assignments, simulations, clinical performance, structured debates, presentations, and scheduled exams. The libraries, teaching laboratories, and computer labs on both campuses, discussed in Standard Seven, are intrinsic to the educational process at LAU. The university offers faculty and students access to fast internet access and constant electricity supply, resources that are lacking across the country. The university also provides faculty and students access to Blackboard as learning management system as well as many other tools and software that are used for teaching. The vast majority of classrooms at LAU are smart classrooms, and some were transformed for distant learning and lecture capture modalities to meet the increased demand on active learning tools.

## Assuring Academic Quality

### Description

Academic oversight is effectively maintained through a structured academic hierarchy, ensuring the implementation of program and academic initiatives. The process commences at the school level, where faculty-governed committees, including curriculum committees and assessment committees, take the initial steps. Subsequently, these initiatives are reported to department chairs, who act as intermediaries between the committees and the school Deans. Ultimately, the Deans carry forward the initiatives and present them to the University Council of Deans (CD), a governing body chaired by the university provost. In cases where national approval is required, the University seeks endorsement from both the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the New York State Board of Education. Additionally, external reviews are pursued for new programs. It is important to note that the formation and procedural framework of school-based committees mirror those of the [university-wide councils](#), ensuring consistency and coherence in governance practices.

Programs are administered and offered by the faculty body, with schools responsible for managing the programs, including aspects such as teaching load and class capacity. The Council of Deans convenes on a weekly basis to engage in discussions and make decisions, with detailed minutes recorded and subsequently shared with the university faculty body. These minutes are communicated through the Deans and chairs, as well as being published and distributed via email to all faculty members weekly. Similarly, updates from university councils, including Senate meetings, are reported to the provost and made available to faculty members through publication on the university portal and e-mail circulation. Additionally, the minutes of school-based meetings and committees are disseminated to the relevant individuals through email.

### Appraisal

The development of Strategic Plans (SP) at both the university and individual school levels involves a comprehensive approach, incorporating elements such as SWOT analysis, feasibility studies, and market needs assessment. These SPs, discussed fully in Standard Two, are structured around specific pillars and encompass measurable key performance criteria that have been identified. The goals and outcomes of programs are carefully aligned with the missions of the respective schools and the overall university mission. When it comes to budgeting, the process begins at the school level, where chairs assess the available resources and determine the need for expansion. Subsequently, the



budgets are submitted to the Deans, who engage in discussions with the Provost. Finally, resource allocation decisions are made at the central university level. As part of the strategic changes and routine assessment cycle, new programs were introduced to gradually phase out outdated programs. These new programs have been designed to be more appealing and attractive to student. Any phased-out programs will still be available for currently enrolled students to complete their studies, but no new admissions will be permitted.

The university assures that internships connected to programs are effectively managed through an MoU/MoA especially in professional degrees, and the university places a strong emphasis on ensuring the English language proficiency of its graduates. This process begins with a placement test that assesses the English proficiency of incoming students, allowing them to be [categorized accordingly](#). As part of the [Liberal Arts and Sciences \(Gen Ed\) curriculum](#), English courses such as ENG202 and COM203 are integrated and are core requirements that all students need to complete. Indeed, the use of English as both a spoken and written language is integrated throughout the curriculum; To further support development of students' English language skills particularly writing, the university's [Writing Center](#), established in 2010, offers assistance in assisting faculty and students to meet the appropriate level and breadth of English proficiency.

Graduating students are required to meet minimum requirements set by their respective schools. The final list of graduating students vetted by the Office of the Registrar is determined through a faculty vote. As part of their graduation requirements, students must demonstrate evidence of independent learning and inquiry skills, which can be fulfilled through a senior study project or a capstone project. To further support student learning, the university librarians have developed learning modules through the Library Liaison Program to facilitate integration into courses. Additionally, many programs have professional ethics courses embedded within their curriculum and the liberal arts curriculum includes courses that address moral reasoning and ethics, which are tailored to suit the needs of different programs.

## Undergraduate Degree Programs

### Description

LAU offers [33 undergraduate degrees](#) and [37 minors](#). Based on the academic plans of the various departments, course offering schedules allow students in good standing to graduate with a BA or BS degree within three years, with a Bachelor of Engineering degree in four including three summers, a B. Arch. degree in five, also including four summers, and a B.S. in pharmacy in five years and one additional year for the Pharm. D degree. These years are counted post 30 credits of freshman including English courses that should be taken prior to graduation. The academic advisors that are part of the Dean of Students' office and faculty advisors in the schools advise students on the various courses they should take through mandatory advising forms and the Curriculum Advising and Planning Program (CAPP) of the Banner system assists students in planning their academic schedule.

The scores obtained on the SAT examination and high school grades are used to determine admission to the major. While the mandatory English Entrance Exams such as the English Entrance Exam (EEE), TOEFL, SAT I writing, SAT I Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, ACT Writing, Duolingo English Test or IELTS are used to determine the placement of students in English courses and the exact number of credits transferred. The Office of Admissions coordinates with the schools to process undergraduate admissions. The University Admissions Council (UAC) is responsible for establishing [admission policies and procedures](#). Details on admission to programs are found in Standard Five. According to the higher education law in Lebanon, students may be admitted into higher education

institutions at the sophomore level if they have completed grade 12 and have successfully passed the Lebanese Baccalaureate II (Bacc II) exams, or the approved equivalent (including the International Baccalaureate or the French Baccalaureate). Students who do not have the Bacc II (or approved equivalent) must complete the freshman program at LAU, if they fulfill the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) for entering university as a freshman student in Lebanon. These requirements stipulate that a student must have obtained permission from MEHE to follow the High School Diploma curriculum and to enter university as freshman; this official permission from MEHE typically requires that the student either has a non-Lebanese passport and/or has spent at least 2 years of high schooling outside Lebanon.

It is important to note that the Lebanese Bacc II is similar to the International Baccalaureate and French Baccalaureate in terms of equivalency and number of credits and is equivalent to the freshman year program in the American system of education. Holders of the Bacc II (or approved equivalent) are therefore granted up to 30 credits of freshman level courses upon enrolling at LAU, counting towards the total number of credits required by their degree program. All degree program evaluations are available in the Standard Four electronic workroom.

### **Appraisal**

Living up to its mission and commitment to deliver on its promise to educate “the whole person,” LAU has embedded throughout its curriculum specific life learning skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative, analytical; technical; and communication skills. These are also important measures for program accreditation. Specific developmental courses in the schools of Business, Arts and Science, Engineering, Pharmacy, etc. are offered to advance students’ professional development and increase their competencies not only to be placed but also to compete at the global level. At the Dean of Students Offices, there are 5 full-time staff working as academic advisors on both campuses, 3 in Beirut Campus and 2 in Byblos. The [academic advisors](#) are responsible for assisting students in understanding the purposes, opportunities, and challenges of higher education. To fulfill this goal, the academic advisors help students set and implement a plan that matches their interests, abilities, and careers. Students are then followed closely by their faculty advisors through the mandatory advising on the banner system that allows students to choose courses and get their advisor’s input prior to registration. The [Academic Success Center](#) offers on campus and online peer tutoring sessions in the following subjects: Chemistry, Biology, Bioinformatics, Physics, Math, Computer Science, Engineering, Education, Statistics, and Pharmacy. The Adnan Kassar School of Business provides [support](#) to students who are experiencing academic difficulties. Business students who need academic help can receive tutoring services provided by our MBA Graduate Assistants. Tutoring sessions (group sessions or one-on-one) are offered as a free service for all currently enrolled business students. Tutors provide thorough assistance/problem solving sessions namely in the below courses: Financial Accounting, Managerial Accounting, Managerial Finance and advanced finance courses, Quantitative Business Analysis, Operations and Production Management, Information Technology Management, Introductory courses in Management and Marketing.

## **General Education**

### **Description**

LAU is a Liberal Arts institution that aims to educate the whole person, thereby yielding well rounded graduates. Hence, all academic programs include a set of courses that are program-specific along with a number of [Liberal Arts and Sciences \(LAS\)](#) courses required for all students. Programs are committed to offering the required courses as well as the elective ones (free and technical) so that

all students graduate in the allocated period of time, The minimum number of LAS credits in each program abides by the New York State of Education Department [requirements on Liberal Arts degrees](#). It is worth noting that freshman level general education courses and other undergraduate courses taken within the major but meet the LAS definition are counted towards the LAS credits at LAU. Freshman students also complete [a series of workshops](#) for them to discover their own talent and potential for a successful university life and future careers.

LAU has embarked on revamping the LAS curriculum and has successfully introduced a new curriculum ([LAC Curriculum Z](#)) that started in Fall 2022. The new curriculum serves a global purpose, beyond the immediate need to instruct students in the Liberal Arts. A *Change Makers Unit* was introduced where students are taught using a Problem-Based / Solutions Focused approach. The Change Makers series consists of topics drawn from the Sustainable Development Agenda that the UN has set until 2030. Students will enrich their academic work by relating it to current issues and problems that are approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. The program is also comprehensive both in disciplines represented by difference courses (Arts & Humanities, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Social Sciences) as well as signature interdisciplinary courses within the change makers and digital cultures series.

In addition, the curriculum prepares students to engage with an increasingly complex world, characterized by a fast-paced technological change that impacts on our ethics, our cultures and traditions, our norms and interpersonal relationships. To this end, the unit on Digital Cultures has been conceived to allow students to explore complex philosophical, cultural and socio-political impacts of the so-called Digital Revolution which has, in turn, initiated what some thinkers are dubbing as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The program is currently hosted under the newly established [Department of Liberal Education](#), and program development, improvement and assessment has been conducted by a university-wide Liberal Arts and Sciences Program ad-hoc Committee (LASPC) appointed by the Provost to revamp the LASC and assist in program assessment. A comprehensive assessment plan [Exhibit\* 4.0] to evaluate the effectiveness of the new LASC program was established and implementation is underway to ensure compliance with its expressed mission and objectives.

LAU undergraduate students are also encouraged to focus on high impact activities both within specific courses and across the curriculum. One example of such an activity is the [Undergraduate Research and Discovery \(URaD\)](#) program at the School of Arts and Sciences, where students utilize skills gained through a variety of Liberal Education courses to undertake innovative and empirical research. There are many other instances for Undergraduate students to remain engaged in many ongoing research and innovation projects through senior studies/capstone project courses, internships, research methods courses, final year projects (FYP), [vertically-integrated projects \(VIP\) courses](#). Additionally, the SOE, SArD, AKSOB, SoP and the SAS Nutrition and Dietetics program require internships in organizations, companies, community, or hospital sites. From LAU's side, implementation of agreements with external entities is overseen by LAU faculty on-site, directors and/or department chairs. The placement of students is facilitated by career officers in the professional schools.

The [Study Abroad Office](#) caters for LAU students and incoming students from abroad to organize exchange programs. In addition, students are offered numerous extra-curricular activities and opportunities for civic engagement helping them to develop into leaders in society.

\*Exhibits refer to the supporting documents in the Standard Four electronic workroom.

## Appraisal

Each program at LAU uniquely caters to the needs of its students and the skills they need to acquire. This includes a substantive general education component with at least 48 credits, including 30 credits at the freshman level and a minimum of 18 credits post-freshman (Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum (LASC): Core and Electives) excluding the courses that are part of the major and part of the general education requirements (e.g., Mathematics, Humanities, Social Sciences, Chemistry and Biology introductory courses that are counted as part of the major). To illustrate the breakdown into General Education/Program post-Freshman courses credits, for a BA degree in English (requiring a total of 122 credits), students need to complete a total of 61 General Education credits: divided into 30 credits of freshman, LASC and Liberal Arts Electives, with an additional 13 credits of free electives. Similarly, to complete a BS degree in Chemistry, students must take 124 credits, which should include 30 credits of freshman, 27 credits from the LASC, 14 credits from Mathematics, Physics, and Computer skills, in addition to 3 credits of free electives. As such, LAU's general education program comprises Freshman credits, the comprehensive signature LASC, and additional elective courses assigned by each program. The bulk of credits taken within General Education falls within the scope of the LASC.

In accordance with LAU's current Strategic Plan SPIV (specifically Pillar 2), our revised LASC aims to 'educate for impact.' The curriculum is aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to provide opportunities for students to connect their coursework to the world beyond. With courses specifically targeting global initiatives (specifically connected to the Nexus of energy, water, and food sustainability; Ethics; Digital and Career Readiness, and Gender Studies among others). We also have a committee in place with a clear mandate to ensure any new courses continue to meet the program objectives. Each newly proposed course adheres to the program and student learning objectives, while remaining within the scope of Liberal Education/General Education courses.

The courses within the LASC are also substantive in that they cover different global themes connected to all the 17 SDGs and offer opportunities for in-depth inquiry and research. Students can take 200- and 300-level courses with high impact activities that include undergraduate research opportunities and means of exploration and critical reflection. To prepare students for the world ahead, our courses explicitly connect to our digital presence and the need for positive change. We also cater some of our LASC courses to Honors students with criteria in line with the Honors program.

Furthermore, the LASC aims to provide balance in terms of general education requirements. Students must take two core courses that support their communication and writing, ENG 202 and COM 203. They also need a minimum of three credits within the 'Digital Cultures' series and at least six credits in the 'Change-maker' series. In addition to the LASC, individual programs also require students to take specific elective courses to ensure diversity. For example, all Bachelor of Sciences students must enroll in courses within the humanities/arts. As such, students are engaged within a highly multi-disciplinary and balanced program that allows for breadth.

In addition, all courses within the new LASC are designed with a clear connection to the existing attributes connected to Humanities and Arts, Natural Sciences/Mathematics, and Social Sciences. While proposing the new curriculum, each course was clearly mapped onto its relevant attributes. Each course is multidisciplinary in nature. As such, these attributes were designated based on the most predominant content. While the LASC program is a significant part of a student's general education, the different programs at LAU also provide/identify additional courses and workshops to specifically prepare students for the future ahead. Programs offer a list of elective courses, internship opportunities, and additional activities to build general career readiness skills. For example, in

Pharmacy, undergraduate students have a comprehensive co-curricular program, discussed in Standard Eight, that includes workshops, talks, and professional activities to build communication, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills. In terms of assessment, we have taken active steps towards assessing the LASC (as the bulk of the General Education courses taken by students). The five-year assessment cycle, which began in Spring 2023, will assess all the core and elective courses in the program, on both campuses. Student learning will be assessed through evidence-based class reports and a final focus group discussion with the student body representatives.

## The Major or Concentration

### **Description**

To ensure the delivery of proper knowledge and skills, LAU's majors are built around a number of intensive and specialized courses and electives that have been adopted within the curricula to meet the learning objectives within each area of inquiry. Curricula content proceeds from Introductory level to Advanced Level in a logical sequence with appropriate breadth, depth and currency. The appropriate prerequisite knowledge and skill are articulated. BA/BS degrees require the successful completion of at least 122 credits including 30 credits of freshman. Majors leading to a bachelor of science, typically in SoAS and AKSOB, have long maintained a higher number of credits in the major, averaging between 37 and 64 credits post-freshman. BS in Nursing requires 60 credits in the major post-freshman. For professional degrees in engineering, architecture, and pharmacy, major course requirements are significantly higher and range between 92 credits for Graphic Design, 114 credits for Civil Engineering, and 134 credits for Pharmacy post-freshman. Besides LAS courses, the remaining credits consist of foundation and elective courses. The professional schools such as SOE, SOP and SARD offer technical/professional electives in the field whereas most other programs have unrestricted electives allowing students to choose courses from other disciplines. Emphases and tracks that are offered in certain programs are recognized on the transcripts of students. LAU also offers the opportunity for students to enroll in more than one major and/or minor provided there is minimum overlap between the programs. Descriptions of majors and concentrations for undergraduate programs are published in the LAU [online academic catalog](#) and additional departmental information can be found on the [university's school webpages](#).

Each academic unit is responsible for its curriculum. Schools continuously review and update their programs through a well-vetted process that starts with the program faculty and includes the review and approval of School Curriculum Committees, the approval of the University (and Graduate – when applicable) Curriculum Councils, and the final approval of the Council of Deans. All of the professional schools have secured [accreditation](#) from the leading international accrediting bodies who provide regular program reviews through their accreditation and re-accreditation cycles.

Professional programs integrate additional curriculum requirements based upon discipline-specific accreditation standards or licensure requirements. Each major has internally consistent mechanisms for sequencing their coursework at different numeric levels. 100 and 200 level courses are typically freshman and sophomore year courses, respectively. Courses numbered 300 and above are considered upper division courses that may have significantly more prerequisites than lower numbered courses and are typically restricted for non-major students. The curricula of the various majors build from basic to advanced courses, have logical prerequisites, and balance semester loads among various technical and non-technical courses. Many professional majors require that students complete capstone courses, culminating in experiences in which students apply knowledge gained throughout the curriculum. Majors leading to professional degrees have planned field experiences at off campus sites that foster team work, communication skills, critical thinking and application of

theoretical knowledge in a professional setting. Graduates in the professional programs are adequately prepared to practice in their field of specialty. Professional programs also develop student adherence to professional and ethical standards appropriate to their chosen fields through professional ethics courses. Academic programs [with professional accreditation](#) must meet the highest standards of professional practice.

LAU ensures the integrity of grades through an online grade submission process. In addition to the secure grade entry system, when any change of grade is implemented in the system, email notification is sent to the student, instructor, and the Registrar. The change of grade procedure entails the instructor filling out an online change of grade form through the EDMS (Electronic Document Management System) with justification and evidence, to be approved by the department chair and relevant dean before being sent to the Registrar for processing. Moreover, there is a clear student Code of Conduct, discussed in Standards Five and Nine, to reinforce ethical behavior while also making clear the sanctions in case of any infraction.

### **Appraisal**

LAU's undergraduate academic programs continue to update their program objectives and student learning outcomes to keep them current with industry needs, local and global challenges, and technological developments. Program objectives and student learning outcomes for the various LAU programs are publicly available on the program websites and in LAU's online academic catalog. These changes drive curricular modifications in the various majors that promote and foster the formation of new generations who are aware of the necessary societal transformations and are prepared to carry them out.

In 2015, LAU launched the [Honors Program](#) which is intended to provide enhanced educational opportunities for selected, motivated and academically inquisitive undergraduate students from various academic disciplines. The program offers special courses in small classes (of no more than 20 students) with greater opportunities for participation, increased student-faculty interaction, more individual attention, lively discussions of contemporary issues and other projects specially designed to challenge talented students. Honors students actively engage in the learning process resulting in a greater intellectual and emotional investment. Honors courses require students to complete challenging readings and writings to broaden their knowledge, adding dimension and depth to the topics in question. Honors courses include teamwork and a research component — they emphasize enriched rather than accelerated learning. The Honors Program is available in the following majors: Architecture, Bioinformatics, Biology, Business, Computer Science, Economics, Political Sciences, English, Psychology, and all Engineering majors. A list of honors courses can be found on the [Honors Program website](#).

The current curricula for the various majors and concentrations at LAU offer students increased flexibility in depth course offerings based upon curricular revisions to academic programs and implementation of the new LAS Curriculum in 2022. There have been on-going efforts by programs to update their offerings and re-examine the structure of their programs in order to allow students the opportunity to have a wide selection of elective courses that address current topics such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, gender issues, civic engagement, human rights, artificial intelligence, experiential learning, and others. For example, the School of Engineering requires students in all its majors to take two Engineering *Signature* courses where students select from: intro to sustainable engineering, engineering entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and virtual reality and computer vision. Similarly, the nursing major requires its students to complete two co-op work-based learning experiences where they support their professional and personal growth in all three domains of learning: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.



The schools of engineering, business, and arts and sciences offer their students the opportunity to participate in the [Vertically Integrated Project \(VIP+\) program](#) where they can engage in ambitious, long-term, industry-scale, multidisciplinary project teams. The VIP+ is a transformative approach to enhancing higher education that encapsulates an initiative to instill entrepreneurial confidence in students and empower them to launch successful startups. Students work within vertically-integrated teams that are led by faculty, coached by graduate students, and co-mentored by industry partners. Students acquire knowledge of professional (e.g., documentation, leadership and teamwork, communications, project management, intellectual property) and technical (e.g., hands-on lab skills, scientific concepts related to the project) skills. Most majors in these three schools allow students to take up to 6 VIP credits.

## Graduate Degree Programs

### Description

Graduate programs at LAU, 26 in all, are offered at the Master's level in addition to the Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Pharmacy degrees. The Adnan Kassar School of Business grants the following degrees: MBA, Executive MBA, MS in Human Resources Management, MA in Applied Economics, LLM, online MBA in Business Analytics, online MBA in Global Business Administration, and online MBA in Healthcare Management. The School of Arts and Sciences grants the following degrees: MA in Education, MA in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, MA in International Affairs, MA in Migration Studies, MS in Applied and Computational Mathematics, MS in Biological Sciences, MS in Nutrition, MS in Computer Science, along with an online MS in Applied Artificial Intelligence and online MS in Computer Science. The School of Engineering grants the following degrees: MS in Computer Engineering, MS in Civil and Environmental Engineering, MS in Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management, MS in Mechanical Engineering and an online MS in International Construction Management. Besides the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD), the School of Pharmacy grants an MS in Pharmaceutical Development and Management. The School of Architecture and Design grants an MA in Islamic Art. The curriculum for each graduate program has been developed by the faculty and approved by the School Curriculum/Academic Committee, University Graduate and Research Council (UGRC), and by the Council of Deans and then registered in the inventory of the University of the State of New York - New York State Education Department. Furthermore, by law, each program is registered, before its launch, at the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education [Exhibits 4.1 and 4.2]. [Academic Rules and Procedures](#) relevant to graduate education are published in the Academic Catalog available on the LAU webpage.

The above online graduate programs are described in our new webpage on [online programs](#), and the key dates pertaining to the online graduate degree programs are included in our [online calendar](#). Below is the process followed to verify the identity of our online learners.

- 1) The student application includes official government IDs, transcripts, and test scores.
- 2) Students go through an online, video interview as part of the application/admissions process.
- 3) All applicants are submitted for vetting relative to the institutional requirements associated with being the recipient of US Federal funding.
- 4) During the courses, faculty members have weekly, synchronous video sessions with the learners.
- 5) When student work seems questionable or the student does not login to the system for one week, student support advisors call learners on their personal numbers to follow-up.
- 6) Online tests are conducted using *Respondus Lockdown Browser*.
- 7) All learners are invited to participate in the in-person graduation ceremony during which their IDs are verified.

8) [The Student Code of Conduct](#) explicitly forbids acts of Dishonesty and violations of academic integrity which include falsification of IDs and the receipt of outside help.

In addition to the above documented procedures, the familial LAU culture promotes meaningful contact between faculty and students -- whether in-person or online.

The [Office of Graduate Studies and Research \(GSR\)](#) was established in October 2013 with the dean of GSR being first appointed. An Assistant Dean of GSR, a Director of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and Research Ethical Compliance and a Director of Sponsored Programs were added to the team in 2019. The office of GSR was created to develop and provide sustained support to graduate education and research at LAU and works closely with the various schools to ensure that the high standards in graduate education are met across all graduate programs at LAU. The office coordinates closely with the [University Graduate and Research Council \(UGRC\)](#) to provide graduate students and faculty with the necessary resources and physical infrastructure to support a diverse range of excellent quality research programs. However, the school deans are currently fully in charge of graduate studies in their respective schools. The UGRC is composed of full-time faculty members at the associate or full professor rank, typically with no administrative duties, and with a good scholarly/research record, in addition to at least three years appointment at LAU.

The mandate of the UGRC is to review, develop, recommend changes, and propose policies and guidelines pertaining to graduate studies and research in the university. This council works closely with the Dean of GSR to foster and encourage a research atmosphere while upholding the general rules of the University's graduate study programs and recommending changes when the need arises. Graduate programs and doctoral degrees have program educational objectives and student learning outcomes published in the Academic Catalog and on the LAU webpages.

[Financial support](#) is made available to selected students. Except for the MD and PharmD programs, financial support is mainly based on graduate assistantships (GA) where the student is expected to work/assist faculty or the department (teaching assistant, research assistant, etc.). In Fall 2022, 46% of enrolled graduate students across all programs were receiving a GA [Exhibit 4.3]. However, an enhanced GA is now offered for all newly admitted graduate students effective Spring 2023. Applicants to all LAU graduate programs in Fall 2023 qualified for enhanced GA, upon acceptance, where the average increased from 46% to 85% GA coverage. In addition, highly qualified students may be rewarded with additional financial support up to a full tuition waiver.

Additionally, the [Graduate Research Scholarship \(GRS\)](#) offers distinguished students a unique opportunity to pursue a master's degree with tuition fully waived for two years in selected programs. Moreover, LAU was the first university in the MENA region to implement the Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate (TLG) Program in 2018. The program is a fully funded scholarship by the United States Department of State. The program covers selected programs over a period of two years with the purpose of equipping graduate students with the professional experience needed to advance their academic knowledge and engage in research that furthers the professionalization of emerging leaders. As for the MD program, merit scholarships are awarded to the top applicants of each entering class based on a specific academic criterion. Tuition coverage ranges from 25% to 100%. Finally, grants and loans are awarded based on financial need to both MD and PharmD students to cover part of their tuition. Information and physical resources are available to support students in their graduate programs in addition to staff and IT (Information Technology) support. This support is discussed in Standard Seven.

Graduate courses in all programs are taught by faculty members holding terminal degrees as part of their normal teaching load, exceptional cases are the MBA, online MBA, EMBA, MD, and PharmD



programs where professional qualifications are required for some courses [Exhibit 4.4]. Recently, these supervisors must be at the rank of Associate Professor and above in compliance with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education's decree no. 488/m/2023.

All [graduate programs](#) require the applicants to hold bachelor's degrees from recognized universities; with a minimum GPA requirement as set by the program, typically 3.00, except for the EMBA; applicants with a GPA between 2.75 and 3.00 are accepted on probation. Competitive scores on the MCAT examination are required for the MD program. Credit requirements for graduation vary between programs: 30 credits for MA and MS degrees except for Pharmaceutical Development and Management which requires 36 credits. The required credits for the rest of the programs are as follows: 36 credits for the EMBA, 33 credits for the Online MBA in Global Business Administration and the MBA in Business Analytics, 39 credits for the MBA and 27 credits for PharmD (P4 year). All credits must be earned in graduate-level courses. For the MD, the requirement is based on the completion of a specific four-year program. All graduate programs have cohesive curricula and require scholarly and/or professional activities designed to advance the student beyond the educational accomplishments of a baccalaureate degree program.

Excluding the EMBA, the three online MBA programs, the online MS in International Construction Management, PharmD and MD, all graduate programs require the demonstration of research and theoretical skills through the successful completion of a six-credit thesis or a three-credit project with faculty supervision. However, the online MBA programs have a case studies capstone course and optional research project, and the MBA has the thesis and project being optional and may be replaced by an equivalent number of course credits. Theses are digitized and made publicly available online (<https://libraries.lau.edu.lb/research/laur/terms-of-use/thesis.php>).

The MD and PharmD curricula incorporate active learning methods and extensive practice experiences whereby students apply their knowledge, skills and abilities using real-world problem-solving approaches. These programs are part of the first national and regional health sciences schools to integrate simulation technology, the latest international standard for medical education, surgical training, and professional development, into their curricula. All programs are subject to periodic program assessment [Exhibits 4.5 and 4.6] and each program revises its course offering and description and program requirements when needed.

### **Appraisal**

Students can find the requirements for graduate programs, as well as the program rationales, objectives, and learning outcomes published on the department/school website as well as in the online Academic Catalog. The website and catalog are updated every Fall and as required to reflect any change pertaining to program requirements. Most graduate programs reflect a high level of complexity in the objectives and students' outcomes (See for e.g., <https://soas.lau.edu.lb/files/Graduate-Students-Manual.pdf>). Adequate financial, physical, and human resources are made available to support graduate education. Specifically, 46% of students benefit from [GAs](#), while a few of them opt for work outside the university to support themselves financially during their graduate studies [Exhibit 4.3]. During the academic year 2019-2020, a Research Assistantship (RA) program was enacted to recruit 21 talented graduate students across the School of Arts and Sciences (SoAS), Adnan Kassar School of Business (AKSOB), and School of Engineering (SOE) [Exhibit 4.7]. Starting Fall 2020, the RA initiative was replaced by the [GRS](#) program. Both initiatives included full tuition waiver and a monthly stipend allowing students to dedicate more time to completing their course/thesis requirements in time. Moreover, these initiatives are beneficial to the research productivity of both faculty and students [Exhibit 4.8].

It is worth noting that LAU was the first university in the MENA region to implement the [Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate \(TLG\) Program](#) in 2018. The program attracted a total of 59 students so far across seven Master's programs [Exhibit 4.9]. Periodically, few students are hired as paid research assistants funded by both intramural and extramural grants held by faculty members. LAU further established in 2022 the President Intramural Research Fund (PIRF) which provides the needed financial support for faculty and their graduate students to produce and maintain high standards of academic research [Exhibit 4.10]. Adequate [labs](#) are available on both campuses and are equipped for teaching and research needs in various disciplines ranging from biology, chemistry, nutrition, engineering, to business.

Remote computing resources are made available to online students using VPN connections when required. Along with that, the [Clinical Simulation Center](#) is available as a medical training facility for health care students and professionals in the School of Pharmacy (SOP) and the Gilbert and the Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine (SOM). These schools are among the first national and regional health sciences schools to integrate simulation technology into their curricula. All graduate students have onsite and remote access to library databases and resources (<https://libraries.lau.edu.lb/index.php>).

In line with our SPIV (Pillar 1, Goal 4), we aim to develop more graduate programs at the Ph.D. level. In 2024, Ph.D. programs in Biological Sciences, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Engineering, and International Affairs were approved by the Council of Deans and will be launched once the required registration approvals are secured from the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the NY State Education Department (NYSED).

Faculty involved in graduate education have the necessary credentials, experience, and time commitment to achieve their programs' learning objectives. All faculty teaching graduate courses in Master's programs with a thesis/project requirement are research active (<https://www.lau.edu.lb/research/schools.php>), while those involved in professional programs have industry experience (See for e.g. <https://medicine.lau.edu.lb/about/faculty/>). Moreover, there is a strong correlation between faculty who teach graduate courses and those who supervise theses [Exhibit 4.8]. After the GSR office's establishment, adequate faculty research support has been provided to strengthen research activities related to research-oriented graduates (<https://news.lau.edu.lb/2022/lau-strategy-yields-a-marked-rise-in-research-output.php>) and to facilitate the path for admissions into reputable Ph.D. programs (<https://mepitl.lau.edu.lb/success-stories/>).

To ensure that admitted students have the qualifications for advanced studies, all admitted graduate students are required to meet the general and program-specific admissions requirements (<https://www.lau.edu.lb/apply/graduate.php>). Applicants who fall short of these requirements might be considered for probationary admission or are required to complete a set of remedial courses. All current graduate students must demonstrate knowledge of ethical conduct in research. A number of mandatory trainings under the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program are a pre-graduation requirement; General Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training is required from all graduate students with no exception; A Human Subject Protection training is required from all students engaged in research involving human participants; Working with Animals training is required from all students engaged in research involving experimenting on animals (<https://gsr.lau.edu.lb/irb/education-training.php>).

Most of the offered graduate courses are on par with courses in reputable American universities. The strides for improving the research quality and quantity made by the university over the past 10 years improved the depth in most graduate courses, in particular in programs with a thesis requirement (<https://www.lau.edu.lb/research/>). To ensure breadth, some Master's programs cross-list some advanced undergraduate courses in their curricula such as the MBA and engineering programs. The latter is due to either the advanced nature of the course or low enrollment in the graduate program. The overall drop in graduate students' enrollment for in-person programs since Fall 2022 [as illustrated in Data First Forms 4.4] prompted the university to hire a Graduate Students Recruitment Officer affiliated with the GSR office with the aim to break the downward trend and boost graduate enrollment going forward. Furthermore, a strategic recruitment plan for graduate studies was designed with the aim of boosting enrollment numbers over the next years [Exhibit 4.11]. This plan is also addressed in Standard Five.

Research skills and understanding of research methods are developed throughout the graduate programs. All students are required to undertake the RCR CITI training, while all Master's programs, except for the Biological Sciences, Computer Science, Applied and Computational Mathematics, and some online programs, have at least one required research methods course. The requirements are mentioned in each program's curriculum on LAU's website. The relatively small class size coupled with the increased funding for graduate studies is increasing the average quality of students, which in turn results in a feedback mechanism further improving both educational and research qualities [as seen in Data First Forms 4.4]. This is also reflected by the increase in the number of publications co-authored by graduate students in recent years. [Exhibit 4.12].

LAU offers the following professional programs: MD, PharmD, MBA, EMBA, and three online MBAs. The MD program is designed to prepare students for their careers involving the application of the latest advancements in medical knowledge via the clerkship's two-year requirement; the intensive use of the Clinical Simulation Center; and interprofessional collaboration with other health sciences programs (<https://medicine.lau.edu.lb/education/md/curriculum.php>). The PharmD program has professional pharmacy courses as a prerequisite to admission. In addition, Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs) include nine required clerkship rotations during the program (<https://pharmacy.lau.edu.lb/education/graduate/pharmd.php>). Although work experience is not a prerequisite for admission into the MBA programs, it is requirement for the EMBA (<https://sb.lau.edu.lb/academics/programs/graduate/emba/>). All other graduate programs, which are research oriented, require a thesis or a graduate project for graduation. Students must publicly defend their theses demonstrating their acquisition of knowledge and skills identified in their program's objectives [Exhibit 4.13].

Finally, with regard to the online graduate programs, it is worth including that very recently, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the CD approved a proposal for updated administrative and reporting structures for online programs spanning all phases of the online program life-cycle, starting with program design and initiation (identifying new programs, developing curricula, securing registration approvals, and beginning course offerings, etc.) and stretching over program launch, growth, and maintenance (student recruitment, curriculum assessment and revision, etc.) Roles and responsibilities, along with the bylaws and appointment terms of the parties involved in managing online programs, were also presented. The proposal stipulates that online program directors, supported by committees, would oversee the programs and report to the Provost via the concerned dean(s). The proposal, including the program bylaws and new structure, is exhibited in the Standard Four electronic workroom [Exhibits 4.14 and 4.15, respectively].

## Transfer Credit

### Description

LAU has clearly communicated rules and procedures for transfer credits and the information is available to all interested parties. All transfer of credit rules are listed in the [LAU academic catalog](#), including transfer of credit rules for applicants from other universities into the LAU undergraduate or graduate programs and transfer of credits to applicants who are admitted with the Lebanese Baccalaureate or equivalent into the Sophomore class [see Exhibit 4.16], all listed under academic rules and regulations, separately for [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) programs. Transfer of credits to the graduate programs are limited to maximum of 6 graduate credits out of 30-credit programs, and maximum of 9 graduate credits out of 39-credit programs. Students can refer to the directory of local universities to check courses that have equivalence at LAU; this directory is updated every five years. LAU also has articulation agreements with higher education institutions in other countries for Exchange and Study Abroad programs [see Exhibit 4.17].

### Appraisal

Policies related to transfer of courses are strictly abided by the Registrar's Office and the School university councils. Based on the equivalence evaluation by schools, the Registrar's office grants the transfer of credits. A new online workflow process to evaluate student files for transfer of credits was just launched by the Registrar's office in summer 2024 to facilitate and expedite the execution of decisions [Exhibit 4.18].

It should be noted that the Curriculum Advising and Planning Program (CAPP) of the Banner system ensures no student graduates if more than 50% of the major or emphasis courses are taken outside LAU, nor if the last 30 credits are not taken at LAU. Upon the course equivalence evaluation, students are given direct transfer credits if the courses are taken from a list of universities "accepted" by LAU, otherwise they are placed on probation until the fulfillment of some conditions.

Students transferring from other universities are informed by email about their status with regards to transfer of credits evaluation [see Exhibit 4.19]. An analysis of transfer students who have applied to join LAU in the last ten years shows the trend of those who enrolled [see Exhibit 4.20].

## Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

### Description

#### Recognition of Degree Requirements:

LAU designs its academic programs based on the American system of higher education. The LAU academic catalog and school websites clearly state the length, content, and level of all academic programs. The minimum degree requirements for each level (undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate) are aligned with the bachelor's, master's and post-graduate standards as stipulated by NYSED and the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE).

All schools provide study plans for each major, full course descriptions are listed, and separate undergraduate, minor, and graduate offerings are detailed on the school websites. Course offerings are planned to facilitate the graduation of students within the outlined timeframe for each major. The offerings of past, current, and next year's semesters are electronically available.

#### Oversight of Curricular Development:

Curriculum development follows a standard process whereby programs and courses are reviewed. The process of review and proposal begins at the department/program level before sending the

proposal for approval to the School Curriculum Council then the University Curriculum Council (or the University Graduate & Research Council for Graduate courses), and finally to the Council of Deans, for the final approval. Only when there are significant changes to the programs, approvals from NYSED and MEHE are also sought. Recently, the Liberal Arts Curriculum (LAC) was updated to [Liberal Arts & Science Curriculum \(LASC\)](#). The LASC mission and requirements are stated in the online catalog on the [LAU website](#).

#### Awarding of Academic Credit:

The scope and depth of course requirements at LAU are stated in the course syllabi and aim to correspond to the field of study and are appropriate to the level of the course. All course syllabi and guides outline the learning outcomes of courses and the evaluation criteria and modes. The school curriculum councils decide on the content and coverage of the courses. Graduate courses tend to place more emphasis on research projects. Sample course syllabi from all schools are available as exhibits in the Standard Four electronic workroom.

#### Students' Access to Relevant Information about Award of Credits:

The university publishes an academic catalog on a yearly basis which contains policies, academic program descriptions, rules and procedures, and course listings for the various programs offered by the university, in addition to academic rules, procedures and policies for both undergraduate and graduate programs related to registration, course load, changing majors, reactivation of student files, course substitution, registration in other universities, re-registration and withdrawal from courses. These rules are also posted on the LAU website. Moreover, rules that govern Academic Standings such as Distinction, Honor, Academic Probation, Academic Suspension, and Academic Dismissal are also published in the LAU catalogue posted on the website [see Exhibit 4.21]. The Registrar's Office implements these rules using the Banner student information system. At the end of each semester, the Registrar's office sends e-letters to students with academic difficulty and informs the Dean of students' offices for their follow up; as for students with Honors or Distinction standings, the Registrar's office sends lists to different schools and the respective deans send out personalized congratulatory letters to students [Exhibits 4.22a&b].

The online catalog and School websites inform students about majors, minors and all curricular requirements, whether core or elective. The number of credit requirements is posted, as well as a suggested study plan to fulfill the needed graduation requirements. The catalog also outlines the process for graduation clearance.

Furthermore, undergraduate and graduate students have at their disposal the Curriculum Advising and Program Planning (CAPP) module for automated degree evaluations. CAPP is a tool that is used, by both students and advisors, for academic advising and program planning. It is also used by the Registrar's Office for degree audit and/or graduation evaluation. Degree evaluation compares the student's academic history to the program in which he/she is enrolled. Students expecting to graduate are required to submit an online application for graduation to the Registrar's Office one semester prior to the graduation date. The application includes the report produced by CAPP. The Registrar's Office oversees the degree evaluation process and uses email to communicate to students any pending requirements referring to the latest degree evaluation copy [Exhibit 4.23].

### Integrity of Grades:

Faculty ensure the academic integrity of the award of grades and credits through various means. On-line grade entry procedure is sent to all faculty by the Registrar's office. Any change of grade request is completed through an online workflow that ensures the instructor's signature and the approvals of the Department Chair and the School Dean [Exhibit 4.24].

LAU has a policy for Student Code of Conduct, which is reviewed periodically to be more relevant with the available tools for students. The Student Code of Conduct is addressed in Standards Five and Nine. The university faculty, with the help of the Dean of Students offices, reiterate the importance of abiding by the academic integrity rules. Failure to respect the Student Code of Conduct leads to disciplinary decisions. The university Writing Center and the Cooperative Learning Center continue to give workshops and guidance on avoiding plagiarism while at the same time supporting special learning needs, and the University recently developed guides for AI use in classes [Exhibit 4.25].

### Abbreviated or Concentrated Time courses:

Offering condensed time courses at LAU is restricted to very few courses in the Alice Ramez Chagoury School of Nursing offered at the senior year of students. All these courses are didactic or clinical courses, and in terms of content and coverage, they fulfill the course outcome requirements in the same rigor as required from any credit awarding course [Exhibit 4.26].

### Off-Campus Courses:

Students who follow off-campus courses acquire competencies consistent with LAU learning objectives. Most programs require students to take off-campus courses (internships, professional experience, clinical rotations) as part of their program requirements. These courses are offered in clinical settings (hospitals, community pharmacies, dispensaries, clinics) for the health-related majors (Medicine, Nursing, Nutrition, and Pharmacy), or in companies, schools and agencies for the other majors. The off-campus courses are designed and supervised by faculty members to ensure that they maintain the expected academic standards and meet the desired hands-on learning outcomes of the course.

### Certificate or Diploma Programs

Certificate or diploma programs are offered at LAU. The School of Engineering had an agreement with the American University of Cairo and the American University of Beirut to grant the Green Diploma. The Gilbert & Rose-Marie Chagoury School of Medicine grants Simulation Lab diplomas. The School of Arts & Sciences grants two teaching diplomas. Other new certificate programs have been developed recently in coordination with Wiley group as online graduate certificate programs and the relevant policies have been approved. Exhibit 4.27 lists the current online graduate certificate programs.

### Completion timeframe of programs

LAU requires its students to complete the last 30 undergraduate credits and at least 50% of major courses at LAU.

## **Appraisal**

### Recognition of Degree Requirements

The degree requirements of all programs comply with the American system as per the standards outlined by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the specific conditions of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The School surveys we conducted recently confirm the length of degree programs which varies especially in the professional

schools. Excluding the freshman year, the normal duration is 3 years for bachelor's degrees; 4.5 years for BA Interior Architecture; 5 years for bachelor's in Engineering, Architecture, Pharmacy degrees; 6 years for Pharm D; and 7 years for Medical Doctor degrees, including the pre-med period.

Based on the outcomes from the student survey we conducted, 79.54% of respondents agreed that the study plans and course offerings at LAU allow them to graduate within the normal time frame. The Faculty Focus Group also confirmed that all programs offered at LAU allow students to graduate within the stated time frame. However, they raised concern that in cases when students' entry level of English is insufficient and they are required to take additional English courses, or when they have to repeat several courses, a delay of one or two semesters is expected [Exhibits 4.28 and 4.29a&b].

#### Oversight of Curricular Development

University documentation confirms that new programs are introduced or revised based on the stated procedures starting from the Department and moving to the School level before submission to the University Curriculum Council and the approval of the Council of Deans, as shown in the document approval of new programs, such as BFA Fashion Design. Programs are not initiated until the official initiation permission is received from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education [see Exhibits 4.30a&b].

University Liberal Arts & Sciences Curriculum (LASC) requirements are implemented according to the program and no graduation clearance is issued unless these requirements are satisfied. The CAPP degree evaluation clearly states the LASC requirements per major [sample degree evaluations found in Exhibit 4.31].

#### Awarding of Academic Credit

Course syllabi from across the university show an increased attention in recent years to listing detailed information of course content and mapping of the learning objectives for the course. Representative sample syllabi are available in the Standard Four electronic workroom.

All schools clearly state the learning outcomes and criteria of assessment in the course syllabi as shown in the student survey, whereby 91.39% of the respondents agreed that the criteria are "always" or "most of the time" stated in the course syllabi. The survey results from Schools and the feedback from Faculty Focus group also confirm this practice. To maintain consistency in the evaluation of student learning and award of credits, department chairs are mandated to provide the appropriate oversight. Schools maintain course files including student course evaluations.

The Registrar's Office utilizes the automated degree evaluation (CAPP) module to ascertain that the various degree, residency, and grade point average requirements are attained, before issuing degree recommendations. The CAPP module matches the student's academic courses with the requirements of the program he/she is enrolled in. Degree assessment produces a report that shows how LAU courses and/or transfer courses apply toward program degree requirements. The Registrar's Office oversees the degree evaluation process and certifies the degrees to be awarded to the students. The final confirmation for the award of degrees is ensured through the vote of the School Faculty and the Faculty Senate.

#### Students' Access to Relevant information about Award of Credits

The university publishes through its online academic catalog requirements for academic recognition, academic probation, academic suspension, and readmission after suspension. The catalog details the

reasons why students are placed on probation, steps needed to be removed from probation, and reasons of suspension. The catalog also outlines the process for readmission after suspension and ways to remove the probation. Every semester and using the Banner Registration System, the Registrar's Office generates lists of students that are on first probation, second probation, or suspended/dismissed. These lists are communicated to the Deans of Students for follow up. Academic recognition emails and lists are sent to school deans so they can congratulate their students who are on Honors or Distinction lists.

The academic catalog describes the requirements for the different degrees awarded at the University, including certificate programs, bachelor's and master's degrees, minors, and teaching diplomas. The description includes requirements for holders of Lebanese Baccalaureate or any official certificate equivalent to the Lebanese Baccalaureate, Baccalaureate II holders, and transfer students. The catalog also describes residency, dual degree requirements, and grade point average requirements. The catalog is available [online](#) on the LAU website. From the respondents to the student survey, 50.1% of the students confirmed that they use the LAU website and academic catalogue for information about programs, 19% from Academic Advisors, 8% from the Registrar's office and about 15% from a classmate, 5.57% from Social media, and 2.34% from the Dean of Students office.

#### Integrity of the Award of Grades

All faculty use the on-line grade entry feature provided in Banner. The Change of Grade process is implemented according to the university rules. A three-year comparison table of Change of Grade entries shows that all such changes are justified. Exhibit 4.33 shows the different reasons for the changes where error entries by instructors, misreporting or miscalculations can be diminished by being more vigilant while entering online final grades.

There is consolidated effort by all schools, as reiterated in the School surveys [Exhibit 4.32], to raise students' awareness regarding academic integrity rules to avoid cheating and plagiarism. These rules are stated in course syllabi, highlighted by every faculty at the beginning of each term, and student integrity rules are found on the website under Student Code of Conduct.

In a focus group meeting with faculty representing the different schools of LAU, they confirmed that course syllabi or course guidelines are the main reference for student awareness about integrity to avoid cheating and plagiarism. School orientation sessions reiterate the importance of integrity. The Deans of Students also communicate separately to all students and urge them to abide by the Student Code of Conduct. The professional schools (SOE, SOP, SON, SOM) highlight the critical importance of professionalism and integrity as core requirements in courses. Faculty suggested that student commitment, possibly through a pledge system, can further increase effectiveness of current integrity rules. They also expressed that there should be a mechanism in place to ensure consistent implementation of the sanctions by all faculty.

#### Off-Campus Courses

The Off-campus courses are designed and supervised by faculty members to ensure that they maintain the expected academic standards and meet the desired learning outcomes of the course as stated in the School surveys. The student-faculty interaction modes and methods are varied. Student surveys regarding the interaction with an assigned LAU faculty when taking off-campus courses such as internships, clinical rotation, etc. show that the highest interaction mode is through emails (38.52%) followed by direct regular meetings 28.02%, Blackboard 25.49%, report 4.67%, portfolio and other 3.31%.



In the Faculty Focus group, it was clarified how the nature of the major determines the level of involvement of faculty in these off-campus courses. A faculty is always assigned to a student who registers in off-campus/internship courses. In some schools and based on clear guidelines for expectations, students submit a final report/project/portfolio for the faculty's evaluation. In the case of Education programs, student practicum requires faculty observation and regular reports. In the Health Sciences (SOP, SON, SOM) and BS Nutrition and Dietetics program, off-campus courses include rotations and hospital visits which require more rigorous faculty supervision where all modes of communication and interaction are utilized. All School of Business students are required to take a Civic Engagement course to be engaged with NGOs. An LAU faculty member is assigned as the coordinator for all Civic Engagement sections to monitor and assess their work.

#### Certificate or Diploma Programs

The first cohort of graduates from the online certificate programs was in Spring 2023 with 14 Graduates in MBA in Global Business Administration. The consistent implementation of policies for online graduate programs and certificates ensure the maintenance of academic standards.

#### **Projection**

- ✓ Efforts are underway to identify and utilize a standardized test specifically designed for evaluating critical thinking abilities. The School of Pharmacy has taken the lead in this initiative in collaboration with DIRA; if successful, the test may be implemented in other programs especially in the health sciences.
- ✓ In line with SPIV, several programs are planning to incorporate more undergraduate research experiences; experiential learning, such as co-op programs, internships, and VIPs; and new courses that address local and global challenges such as UN SDG issues. Schools will report on these initiatives in their biannual School reports submitted to the Provost Office.
- ✓ Based on the student survey, more than 50% of students use different sources (than the website) to get information. Schools will continue to provide orientation sessions with students, and *SDEM* will coordinate with *StratCom* to raise students' awareness regarding key academic rules.
- ✓ The process of evaluating files of transfer students will be revisited by the Registrar and the Provost Office during AY 2024-25, with an aim to assess the implementation of the new EDMS automated system for processing transfers and to ensure optimum facility, flexibility and speed.
- ✓ The online graduate programs and new initiatives to launch more online graduate certificates will be monitored, assessed and reviewed to ensure that the academic standards are aligned with all other regular programs. The new proposal for online programs, approved by the Council of Deans on August 1, 2024, will be implemented as of Fall 2024.

## Standard Five: Students

### Admissions

#### Description

As per LAU's mission, the University takes all necessary steps to enroll a diverse group of students in an equitable manner from across Lebanon and overseas, irrespective of religion, gender, sect, nationality, social background or physical condition. The University's enrollment plan aims at maintaining stable enrollment despite the worsening economy in the country. This strategy has been successful through rigorous undergraduate student recruitment, generous financial aid, robust student services, and close coordination between Admissions and academic Schools, Finance and Facilities. We plan to maintain an overall enrollment above 8,000 students, with 85% of total enrollment at the undergraduate (UG) level, while trying to increase the graduate (GR) numbers gradually over the next five years.

As shown in the Data First Forms, the grand total student headcount across both undergraduate and graduate levels at LAU has remained relatively stable over the past three years, moving from 8,012 in FY 2021 to 8,228 in FY 2022, and further increasing to 8,610 in FY 2023. The grand total FTE has seen a similar trend, increasing from 7,911 in FY 2021 to 8,561 in FY 2023, representing a +6% change. There has been an increase at all levels in FY 2023: the undergraduate total headcount of 7,499 in FY 2023 has shown a yearly increase of 5.3%, from 7,228 to 7,499, and the graduate total headcount increased by 13%, from 1,000 to 1,111. The School of Arts & Sciences houses our largest student population (36%), followed by the Adnan Kassar School of Business (30%), the School of Engineering (16%), the School of Architecture & Design (8%), the School of Pharmacy (5%), Medicine (3%) and Nursing (2%). The University has a compulsory in-person attendance policy at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, except for the six online programs, which enrolled 334 students in Fall 2023.

The School of Arts & Sciences receives around 45% of the total UG applications (of which 35% are to the Pre-Med program, followed by Freshman, Computer Science, and Psychology), while the Schools of Engineering and Business receive about 20% each. The School of Architecture & Design receives about 7% followed by the Schools of Pharmacy and Nursing. The enrollment figures of 2023 reveal that the female/male ratio stands at 52/48. LAU also boasts an international student body that stands at 14% among the undergraduate cohort, versus 13% of the graduate cohort.

Once enrolled at LAU, with the help of the Dean of Students Office (DOS) and other offices, the University ensures that all services are available to students, the incoming class integrates well within the larger student body, and all students have comparable academic and personal experiences. Furthermore, LAU commits to provide the necessary services to its students, so they benefit from an unforgettable student life experience, and they succeed personally, academically, professionally, and achieve their educational goals.

Our merit and talent scholarship programs target academically excellent and gifted students, while LAU also admits high school students with academic potential on a probationary basis. These students are provided with intense advising, remedial courses, tutoring and assessment to best ensure their success. We believe that all students who have the basic academic requirements should be able to enroll at LAU. With the personalized help and services offered by the Deans of Students and other offices, LAU continues to maintain high retention and graduation rates across all cohorts. LAU also welcomes students with disabilities (PWDs) and provides the necessary help to ensure they succeed and graduate on time.

In its mission to provide a platform of equal opportunities, LAU has vigorously served and continues to serve vulnerable communities, including refugee populations, as evidenced by several of its programs -- most notably, students who come from rural and from financially disadvantaged areas under the USAID scholarship program and similarly students from the MENA region under the [MEPI-TL](#) funded programs.

LAU has also made strides in recognizing and supporting academically exceptional students through the implementation of the [Honors Program](#). This program enables students with a GPA of 3.5 or above to register in designated courses. In 2022-2023, 346 undergraduate students successfully completed the Honors Program.

Undergraduate research has become a pillar of higher education, and LAU has played an exemplary role in advancing the scholarly output of its undergraduate cohort though, for example, the [MEPI-TLS](#) program and the [Undergraduate Research and Discovery](#) (URAD) program in the School of Arts and Sciences. The TLS requires scholarship, conference presentations, and in many cases publications on gender-related topics. The URAD nurtures students to become capable future researchers, while equipping them with the analytical, technical and non-technical skills they would need to present a competitive portfolio when applying for graduate studies. Graduate students, of course, are expected to conduct research, present, and publish as per discipline requirements. Finally, LAU has positioned itself regionally as a pioneer in technology and AI, in the area of X-tended Reality (including Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Realities) through the development of an XR facility on the Byblos campus. During the two years since its inception, the facility has housed students from the programs of Computer Science, Computer Engineering, and Architecture and Design.

### **Appraisal**

Despite all the challenges, especially the continuously deteriorating local economic situation, our recruitment strategies allowed us to successfully maintain stable overall, even positive, enrollment per campus and per School. Application numbers are solid, and our financial aid and scholarship packages are among the most attractive in Lebanon. Additional strategies will need to be in place to increase our graduate numbers.

On a yearly basis, Student Admissions obtain and review admission requirements with Schools, then share and discuss enrollment data such as application and acceptance numbers per major along with enrollment yield. This information helps us to plan for the number of students we can enroll per major and per School, the needed number of faculty, and the required classrooms and lab space. Once we project our undergraduate enrollment, we can then estimate the needed financial aid budget to meet LAU enrollment goals.

Despite the economic downfall in Lebanon, we successfully met our recruitment goals and even increased our overall enrollment to a record high of 8,610 students in Fall 2023. To ensure enrolling students from all over Lebanon and overseas, our student recruitment activities target private and public high schools in Lebanon and abroad, both in person and through online webinars. In any specific year, our student recruiters visit about 300 private high schools and all the 260 public high schools in Lebanon while they visit about 170 high schools in the MENA region and West Africa. Our student recruitment materials and admission requirements are displayed [online](#) to the public, explained during presentations, and distributed during recruitment events. Moreover, our financial aid and scholarship packages target all deserving students irrespective of religion, gender, sect, nationality, social background or physical condition.

In addition to the in-person high school visits, we organize open days on both campuses in full synchronization with LAU Schools, targeting prospective students, their parents, and high school counselors. Furthermore, we offer specific summer camps, specific webinars explaining the admission and financial aid process, we carry personalized calling campaigns to admitted students and we offer personalized and group campus tours. We conclude our recruitment strategies by offering a personalized advising and registration process to newly admitted students.

Our UG application numbers remain strong at around 6,500 applications/year, and we continue to receive twice the number of applications to the Beirut campus than to the Byblos one. Our GR application numbers remain steady at around 750, while numbers to the online programs increased from 40 in 2021 to 185 in 2023. Our overall application numbers (UG+GR) remain steady at around 8,000.

LAU welcomes academically qualified students from across Lebanon and abroad. Money is not an obstacle preventing financially needy and deserving students from enrolling at LAU. The fact that about 80% of LAU's undergraduate students receive financial aid is a clear indication that the University welcomes all categories of students who have the potential for success. At a time when the global student population has had to navigate the restrictions of a health pandemic, Lebanese students have faced far greater challenges than most, as they and their families have endured – and continue to endure – the effects of a devastated economy and an unstable political environment. The recent devaluation of the local currency along with hyper-inflation left the younger generation of our nation in real jeopardy of being unable to afford tuition fees; this in turn has impacted rates of enrollment at all institutions of higher education. However, LAU substantially increased its financial aid budget to ensure we help students continue their university studies. As a result, we saw a +1.9% increase in UG enrollment in Fall 2023 vs Fall 2022.

We continue to review our admission requirements via coordination between Enrollment Management and the Schools. LAU remains committed to welcoming deserving students from all over Lebanon and internationally irrespective of their background and physical conditions. Our renewed focus on international recruitment should yield improved results in the near future.

## Student Services and Co-Curricular Experiences

### Description

The Dean of Students Office (DOS), overseeing Academic Advising, Career Guidance, Student life activities, the Athletics Department, Dorms, and the implementation of LAU's student-related rules and policies, strives to create a safe hub for students to practice theories they learn in class, to test and experience what works, and to learn new skills and strategies while developing themselves. The DOS organizes and manages student-related events on campus, beginning with Orientation and ending with Commencement. Multiple workshops and services motivate, supervise, mentor, advise and guide students during their matriculation at LAU. Moreover, both [Community Service & Engagement](#) (CSE) and [International Services and Programs](#) (ISP) which manage all federal-funded [USAID](#) and [MEPI-TL](#) student scholarships respectively, complement the DOS office to provide the needed and additional services and support to ensure the multiple KPI's of the grants.

The Student Development entities (DOS, CSE, [OLE](#), and ISP) motivate and support student involvement on and off campus and encourage student civic engagement, volunteer and leadership opportunities. These initiatives, many of which are unique to Lebanon and the region, inspire LAU students to be engaged in university life and society beyond the classroom. Students have many opportunities to join clubs, run for student elections, participate in university governance, become a peer tutor, join

the Secretariat of LAU's signature [Simulation Model](#) (MUN, MAL, MEU, MGG) programs and participate in a [study abroad](#) or international exchange semester.

The DOS Office is the Student Governance council advisor and is responsible for planning and organizing annual student elections, updating the Student Code of Conduct and ensuring students abide by the guidelines and sanctions. During the academic year, the office guides and advises the council members, and works with them to develop their plan of action. The office also acts as a liaison between the council and administration, where and whenever needed.

[Residence Halls](#) at the University, whether off or on-campus, offer a supportive and an engaging environment and provide a range of recreational, social, sports, and cultural activities that provide opportunities for students to have fun, make friends, and take a break from their academic duties in view of developing growth and personality. The Residence personnel consists of competent, caring, and friendly staff members. LAU dorms meet the diverse needs of students effectively. This includes providing comfortable and safe living spaces as well as online portals for applications, renewals, maintenance requests, and other platforms.

As clearly indicated in its mission, LAU welcomes every student who deserves an American-style education without any discrimination based on race, age, religion, sex or financial ability and ensures providing the necessary means to welcome these students. For example, the [Counseling Services](#) caters to all students whether they are on or off campus. They offer in-person counseling as well as virtual counseling and make the necessary referrals. The MEPI-TL programs has also two Welfare Officers as counselors for the specific needs of the TL, mostly international, students. All LAU counselors refer students in need of psychiatrists or psychologists to special educators and to hospitals. LAU ensures that staff responsible for student services are qualified and have the necessary professional experience to address the needs of students effectively. For example, the University counselors are licensed psychologists and registered in the Lebanese Order of Psychologists. They can treat a variety of cases ranging from mood, personality and learning disorders. Further to the counselling services, LAU offers health and medical services to students and staff through its University Health clinics on each campus in addition to its two hospitals, St. John's and LAU-MC Rizk.

The [Athletics Department](#) offers many recreational and athletic programs that complement students' educational journey. They adhere to LAU's institutional mission and standards of integrity. The Athletics department provides students with a vast variety of athletic services, such as access to gyms and courts with experienced coaches and instructors to assist students during personal or team sports. In addition, students have access to the student lounge, where they can play chess, table tennis, and pool. Moreover, the outdoor sports fields are open daily for tennis, volleyball, basketball and mini football. LAU allocates a yearly budget for varsity teams to sustain the existing sports programs. This support covers team uniforms, sports venues rentals, student athlete transportation to and from practices and games, coaches' and administrative staff salaries and compensations, participation fees in national university championships, and travel to participate in international tournaments.

As part of the academic advising services provided to all students, and in coordination with Enrollment Management and LAU Schools, the DOS helps newly admitted students adapt to LAU's environment by giving personalized services and assisting them in course advising/registration. It further assesses students' academic performance throughout the semesters and offers them plans to align their potential with the academic requirements. These plans include change of major options, psychological referrals, tutoring services, and others. To further strengthen this unit, LAU is bringing on board new Retention Officers to help the DOS with incoming students.

The [Career Office](#) at LAU is dedicated to empowering students on their career journeys through a comprehensive array of services. The Strong Interest Inventory assessment, expertly administered by our career team, serves as a crucial tool to identify students' interests and align them with their potentials, ensuring they find relevance in their chosen majors and successfully navigate their future career paths. Additional services aimed at enhancing employability skills cover precise résumé and cover letter writing, LinkedIn profile creation, interview preparation, and various topics addressed in professional development workshops and one-on-one career guidance sessions.

Our commitment to fostering connections between students and potential employers is evident through on-campus recruitment presentations conducted regularly. Furthermore, the annual Spring Career Fair serves as a flagship event, providing a platform for students and alumni to engage with prospective employers and access a multitude of job and internship opportunities.

Access to local, regional, and international job opportunities is streamlined through the LAU International Career Portal. This global recruitment platform not only connects individuals with diverse career prospects but also offers additional features for acquiring in-depth career knowledge, connecting with experienced advisors, and accessing a wealth of career-related advice.

Alumni engagement is promoted through collaborations like the "Global Mentorship Initiative-GMI," connecting students with LAU alumni and other worldwide mentors for knowledge-sharing and career guidance. Moreover, in partnership with the LAU Consulting Community LCC, we provide students with the necessary skills to break into the competitive consulting field.

### **Appraisal**

All student services entities are regularly assessed and altered, as need be, to accommodate changing needs. With a continued good retention rate of 80%, LAU is doing well in supporting its students. As indicated above, annual surveys and other modes of assessment are conducted as well as the Exit Questionnaire administered by DIRA that allows graduating students to evaluate their entire LAU experience.

The DOS offices continue to do their best to reach the highest number of students to guide them, support them and help them. So far, students have expressed a high level of satisfaction of these services. Furthermore, the DOS continues to create a supportive and informative environment for students by organizing orientation sessions, training, social activities and empowering students, staff, and the resident assistants. Student surveys reflect a big success in this area. Regarding the Athletic center, a main challenge continues to be the lack of sufficient sports facilities on the Byblos campus.

The current decentralization of the rented facilities dilutes the impact of having sports teams supporting each other in games and practices. Despite this challenge, our female athletes continue to perform extremely well, and our female teams are leading in Lebanon. Student clubs and the student council continue to play a major role in the student life experience. During AY 2022-23, they organized more than 130 different activities with over 50% participation rate of the student body. The Student Council is highly active with different tasks and activities related to student safety and concerns.

Residence Halls, as mentioned, provide comfortable and well-maintained housing facilities with study rooms, quiet areas, and fair discipline policies. They also offer guidance and support services to help students overcome any obstacles to their academic success. They prioritize securing housing for students who are required to reside on-campus and students who have an urgent need for a secure, convenient, and comfortable living space. Housing policies, procedures, and practices are reasonable,



unbiased and provide equal treatment to all students and accommodate students with disabilities. Students consistently report high levels of satisfaction with the housing facilities and the support services they provide.

A clear description of the nature, extent and availability of student services is clearly displayed to students and prospective students on the LAU website under the Category: [Experience](#). Newly enrolled students receive this information via their student portal along with personalized messages about their advising and registration via SMS. Furthermore, the Dean of Students Office organizes orientation sessions at the beginning of every semester to newly admitted students in coordination with Schools and multiple offices to provide new students with all the University details, rules, regulations, opportunities and available support services.

As mentioned above, in terms of financial aid and scholarships, LAU offers a wide range of [need-based aid, merit scholarships and extra-curricular awards](#). These programs help about 80% of LAU's undergraduate students. Academic merit scholarships range from 10% to 100% of fees and are offered and renewed based on pure academic performance. Extra-curricular awards are offered to students with outstanding participation in various activities (for example, Simulation Programs and School-based recruitment events). In addition, LAU offers Athletic scholarships to student athletes who enroll at LAU after they successfully pass athletic tryouts. LAU primarily offers need-based financial aid packages and an additional LAU loan (with no interest). Students with US Green card or who are US citizens can benefit from the FAFSA loans. Students can receive a combination of financial aid, scholarships, awards and LAU loans. On a yearly basis, we review and assess aid packages and scholarships restrictions. Tuition fees are published on LAU's website (<https://www.lau.edu.lb/fees/>). To ensure transparency and clarity, when students receive scholarships and/or financial aid, we inform them of the percentage and exact amount they received and of the remaining net to pay balance. Students who choose to benefit from the LAU loan meet with the Business Office after Graduation to agree on a repayment schedule.

Moreover, LAU provides a safe space for all students in collaboration with the university [Title IX Office](#). The Title IX Office at LAU "provides information, confidential discussion, training/awareness materials, and networking regarding eliminating gender discrimination and sexual harassment or misconduct for the LAU community" while conducting all confidential sexual abuse, harassment and grievances.

To ensure communication and transparency, LAU identified, developed, published, and implemented an appropriate set of clearly stated ethical standards and policies describing students' rights and responsibilities, including student conduct, grievance procedures (<https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/policies.php>) and other related matters. These policies include a confidentiality policy and a record retention and disposal policy. During orientation to new students, we inform students of these policies, and every semester we communicate with students our "opt-in/out" confidentiality policy to keep our records up to date.

Each unit regularly and systematically assesses the programs/services it offers in our continued effort to achieve an equitable educational experience for LAU students. In close coordination with DIRA, we conduct annual surveys, questionnaires and focus groups. For example, the Counseling Services evaluate the results of counseling methods to determine the reliability and validity of interventions. Simulation Model programs are assessed as are all USAID and MEPI-TL scholarship programs. Residence Halls regularly conduct surveys to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of services offered to students.

The current unstable economical/political situation in Lebanon has undeniably placed pressure on our student body forcing a higher number of students to seek personal counselling and academic advising. The Counseling Services follow guidelines and procedures and a code of ethics adapted from the American Counseling Association. Our counsellors identify students in need and refer them to appropriate services.

### **Projection**

- ✓ The University plans to:
  1. Maintain a minimum overall enrollment of 8,000 students in Fall 2024
  2. Expand and modernize its recruitment strategies
  3. Gradually increase its graduate enrollment: More details are provided in Standard Four - A strategic recruitment plan for graduate studies was designed with the aim of boosting enrollment numbers over the next years.
- ✓ Based on the above appraisal, over the next 3-5 years, our Student Services will:
  1. Hire one additional student counselor per campus to respond to the higher number of students needing the service
  2. Work with Advancement and other units to establish an Athletic Centre on the Byblos campus
  3. Hire one retention officer per campus to maintain high retention rates and help the higher number of students needing academic advising and guidance



## Standard Six: Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship

### Faculty and Academic Staff

#### Description

LAU is an academic institution that prioritizes both teaching and research. LAU continues to recruit PhD and terminal degree holders who are committed to high quality research and the production of meaningful scholarship. As shown in the Data First Forms, in Fall 2023 the university employed 1,256 faculty members: 433 full time faculty including clinical, research and visiting as well as 718 part time faculty members and 51 adjunct faculty.

The recruitment of faculty follows approved university procedures, as addressed in the Personnel policy-faculty section [Exhibit\* 6.1]. Positions are [advertised](#), and the selection process is based on merit and qualifications. Once the search process is completed, the faculty search committee makes its recommendation to the Chair who forwards it to the School Dean with his/her own recommendation. The Dean makes recommendations to the Provost for new faculty appointments. These require final approval of both the Provost and the President. At present, 54% of the courses are taught by full time faculty members. In most schools, the percentage of full-time faculty versus part-time is less than 50%. In Fall 2023, the Graduate Studies and Research (GSR) Office had 17 research faculty and post doctorate fellows.

Faculty members are full-timers until the age of 64. Then, their full-time contract may be renewed yearly until they reach the age of 70 subject to specific procedures and upon the recommendation of the School Dean to the Provost and approved by the President [Exhibit 6.2]. LAU may hire faculty members over the age of 70 on an exceptional basis but not to exceed one year at a time. These exceptions are subject to specific procedures and require President's approval.

As shown in the Data First Forms, in the past three years, 79 faculty left LAU; 56 in 2021, 23 in 2022, but none in 2023. Faculty left LAU because of the following reasons: (1) the dire economic crisis in Lebanon and the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira, (2) reaching retirement age, (3) accepting employment elsewhere, and (4) not being promoted; however, 150 full time faculty were newly appointed in the past three years: 36 in 2021, 64 in 2022, and 50 in 2023.

The faculty body at LAU consists of full time, visiting, research, adjunct, and part time faculty. Full time faculty are appointed as tenure track/tenured; this track consists of professors, associate professors and assistant professors. Non-tenure tracks consist of instructors/practice instructors, senior instructors/practice senior instructors, lecturers/practice lecturers, and senior lecturers/senior practice lectures; and a professional track which consists of assistant professors of practice, associate professor of practice, and professor of practice. The clinical track consists of clinical instructors, clinical senior instructors, clinical assistant professors/clinical lecturers, clinical associate professors/clinical senior lecturers, and clinical professors. Criteria regarding each track are spelled out in the Personnel Policy – Faculty section.

As shown in the Data First Forms, as of Fall 2023, out of the faculty members holding a PhD, 34 are at the professorial rank, 107 associate professors, 66 assistant professor, 2 senior lecturers, 11 lecturers, 15 research faculty/post-doctoral research fellows and 299 others.

\*Exhibits refer to the supporting documents in the Standard Six electronic workroom.

In Fall 2022 the majority of full-time faculty (105) received their highest degree from Europe; 98 from the US, 79 from Lebanon, 19 from Canada, six from Australia, two from Asia, two from the Middle East, one from Mexico, and one from South Africa [see Exhibit 6.3].

The contracts of tenured faculty are discontinued once faculty members reach retirement age, or if faculty members fail to fulfill their duties satisfactory and do not abide by the rules, regulations and policies that govern the university, as stipulated in the Personnel Policy-Faculty; however, their contracts can only be terminated through due process, as spelled out in the same personnel policy.

LAU has well-established [policies](#) and practices regarding recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement that prohibit discrimination on any grounds. Various policies and procedures at LAU emphasize providing equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all faculty, staff, and students, for e.g., [Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Prevention policy](#) and Faculty Grievance Procedures [Exhibit 6.4], all discussed in Standard Nine. The regularly updated Faculty Handbook and Faculty Integrity Handbook [Exhibit 6.5] delineate the rights and responsibilities of faculty, while underscoring the centrality of ethical and professional conduct. In Fall 2023, there were 583 full and part time female faculty versus 673 full and part time male faculty. It is important to mention that in order to assess how well LAU supports gender equality, LAU launched its first Gender Equity Plan (GEP) [Exhibit 6.6] in Spring 2022 to describe and assess policies, practices, and conduct that support gender equality at the institution.

The workload of faculty consists of teaching duties, responsibilities in the area of scholarly, creative and professional activity, and service. Faculty in the professorial ranks teach 18 credits per year while faculty in non-professorial ranks as well as faculty in practice teach 24 credits per year. Faculty may be required to teach fewer credit hours because of administrative duties and/or services to the university. In principle, the Deans are required to teach a total of three credits per academic year; the number of credits though may differ from one school to another. The annual instructional workload of associate and assistant deans is reduced by 9 credits; the assistant provost load is reduced to 6 credits. The total annual instructional workload of chairpersons is reduced to 12 credits, and the instructional workload of academic Directors and Associate Chairs is reduced to 15 credits. Faculty members are also required to work closely with students. It is the duty of the faculty to provide effective academic advising to students. There are also academic advisors who work closely with students at risk.

All full-time faculty at LAU are bound by a Memorandum of Appointment in accordance with LAU applicable policies and procedures [Exhibit 6.1]. LAU has a set salary structure that depends on rank and area of specialty. Full time faculty are entitled to the following packages: health insurance at 75% coverage, a group life and long-term disability insurance policy, pension plan, and education benefits, as stipulated in the Personnel Policy-Faculty Section and in the Personnel Policy-Benefits Section [Exhibit 6.1]. US citizens are also entitled to US social security benefits while non-US citizens receive an end-or-service indemnity. LAU also contributes to a housing allowance for foreign faculty [Exhibit 6.5 Faculty Handbook].

The Personnel Policy-Faculty section spells out the duties and services expected from faculty. Department chairs, deans, and the Provost are charged with ensuring that faculty members observe their obligations as stated in the Faculty Bylaws [Exhibit 6.7]. A number of policies and codes govern faculty rights and their exercise in an ethical manner, as spelled out in the Faculty Handbook. All documents, important policies and procedures pertaining to faculty, including the Personnel policies, Faculty bylaws, and Faculty Handbook, are published on the LAU website. These policies are put in place to ensure an environment supportive of academic integrity.

The evaluation of part-time faculty members relies on student course evaluations and course files, as well as classroom observations in some schools and departments (Exhibit 6.8 Evaluation of part time faculty at Adnan Kassar School of Business and evaluation for part time faculty at the School of Engineering).

Promotion takes place through a peer review process based on university guidelines and school specific criteria [Exhibit 6.9]. A peer committee reviews the file and sends its recommendation to the dean of the school who adds his/her own recommendation and sends to the Provost. The Provost convenes two university promotion committees, one for promotion and tenure of assistant professors to associate professor with tenure, and another for the promotion of associate professors to full professor and to grant tenure for non-tenured associate and full professors. The Provost conveys the committees' recommendations to the President who then adds his final recommendations to the Board of Trustees for approval. In case a faculty member is denied promotion, they may appeal to the Faculty Welfare and Promotion Council. Tenure and promotion guidelines at LAU were approved by the CD in 2021; they were then revised and reapproved in February 2023 [Exhibit 6.9].

The CD also approved the procedures of mid-term review for assistant professors on tenure track first in 2008 then the amended version in 2022 [Exhibit 6.10]. Also, in 2019, the CD initiated a post tenure review procedure in cases where the tenured faculty has clearly defaulted in terms of professional duties to the university, namely, teaching, research, and services [Exhibit 6.11].

Graduate assistants may be either research or teaching assistants. Research Graduate Assistants assist a faculty member in conducting research (conducting a literature review, collecting data, inputting and analyzing data, etc.) At the School of Business and in some programs at the School of Arts and Sciences (Computer Science, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Biology), graduate students are required to teach or assist in teaching courses [Exhibit 6.12 GA contract School of Business]. In the past two years, all graduate teaching assistants and new part timers at the School of Arts and Sciences attended orientation workshops related to pedagogy [Exhibit 6.13 School of Arts and Sciences-OPTA]. Graduate assistants may also apply for a [Graduate Research Scholarship \(GRS\)](#) at LAU. Such scholarship (established in 2020) gives them an opportunity to conduct research and benefit from full tuition fee waivers while working towards a master's degree.

Faculty are also involved in governance. They make their recommendations to the academic administration through department committees, University standing councils, and the Faculty Senate. The membership of the Faculty Senate, the representative body for the full-time faculty at LAU, includes voting representatives from every department and from each of the schools with equal representation from both campuses [Exhibit 6.14 Faculty Senate Bylaws]. The Senate provides the administration and Board of Trustees with faculty recommendations on matters of concern to faculty. The Faculty Senate holds regular meetings, and faculty members are encouraged to share their concerns with their respective Senate representatives. Senators are committed to keep their colleagues abreast of the deliberations that occur during the sessions of the senate. Also, the [Faculty Senate website](#) has an archive section where minutes and post Senate actions and resolutions are posted.

Students in most majors are taught by a diverse faculty body to ensure their exposure to different academic strengths and viewpoints. Teaching effectiveness is assessed in multiple ways: Student course evaluations, annual faculty evaluation, program reviews, and accreditation. Each School has its own annual faculty evaluation form based on rank and major [Exhibit 6.8].

## Appraisal

The Covid-19 pandemic, the political instability, the economic crisis, and the devaluation of the Lebanese lira have undoubtedly affected the morale of LAU faculty. Yet, the University has pulled through and has been not only supporting the current faculty but also advertising and recruiting a good number of highly qualified faculty members (50 new faculty in 2023). Still, a large number of courses are taught by part time faculty; some of these part timers are professional in their field and thus provide different perspectives to the students.

LAU has been able to recruit and retain qualified and diversified faculty over the years. The recruitment process of full-time faculty is transparent; however, as observed in the results of the surveys and focus group interviews we conducted [Exhibit 6.15], few faculty believe that not all schools and departments have a transparent recruitment record as there are still every now and then some faculty members that are ‘parachuted’ into departments; this perception could be explained by the special appointments that are made in some instances [Exhibit 6.1 Personnel policy - Faculty section]. Recruitment in principle follows established procedures that are published in the Faculty Handbook. It is also important to note that the faculty body is recruited from around the globe and most faculty members have received appropriate training from first-rate graduate institutions, as established in the above Description section.

The readjustment of faculty/staff salaries are in principle helping to retain faculty members, yet some faculty members deny this, as seen in the survey and focus group responses. Most faculty members acknowledged that LAU had adjusted salaries adequately at the beginning of the crisis in Lebanon, but as of the AY 2022 -2023, associate professors and professors have felt that their salaries are below expectations and urge the University to look at the range of salaries critically and adjust them accordingly.

Although many faculty members left LAU in the past three years, the new appointed faculty exceeds this number, as seen in the Data First Forms. The schools have been active in recruiting full-time faculty. LAU Strategic Plan IV (2022 – 2027) stipulates that schools are expected to develop school specific faculty recruitment plans to meet set recruitment targets.

All manuals and policies pertaining to faculty, such as the Faculty Handbook, the Personnel Policy-Faculty Section, etc. are comprehensive and user-friendly. The information and content are comparable to those found in manuals, handbooks, and policies at other international institutions. Nondiscrimination and integrity are discussed in Standard Nine.

LAU has put greater emphasis on faculty research as the university’s reputation for scholarship and research has grown, leading to increasing amounts of work to keep up not only in scholarship but also with teaching and service. Furthermore, many of the schools and programs have specialized accreditation (e.g., ABET, ACCSB, NAAB, AACCP, CNNE, NASAD, ACEND, RPSC, etc.), yet the teaching load of faculty has not changed since 2006 (nine credits per semester for tenured and tenure track faculty). Teaching nine credits per semester was supposed to ease the burden on faculty instruction load but other issues have kept faculty busy, according to faculty surveyed.

Annual faculty evaluation is also school and rank specific. It is based on a clear set of guidelines and a well-established process that starts with a yearly report prepared by each faculty member. Faculty pointed out that in many departments the evaluation is not carried out effectively; it is time consuming and is not taken as seriously as it should be.

LAU has a salary structure that combines rank with discipline or area of specialty. Due to the economic crisis and the devaluation of the Lebanese Lira that affected the country, LAU administration and Board of Trustees have revisited and adjusted faculty and staff compensations many times since 2020 to ensure the well-being of faculty and staff. Cost of living increases have not kept up with inflation over the past few years. Financial strain on faculty has increased and to a certain extent has caused a decline in faculty morale. Merit salary increases, tied to school budgets rather than directly to an earmarked fund, were stopped for two years during the crisis. Faculty reiterated the need to revisit the merit salary increase, add it to the basic salary, as well as make sure that such an increase reflects yearly performance evaluations. LAU has addressed this need, and the merit scholarship has been reinstated: merit increases were added to the salaries of the faculty at the beginning of AY 2023 – 2024. Finances are discussed in detail in Standard Seven.

Evaluation of part-time faculty relies on student evaluations, course files and classroom observations in some department. As observed by some faculty in the focus group interviews, a more rigorous evaluation of part timers should be put in place. In fact, the Council of Deans (CD) in February 2022 highlighted the importance of the evaluation of part time faculty pointing out that it is important tool for assessing and assuring educational effectiveness, ensuring continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, and developing faculty expertise [Exhibit 6.8 CD approved procedure for evaluation of part time faculty]. The CD added that while favorable evaluations will be taken into consideration by the schools for PT faculty contract renewal, additional parameters will also be factored into the final decisions.

Some schools have drafted specific evaluation for part-time faculty [Exhibit 6.8 AKSOB and SOE PT evaluation]. Other schools may want to relook at the evaluation of part timers and follow the procedures posted on the website.

Research and teaching graduate assistants are working alongside faculty. Some schools are providing professional development training to the teaching assistants [Exhibit 6.13]; still, some faculty believe that research assistants may require more research training skills, as revealed by the faculty survey results.

The CD put in place a comprehensive faculty performance review and mid-term review to guide faculty and help them meet the set guidelines for promotion [Exhibit 6.9]. Although these steps are well-received by the faculty, some of the guidelines are still somehow blurred and require more practical explanations, as shown in the faculty focus group interviews.

On April 15, 2021, the CD approved the *tenure and promotion at LAU* document which was then revised by the CD again on February 16, 2023 [Exhibit 6.9]. This document ensures transparency. However, some faculty complained that promotion criteria keep changing. Promotion criteria must be reliable and valid to give equal chance to all faculty making the university great in different areas. There should be a phase in, phase out and a seniority system for the promotion criteria. The old promotion criteria that were in place when they joined the university should apply to them. By changing the promotion criteria, many senior people felt they were at a disadvantage. The promotion criteria should have equal weight, and the date of hire may be an element to consider, according to faculty surveyed.

Faculty members report that services to the university, i.e., being volunteered to do committee work, teaching, and research is overwhelming at times; this is not sustainable as it may lead to faculty burnout. Although the category of Senior Instructor was well received by non-tenured faculty as it

gave them the motive to pursue professional development, the university should have a clearer career path for them to keep them motivated and move forward.

School councils, university councils and the Faculty Senate are active. The Faculty Senate provides a platform for faculty to share in the university governance.

## Teaching and Learning

### Description

LAU's faculty development components include sabbaticals, study leaves, summer research grants, course releases, new faculty seed fund, and travel grants [Exhibit 6.5 Faculty Handbook]. A President's Intramural Research Fund (PIRF) was put in place during the academic year 2021 – 2022 to support faculty in conducting research, hire research assistants or post docs, pay conference fees and/or publication fees, and procure research consumables and equipment [Exhibit 6.16].

LAU established two faculty awards, teaching excellence award and research excellence award [Exhibit 6.5 Faculty Handbook]. The establishment of these two awards are based on the achievements of SPIII; they are both added to the faculty annual evaluations and promotions. The research excellence award is to financially and periodically reward impactful research published in high quality outlets.

Faculty are encouraged to pursue continuous professional development by attending in-house workshops, facilitated by the School or by the [Center for Innovative Learning \(CIL\)](#). CIL which is one of the major achievements of SP III, plays a major role in SPIV as well. It aims at promoting excellence in teaching, learning, and assessment through technologies and high impact pedagogies. It has been very active in providing workshops/lectures for faculty, such as blended learning, Artificial Intelligence, alternative assessment, online exams, creation of rubrics, etc.

### Appraisal

In July 2019, The Center for Innovative Learning (CIL) launched the [Faculty Fellows Program](#). The aim of this program is to bring together faculty members from different schools to promote innovative teaching, learning and assessment through the use of technologies and high impact pedagogies; some of the topics that were presented from 2019 until 2023 are the following: Developing/Designing new courses, updating existing ones, or even combining courses; transforming courses from face to face to online delivery, introducing a project with a virtual exchange component; incorporating technology in existing courses; virtual reality; designing innovative assessment techniques; developing a library of online videos [see Exhibit 6.17 for full list since 2019]. In the past two years, one instructional designer was hired to work with the faculty fellows.

The CIL has been active in offering workshops and lectures to faculty over the years. Still, some faculty surveyed pointed out that some of the topics were geared to beginners and some presentations lacked in-depth discussion. The Center is currently offering orientation for new faculty (full timers and part timers) by conducting workshops pertaining to technologies and pedagogy in collaboration with specialized faculty members in the required fields.

The office of the Dean of the [Graduate Studies and Research \(GSR\)](#) has been active in providing support to faculty in terms of research and funding. It follows up on research faculty, post-doctoral fellows, PIRFs, and International Review Board (IRB). However, the paper work required to for PIRFS and IRB is time consuming according to faculty surveyed; thus, clearer guidelines and procedures should be put in place taking into consideration reducing paper work and red tape.

Recruiting more research active faculty will yield to a better position in local, regional and global ranking for LAU. In fact, Scopus-indexed publications by full time faculty at large has increased from 357 in Fall 2019 to 677 in 2023 with some schools doing better than others [Exhibit 6.16 List of Scopus indexed publications per school].

### **Projection**

- ✓ Schools will submit to the Provost annual faculty recruitment plans with specific targets
- ✓ SPIV Pillar 3 Action 2 suggests the development of a two-week professional development workshop for new FT and PT faculty leading to a certificate. The Provost Office and the CIL, in coordination with the Schools will work on planning and implementing these workshops within the next 2 AYs.
- ✓ Pillar 3 Goal 4 recommends the hiring of instructional designers to support faculty. The CIL has hired one, but the CD and Schools should aim at establishing at least one line per School for instructional designers in the coming five years.
- ✓ Workload distribution under the current system requires tenure track and tenured faculty to teach 18 credits per year. The university should relook at the workload distribution and set clearer guidelines and procedures whereby active research faculty may request course releases. In fact, SP IV Pillar 1 goal 2 action 4 stipulates that more time should be allocated for research active faculty to further extend their exploration engagement. Thus, the CD will review faculty workload during AY 2024-2025 and make recommendations.
- ✓ The University has readjusted salaries many times since Spring 2020. The university administration is following the issue carefully and should revisit and readjust the salary scales accordingly; the administration should also relook at tying the merit increases to faculty performance as this has not been taken into consideration during the pandemic and economic crisis but was implemented during the current AY 2023-2024.

## Standard Seven: Institutional Resources

### Human Resources

#### Description

As of Fall 2023, LAU had a total of 1,239 instructional staff of whom 406 were full-time faculty, as shown in the Data First Forms. In comparison to an undergraduate student body of 7,499, this yields a ratio of one instructional staff to every seven undergraduate students. In support of LAU's educational mission, in Fall 2023, LAU employed a total of 1,001 staff representing a nearly one-to-one ratio of staff to instructional staff.

In both LAU's [values and vision](#), the importance of a diverse community stands out with a particular emphasis on gender equality and the welcoming of all religious faiths. Regular studies on gender and pay at LAU conducted by HR reveal that the full-time staff body includes 50.2% women and 49.8% men. The full-time faculty body includes 48% female and 52% male ([DIRA Factbook](#)).

Human resource policies are available to all [online](#), including a personnel policy for faculty, for staff, and one specifically for [benefits](#). Also available to all are policies on grievances, discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct prevention (last updated 2017), and non-fraternization (last updated 2014). All LAU employees go through an annual review process in consultation with their direct supervisor. Appeals to the evaluation are possible through HR for staff and through higher levels of administration for faculty.

The website of the university includes a page where all job vacancies, both faculty and staff, are posted [publicly](#). Set grades serve to specify the range of pay possible for jobs at LAU ensuring consistency across functions throughout the university. Unfortunately, since the economic crisis began in October 2019, the take-home pay changed significantly leaving both staff and faculty uncertain about the alignment between the value of their work and the value of their paycheck. LAU worked hard to address this issue by incrementally changing the percentage of take-home pay in US dollars (USD) relative to the local currency (LBP). In Fall 2023, full-time faculty receive 80%, part-time faculty receive 65%, full-time staff receive 80%, and part-time staff receive 55% of their salary in USD.

#### Appraisal

In the past three years, the largest challenge faced by LAU within the HR function was retention. There were 389 full-time instructional staff in Fall 2019, but by Fall 2021, there were only 352 representing an approximately 10% decrease in instructional staff. Due to an aggressive hiring strategy in the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Medicine, LAU did witness a recovery to a total of 384 full-time instructional staff in Fall 2022 and 406 in Fall 2023. However, while overall numbers came back to their pre-crisis levels, numbers within individual schools continue to suffer (e.g., the school of business had 62 full-time faculty in Fall 2020 and only 55 full-time faculty in Fall 2022; the school of engineering had 49 full-time faculty in Fall 2020 and only 45 full-time faculty in Fall 2022). Unfortunately, with regards to non-teaching staff there was no strong recovery in numbers. For example, Academic and Student Affairs staff dropped from 226 in Fall 2019 to 184 in Fall 2022 but rebounded to 200 in Fall 2023. The loss of these critical support staff was felt throughout the university. LAU is actively hiring to fill the vacancies, but the labor pool available in Lebanon is limited as are the number of staff within the HR function to execute these critical hiring processes. The ability of LAU to continue to operate at these reduced levels of staffing are a testament to the immense dedication of the LAU community.



The biggest change seen in the past three years within the HR function is a greater emphasis on training and more specifically, training on the [Title IX policy](#). Through a broad reaching campaign, staff and faculty are now aware of Title IX policies and appropriate reporting channels.

For faculty, the programming at the [Center for Innovative Learning \(CIL\)](#) provides multiple training opportunities relative to good pedagogy. Specifically, during AY 2022-2023, the CIL hosted 17 seminars in the Fall and Spring Semesters in addition to the annual month-long Faculty Fellows workshop to which full-time, tenure track faculty apply for special training in innovative pedagogies. The CIL continues to be at the heart of LAU's faculty training initiatives as evidenced by Pillar III of Strategic Plan IV. The CIL is discussed in more detail in Standard Six.

## Financial Resources

### Description

As per the financial policy of LAU, the President, as the Chief Executive Officer, is ultimately responsible to the Board of Trustees for the University's financial resources. The President delegates to the Vice President for Finance, the Chief Financial Officer, the management of financial matters. The Vice President for Finance may delegate and assign authorities and duties that will ensure proper accountability, and efficiency of operations, in accordance with the University's organization structure, subject to President's approval. The Vice President for Finance is also responsible for setting the proper processes, procedures, and controls needed, in coordination with other University constituencies, to manage and safeguard the University's assets and resources, and to approve them through the appropriate channels. The [financial policy](#) establishing the framework for authority and responsibility of financial resources was last updated in 2006.

LAU employs a comprehensive five-year financial plan encompassing the short, medium, and long-term financial considerations associated with the university's strategic initiatives. Due to the uncertainties posed by the political and economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, the five-year financial plan was put on hold during fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22. This hiatus allowed the university to reassess the situation and gain a clearer sense of direction before resuming the normal planning process. In academic year 2022-23, LAU's finance management reinstated the five-year planning process.

In parallel to the five-year financial plan, LAU also engages in a strategic planning process with financial implications across the university. Specifically, at the conclusion of SPIII in 2021-2022, LAU established its fourth strategic plan (SP IV) spanning five years with an estimated total cost of \$44.7 million.

Developing the budget guidelines at LAU rests on the shoulders of the University Budget Committee (UBC). The UBC engages in collective review and evaluation of internal budget information and results, while benchmarking internally across units and externally against competitors. As established in the University Budgets: Roles, Responsibilities, and Procedures document (last edited March 2011, available through portal in University Procedures), the UBC is composed of the Vice President for Advancement, Provost, Vice President for Finance, Vice President for Human Resources and University Services, Vice President for Student Development and Enrollment Management, One Academic Dean (on annual rotation basis to be selected by Provost), One Dean of Students (on annual rotation basis to be selected by VP SDEM), Assistant Vice President for Finance/ Director of Budget & Financial Planning, Vice President General Counsel, Chair of the Faculty Senate, and Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate.

The budget process at LAU requires all schools, divisions, and offices to present to the UBC, in Mid-December, a written document outlining operating plans for the coming three years along with priorities and all new approved programs/offices. The UBC then works with the budget office to adjust the proposals as warranted. Once adjusted, the UBC, in turn, recommends to the president the budget proposal for the current year along with projections for the coming three years. The budget includes both the Operating Budget: composed of faculty and staff compensation, operating expenses, supplies, financial aid and other projects needed for running the operations of each entity and the Capital Budget. The budget office provides support to all entities as they prepare their budgets. In this way, LAU provides sufficient autonomy to the various budget units yielding a sense of ownership and accountability.

The capital budget at LAU consists of two sections: the divisional capital budget and the capital projects budget. For the capital projects budget, oversight is provided by the Central Facilities Committee (CFC). This committee is responsible for monitoring and approving spending on capital projects, including unforeseen CAPEX transactions, renovations, and major maintenance projects. Being a permanent and active member of this committee, Finance plays a crucial role in securing the necessary funding for such projects. The Board of Trustees (BOT) is actively involved in the oversight process of the capital budget. The BOT's Finance Oversight Committee and Finance and Planning Committee monitor the execution of capital projects, and the status of these projects is regularly reported to the BOT. This ensures that the BOT is informed about the progress and financial implications of capital projects. By implementing these oversight mechanisms and involving various committees and the BOT, LAU ensures transparency, accountability, and effective management of the capital budget. The involvement of multiple stakeholders in the decision-making and monitoring processes helps maintain financial discipline and ensures the responsible allocation of resources for capital projects. Furthermore, contingency planning is an integral part of LAU's budgeting process, emphasizing the university's commitment to proactive financial management. For example, LAU allocates a contingency budget of approximately \$1.5 million within its operating budget. Additionally, there is a contingency budget of 10% to 15% allocated for capital projects. Furthermore, LAU invests in insurance to safeguard against political violence, property damage, public liability, life and long-term disability, and directors' and officers' liability, among others. Additionally, LAU purchased \$20 million of political risk insurance from the DFC (US International Development Finance Corporation, previously (OPIC) Overseas Private Investment Corporation), to provide coverage for business interruption and damaged assets resulting from war activities. The current DFC policy is a 10-year policy that expires in 2027.

The budget process is subject to annual, continuous quality improvement. For example, in 2022-2023 the horizon for budgeting was extended from one to three years. Additionally, finance management at LAU, in collaboration with the IT department, is currently working on automating the filing of budgets by each budget unit to ease the job of the UBC and budget office in preparing the recommended budget for submission to the president.

LAU's financial statements undergo annual audits following generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). In the fiscal year 2021-2022, the auditors stated that LAU's financial statements were presented in accordance with GAAP and reflect a fair representation of the company's financial position, results of operations, and cash flows. Of note was the inclusion of a special section in the auditors' report entitled "Emphasis of Matters" which highlights disclosures related to the economic and operational conditions in Lebanon – most notably disclosures relative to the translation of statements across multiple currencies and associated rates of exchange. Despite this note, the clean, unqualified opinion of the auditors indicates the reliability of LAU's financial statements.

To clarify the issue of translation across multiple currencies: the audited financials use the "Sayrafa Rate," while day-to-day financial management relies on the market rate. Sayrafa is an electronic platform developed by the Central Bank to record all Lebanese Pounds foreign exchange transactions carried out by all persons and entities licensed to do so. In December 2023, the Sayrafa Rate of exchange was 85,500LL/USD. The market exchange rate refers to the unofficial, illegal, or parallel market rate at which the US dollar is traded. This rate is not determined through official channels such as banks or financial institutions but rather occurs through unofficial or "black market" transactions. In December 2023, the Market Rate was 89,700LL/USD. The gap between the Sayrafa rate and the market rate, currently at ~5%, generally ranges between 5% to 10%.

As of the close of the fiscal year ending on August 31, 2023, the total assets of the university were \$1,209M which positively contrasts to the \$1,163M in total assets at the closing of the 2022, but highlights the fluctuation experienced with the situation and multiple exchange rates relative to the \$1,287M in total assets at the closing of 2021. Total liabilities on August 31, 2023 were settled at \$50.9 million (2022: \$32.0 million and 2021: \$58.0 million). A current ratio of 17.7 suggests that the local operations of the University have \$17.7 of short-term assets for every \$1 of short-term liabilities. As shown in Table 7.1, the current ratio is relatively stable.

	2022-2023	2021-2022
Current Assets	7%	7%
Investments & Investments in Subsidiaries	67%	66%
Fixed Assets, net	26%	28%
Current Liabilities	52%	60%
Long-Term Liabilities	48%	40%
<b>Current Ratio, excluding liquid investment</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Current Ratio, including liquid investment</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>23.1</b>

Table 7.1 Relative percentage of total assets and liabilities along with the current ratio for 2022-2023 and 2021-2022

Cash and cash equivalents were \$47.1 million at the end of fiscal year 2022-2023 compared to \$46.5 million in the last fiscal year and \$81.8 million at the end of 2020-2021. This item is inflated by draws on endowment of around \$82.1 million during these two years in response to operating and CAPEX needs.

As of August 31, 2023, 73.2% of LAU's banks' position amounting to around \$31.6 million (2022: \$23.9 million) is placed in U.S. and overseas banks and financial institutions and 26.8% amounting to \$11.6 million (2022: \$12.5 million) is placed in local Lebanese banks. The placements in local banks include US Dollar deposit accounts of \$7.0 million. The remaining balance of \$4.6 million (2022: \$9.2 million), expressed at fair market value, is held in local dollars<sup>1</sup> and Lebanese Liras.

<sup>1</sup> This currency signifies the U.S. dollars held in local banks due to the impact of the economic crisis. Presently, this currency is exchanged at the updated official rate of LBP 15,000 per U.S. dollar

The increase in US banks and draw down on local banks is part of LAU’s risk management strategy. Specifically, collections in both the university and hospitals are realized in USD, with only minor exceptions. Local payroll is disbursed in both USD and local currency, even though it is reported in local currency for legal reasons. Thus, LAU’s holdings with local banks serve only to cover payroll and minor transactions. Collections from tuition are immediately transferred to banks in the US. Foreign currency bank loans have been settled by offsetting against holdings in the same currency. Any remaining US dollar placements stuck within the local banking system have been impaired, and provisions for the value of impairment have been recorded. Positions in local currency are almost fully exhausted, and if there is a need for such currency, it is secured through conversion from fresh dollar positions.

At the conclusion of 2022-2023, financial investments stood at \$622.1 million (2022: \$591.6 million). In this period, there were no withdrawals from the endowment, in contrast to the \$31.9 million drawn in 2021-2022 to support the University and its affiliates in their operational and capital expenditure (CAPEX) activities. The cumulative withdrawals from the endowment over the past three years totaled \$82.1 million.

The total LAU investment main portfolio had a positive performance, increasing by 3.1%, equivalent to \$30.8 million, in contrast to the negative returns of \$59.2 million in the academic year 2021-2022. Table 7.2 shows all three LAU endowment portfolios, restricted and non-restricted, and their returns over various time periods.

Portfolio	Market value 31/8/2023	FYTD	3 Year	5 Year	Since Inception
<b>Endowment</b>	\$596,964,953	3.1%	7.8%	5.8%	5.2%
<b>Bank of America</b>	\$17,983,598	7.7%	5.0%	5.8%	5.8%
<b>PNC</b>	\$7,157,825	4.3%	2.9%	4.0%	5.0%

Table 7.2 LAU Endowment Portfolios Performance

The Board of Trustees’ Investment Committee retains full fiduciary responsibility for LAU’s investment portfolio in accordance with the university’s investment policy. It oversees and directs the management of LAU’s investment portfolio through policy setting, asset allocation, hiring and termination of managers, and monitoring of investment activities. Investments consist principally of publicly traded debt and equity securities, alternative investments including private equity, real assets and hedge funds. As a U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and pursuant to its governing documents, the BOT of LAU has a full and exclusive power to manage the university’s endowment in compliance with applicable New York State and federal laws. Accordingly, all transfers from or to LAU’s endowment are subject to the Investment Committee and board authorization.

In June 2009, the university created two subsidiary entities, namely Medical Care Holding (MCH) and Medical Care Management (MCM), along with acquired shares in a Beirut-based hospital structured as a limited liability company. This acquisition aimed to bolster the university's medical, pharmacy, and nursing schools. To comply with Lebanese laws, the university predominantly owns the subsidiary entities, with the remaining shares held by individuals nominated by the university, who also serve as members of the Board of Trustees (BOT). This arrangement ensures complete ownership of the entities by the university. All three entities operate as for-profit corporations under Lebanese law, with two being limited liability corporations and the third functioning as a holding company. MCH and MCM were established to secure financial support for the hospital and to provide management and consultancy services, respectively. Presently, MCM oversees the operations of the LAUMC-St John hospital located on the north side of the capital city, Beirut.

As of August 31, 2023, the University's investment in the hospitals amounted to \$182.2 million (compared to \$182.2 million in 2022). Given the accumulated losses and the resulting decline in the hospitals' equity, a thorough examination of the fair value of this investment is imperative to ascertain the presence of any impairment. In the assessment conducted by the finance management at the close of the calendar year 2022, a certified real estate consultant appraised the land and buildings of the Beirut hospital, excluding equipment and other fixed assets. Restating the net assets based on the appraised figures revealed a fair value of \$184.5 million, indicating a positive spread of approximately \$2.5 million. According to this evaluation, there was no immediate need to recognize impairment in the university's investment in the hospitals as of the end of the academic year 2021-2022. An improved outlook is expected for the academic year 2022-2023, given the recent recovery in the real estate market and enhanced operating conditions at the hospitals. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that the recognition of impairment may become necessary if the hospitals incur losses in the future. The healthcare sector in Lebanon is also facing significant challenges due to the prevailing storm of economic, political, and corruption issues. These challenges, along with shortages of medical products and staff, have had a detrimental impact on the ability of the Lebanese community to access adequate medical care, particularly at first-tier medical centers.

The pricing formula at the hospitals, which involves full reimbursement of medical supplies, consumables, and prostheses, but only 50% reimbursement of hospital services and physician fees based on 2019, has posed financial difficulties. However, negotiations with insurances and third-party administrators (TPAs) have resulted in gradual tariff increases, providing greater financial stability for the LAU Medical Centers (LAUMCs). The increase in physicians' professional fees to 75% of 2019 fees is also a positive development. A full restitution of physicians' professional fees is expected by January 2024, while a complete recovery of hospital services tariffs from 2019 is projected to occur by June 2024. These advancements are poised to enhance the financial sustainability of the hospitals in the coming period. Both LAUMCs face difficulties optimizing their operating environment due to an unfavorable mix of activities, underutilized operating theaters and clinics, and a shortage of busy surgeons in different specialties.

In fiscal year 2022-2023, the combined EBITDA of the hospitals significantly improved, registering a positive EBITDA of \$7.5 million compared to a negative \$0.70 million in the previous fiscal year. Despite this improvement, the combined final results still reflected a loss of \$0.6 million, a notable reduction from the \$6.1 million loss in fiscal year 2021-2022. The positive impact on financial performance is attributed to gradual tariff adjustments since January 2022, leading to increased revenues, and the impact of stockpiling exercises conducted by LAUMCRH during the period when subsidies were in place, resulting in lower expenses. Similar to the University, hospital performance was influenced by adjustments to relief packages, increased costs due to dollarization, and a surge in fuel prices.

LAU's investment in subsidiaries represents the value of the investment of LAU in the Hospitals through a related tax blocker entity, the Medical Care Holding Company s.a.l. (MCH). This strategy allowed for the efficient allocation of profits generated by the Hospitals and facilitated the management of tax obligations in a manner that aligns with the organization's financial objectives. During fiscal year 2021-2022, the University injected \$15.0 million into LAUMCRH to fund construction projects as part of the strategic plan approved by the board. As of August 31, 2022, the University's investment in the hospital was valued at \$182.2 million.

During fiscal 2020-2021, LAU established a subsidiary named LAU Innovate SAL and subscribed in more than 99% of its share capital in the amount of \$20,000.

The statement of activities for fiscal year 2022-2023 reveals a favourable shift in net assets, indicating a reported increase of \$25.0 million (compared to a negative \$98.0 million in 2022). This rise in net assets stems from operating deficits amounting to \$5.8 million (versus \$38.8 million in 2022), counterbalanced by positive returns on investments totaling \$30.8 million (in contrast to a negative \$59.2 million in 2022).

In fiscal year 2022-2023, tuition revenue surged to \$167.1 million, a substantial increase from the previous fiscal year's \$43.2 million, expressed at fair market value. This notable growth was driven by a strategic shift, transitioning all revenue streams to US Dollars. Despite this move, enrollment remained strong, largely attributed to an increase in undergraduate population enrollment, coupled with a generous financial aid package totalling \$100 million, assuming zero attrition in enrollment.

The surge in tuition revenue seen in 2022-2023 is against the backdrop of the revenue stream seen in fiscal year 2021-2022 which forced the University into a loss mode. The administration adjusted the tuition pricing in order to mitigate the financial damage, but this was accompanied by costly retention relief packages that added to the existing financial imbalance. The same pricing model was adopted in fiscal year 2021-2022, despite a further deterioration in the currency, leading to significant operating deficits and a squeeze in cash flow. This resulted in an unprecedented reliance on endowment funding. The relief package adjustments during December 2021 and July 2022 also contributed to the deficit, but they were necessary to retain personnel in light of the heavy exodus of faculty, staff, and physicians.

In February 2021, the University increased its tuition rate to LBP 3,900 to \$1 from the previous rate of LBP 1,515 to \$1, while offering sufficient financial aid to prevent any negative impact on enrollment. The University maintained this practice during the Fall 2021 term and partially transitioned to the new rate of LBP 8,000 per \$1 introduced by the Central bank in December 2021. The University took various measures to improve collections and cash flow amid the numerous changes in the monetary structure of the country. It is worth noting that not only was the exchange rate between LBP and USD fluctuating in the country, but banks were (and continue to) institute capital controls which prevent citizens from withdrawing more than a limited amount of money at a time.

The strategic enrollment management plan incorporates specific objectives and action items focused on utilizing financial aid and scholarships to achieve LAU's enrollment targets. The Financial Aid and Scholarships Plan (FASP) is designed to align with the individual enrollment goals of the schools. In the fiscal year 2022-2023, financial aid for undergraduate students reached an unprecedented level of 59.0%, a significant increase from 45.0% in 2022, and a substantial rise from the consistent 13% to 15% observed a decade ago. The percentage of LAU students benefiting from financial aid increased to over 80% (6,700 students) in fiscal year 2022-2023, compared to 75% (6,250 students) in 2022. While this placed quite a burden on the institution, these levels of financial aid are in keeping with LAU's mission and align with LAU's values.

*Gifts and grants* amounted to \$24.3 million in fiscal year 2022-2023 (2022: \$20.1 million). The private fundraising share of this item includes \$4.4 million in 2023 compared to \$2.9 million in 2022. The remaining balance is solely derived from US and other international grants. The ratio of gifts and grants to total revenues stood at 23.5% during fiscal year 2022-2023 (2022: 29%) with the ratio of private gifts to total revenues at 4% (2022: 7%). The ongoing reliance on US Government contracts and grants, accounting for 82.7% of total fundraising revenues in fiscal year 2022-2023 (compared to 85.7% in 2022), underscores the importance of developing a more diversified fundraising portfolio.

Total expenses, excluding financial aid, surged by 31.5%, escalating from \$65.4 million in the fiscal year 2021-2022 to \$86.0 million in the fiscal year 2022-2023. Notably, 61.4% of the overall expenses of the university is allocated to compensation, with 60.0% dedicated to faculty. In the 2022-2023 period, LAU employed around 450 full-time faculty and physicians, encompassing adjuncts, and 643 full-time non-teaching staff, alongside 437 and 133 part-time employees, respectively. Currently, the university has achieved success by implementing a range of modifications to the relief package, ensuring that its community recovers approximately 85% to 95% of their net income compared to the period preceding the crisis. It is crucial to highlight that a portion of this recovery is facilitated by an existing tax system that partially subsidizes the overall recovery process.

Operating expenses displayed sustained efficiency and effectiveness in resource allocation. The total operating expenses of the university, inclusive of financial aid, reached \$185 million by the fiscal year concluding on August 31, 2023. Educational, common support, and financial aid costs constituted approximately 79% of the university's total expenses.

Property and equipment (*including computer software*) amounted to \$310.7 million, net of depreciation and amortization of \$196.7 million (2022: \$321.6 million, net of depreciation and amortization of \$181.4 million). During fiscal year 2022-2023, the university spent \$4.3 million on construction, renovation, software, and new capital acquisitions. The Board of Trustees has approved a capital budget for the university and the main hospital, totaling \$34.9 million and \$18.7 million, respectively. This budget spans four years and is primarily financed through the operations of LAU and both institutions, fundraising initiatives, and potential utilization of the endowment.

Total liabilities amounted to \$50.9 million (compared to \$32.0 million in 2022). These liabilities mainly include accounts payable incurred in the regular course of business, totaling \$5.3 million, accrued liabilities amounting to \$7.0 million, deferred revenues of \$14.3 million, and accrued end-of-service indemnity totaling approximately \$24.1 million. During the fiscal year 2022-2023, adjustments were made to the provision for accrued end-of-service indemnity to account for a partially increased recovery.

Net Assets, expressed at fair market value, totaled \$1.16 billion for fiscal year 2022-23, up from \$1.13 billion in fiscal year 2021-22, reflecting the impact of this year's positive performance in both operating and non-operating categories (Investments).

### **Appraisal**

Despite multiple unfavorable circumstances, the university's finances are in a sustainable state. This is noteworthy considering the unprecedented, adverse performance in the 2021-22 academic year. LAU's endowment-based model for support through the crisis is unsustainable in the long-run but served to support recovery as part of a conscientious plan including full dollarization of tuition. The path to recovery is most noteworthy in the recovery from an operating deficit of \$38.8 million in 2022 to one of \$5.8 million in 2023. This recovery is a testament to the university's ability to navigate through the perfect storm of crises.

The lack of diversity in LAU's revenue streams creates a significant dependence on enrollment. To counter this dependence, LAU undertook two strategies: (1) dollarization of tuition and (2) diversification of the enrollment portfolio. During the economic and monetary crisis in Lebanon, LAU took a proactive approach by announcing a shift towards full dollarization of its tuition pricing. What set LAU apart was the implementation of a substantial discount, averaging around 60%, for all categories of students. This discount allowed LAU to maintain healthy enrollment levels. The strategy proved successful as evidenced by the consistent enrollment numbers during academic year 2022-2023.

In order to diversify the enrollment portfolio, LAU introduced five online master's programs. Collectively total enrollment in the online programs stands at 200 individual students enrolled in 693 credits in Summer 2023.

While LAU has been successful in securing grants from US granting agencies, \$66.5M for the coming five years (\$53.0M from USAID and \$13.5M from MEPI), the continued dependence on US Government grants and contracts, which accounted for 81% of the total gift and grant revenues for fiscal 2021-2022, highlights the need for a more diversified fundraising portfolio. This dependence on the US Government increases the risk for the University's financial stability in the face of changes in government funding policies or budget cuts.

Within the Lebanese landscape, the economic crisis in the country, coupled with a lack of interest from traditional donors during difficult times, hindered private fundraising efforts. To address this issue, LAU is restructuring its Advancement entity. The appointment of a new Vice President for Institutional Advancement for Lebanon and a Vice President for Global Advancement in the US reflects the university's aggressive approach to enhancing private fundraising. The focus on diversification has stretched beyond historical reliance on private fundraising to include expansion outside Lebanon (e.g., plans to convert the New York academic center to a branch campus and explorations into the Iraqi market) and expansion into industry (e.g., establishing a Bio Equivalence Lab and developing the Industrial Hub). By seeking alternative sources of funding and expanding into new areas, the university aims to reduce its vulnerability to economic fluctuations and create a more sustainable financial model. The Advancement Office presented a plan in September 2023 for fundraising, with a situation analysis and strategic framework for enhancing development. A summary of the plan is available in the Standard Seven electronic workroom.

Recently, LAU's plan to convert the New York Academic Center to a branch campus and to have a more substantial foothold in New York that will mitigate some of the risk of operating in Lebanon has been set in motion. This conversion is not only expected to generate additional revenues for the university but also help to defray the risk of unfavorable decisions from the Ministry of Higher Education relative to online degrees. As a critical first step, the NY State Board of Regents voted on March 12, 2024 to approve the conversion of LAU's New York Academic Center to a branch campus.

Compounding the complexity of financial planning at LAU is the variability seen in expenses over the past four years. In 2020 and 2021, the expenses were reduced due to the shutdowns required by COVID-19. Yet in 2022, the expenses spiked due to policies beyond LAU's control such as the removal of government subsidies on fuel. Furthermore, expenses driven by the procurement function are tied to suppliers' drive to dollarize and resist payments in LBP. Two strategies in this regard will help the university cope with this volatility: tighter controls in setting the budgets and implementation of efficient spending mechanisms.

Due to the accumulated losses and the resulting erosion of the hospital's equity, it is necessary to closely examine the fair value of this investment and determine if any impairment has occurred. In the evaluation process conducted by the finance management at the end of the calendar year 2022, a certified real estate consultant assessed the land and buildings of the Beirut hospital (excluding equipment and other fixed assets). Restating the net assets of the hospital based on the evaluated figures revealed a fair value of \$184.5 million, indicating a positive spread of approximately \$2.5 million. Based on this evaluation, there is no immediate need to recognize impairment in the university's investment at the hospital as of the end of the fiscal year 2021-2022. However, it is important to note that the recognition of impairment may become necessary if the hospital incurs additional losses in the future.



## Information, Physical, and Technological Resources

### Description

LAU's Lebanon-based campuses are situated in Beirut and Byblos with an academic center in Manhattan, New York, USA. The university also owns a University Medical Center (LAUMC-Rizk Hospital, 200 beds) in Achrafieh, Beirut, and operates another medical center (LAUMC-St John Hospital, 70 beds) in the city of Jounieh. Additionally, LAU owns a large parcel of land in Majdelyoun, located in the outskirts of the southern city of Sidon. The institution also rents nearby facilities for administrative offices, off-campus housing, and university storage. LAU's [total built-up area](#) is 269,227 m<sup>2</sup>, including campuses, medical centers, and New York Headquarters and Academic Center.

Facilities planning, construction, renovation, and maintenance are the responsibility of the Facilities Management (FM) department. This department consists of the following four divisions: program management & contract administration, planning & renovations, physical plant-Beirut, and physical plant-Byblos. The FM department, headed by the assistant vice president for FM (AVPFM, who reports to the VP for Administration), is responsible for managing the university's facilities for the benefit of all users. The FM department at LAU employs around 80 full-time and part-time staff and has an annual operating budget (2022-2023) of USD 9,728,046. The 2022-2025 three-year capital budget for construction and renovations, prepared in March 2023, includes 279,752,989 USD split nearly evenly across the Beirut and Byblos Campuses with USD 112,737,016 for Beirut campus projects and USD 167,015,973 for Byblos campus projects.

Facilities management outsources major design initiatives and acts as a commissioning agent and employer representative for capital projects of value exceeding \$500,000, whereas most other minor renovation projects valued below \$500,000 are designed and supervised by the in-house FM engineers. FM is assisted by a project management firm and technical monitoring offices for the management of its major capital projects.

Of particular note, in January 2022, the [Gezairi Building](#) opened its doors to the students of LAU and the faculty and staff of the School of Architecture and Design. The renovated building includes 60 Faculty and Staff Offices, 27 Studios, 12 Smart Classrooms, 8 Academic Labs, 5 Computer Labs, 2 Lecture Halls and a host of other spaces to make learning and working more engaging and comfortable. Not only does the Gezairi Building create spaces conducive to learning in line with the LAU mission, but the areas on the Beirut campus vacated by the move to Gezairi were converted to the benefit of LAU's students. Notably, the studios on the ground floor of the Orme Gray building were converted to group study spaces which are available at all times that the university is open with large desks and ample access to electric outlets. Additionally, in support of learning, new Biology and Chemistry labs used for teaching on the Beirut campus were built and some older labs renovated within Sage Hall. The much-needed upgrade to the lab facilities makes the space safer to work and learn with better ventilation.

On the Byblos campus, the newest buildings include the Engineering Laboratories and Research Center (ELRC) and the Joseph G. Jabbra Library (JGJL). Both of these [buildings](#) operate in direct service to students with the ELRC hosting nearly 9,000m<sup>2</sup> of laboratory space and the JGJL providing study space for nearly 200 students. In support of research, the Byblos campus just hosted the grand opening of the newly renovated, state-of-the-art, Animal Facility on 27 June 2023 (<https://news.lau.edu.lb/2023/usaids-grants-enhance-innovative-technology-and-best-practices-at-lau.php>).

Other investments in the physical resources at LAU include the opening of four, fully equipped video recording studios – two on each campus. These studios, managed by the [Center for Innovative Learning \(CIL\)](#), serve as the powerhouse behind LAU’s online programs. In addition to the studios, the CIL also includes a classroom within the Riyadh Nasser Library which serves as a training center for faculty seeking to innovate within their pedagogical offer or embed technology in their classes.

With regards to technology and connectivity, the Information Technology (IT) department, headed by the Assistant Vice President for IT (AVPIT) is responsible for planning, implementing, securing and supporting information technology throughout LAU. There are four main departments within IT, each headed by a director: IT infrastructure, IT applications and solutions, IT Support, and IT security. The IT department at LAU consists of 45 full-time employees and has an annual operating budget (2022-23) of USD 4,455,000. The IT department reports every 6 months through the VP of Administration the latest state of IT. This includes accomplishments as well new projects based on LAU users’ needs as well as projects of a technical nature needed to sustain IT services at LAU.

LAU hosts approximately 2,575 telephone extensions, 1,736 computers for student use, 1,860 computers for faculty and staff use, and 900 printers and scanners connected to a high-speed wired network. All buildings on the campuses are connected via 10 gigabit single-mode fiber optic cabling. LAU migrated most of the server infrastructure from physical to virtual. The number of virtual machines is 489, running on 16 physical servers with no physical servers running individually. Virtualization helped IT to achieve flexibility and modularity while contributing to LAU’s green initiatives.

Connectivity across LAU’s five physical locations is mission critical with LAU acting as a cloud provided for the medical facilities and New York. The Beirut and Byblos campuses are connected via a 1200Mb redundant WAN connection. The New York office is connected to the LAU campuses’ high speed 250 Mb redundant internet connection. LAUMC-RH is connected to LAU via a 450Mb redundant and highly available wide area network (WAN) link. LAUMC-SJH is connected to LAU via a 300Mb redundant and highly available wide area network (WAN) link. LAU’s off-campus dorms and the downtown office are connected via dedicated WAN connections.

Critical to the strategic shift to online and distance education, IP-based video conferencing systems are available in all 43 conference rooms on the main LAU campuses, at the New York offices, and at LAUMC-RH and LAUMC-SJH. All 290 classrooms on the LAU campuses are equipped with projectors. The university is connected to the internet through two ISPs with a speed of 1800 Mbps. Through the network and web, students, faculty and staff can access the IT services available to them like the student information system (Banner), library information system (currently OLIB), course management system (Blackboard), Raiser’s Edge fundraising system, email, LAU Portal, HR, Financials, i-procurement, medical simulation system (CAE), a Document Management System (Laserfiche), Lecture capture system (Panopto), a curriculum advising application (Starfish), automated the staff appraisal process (SAP Success factors) and other IT services. During the COVID years, IT moved many of its services to the cloud in order to enable remote teaching and performed major integrations between these services and our Video conferencing system (WebEx) in order to ensure continuity of teaching during Lockdown.

IT at LAUMC-RH has seen rapid growth since it was acquired by LAU. The IT environment at the center is comprised of approximately 1000 telephone extensions, 650 computers, 120 printers. IT also virtualized most of its infrastructure where more than 100 servers are virtualized on 9 physical servers; 12 physical servers remain in operation and will be phased out over the next few years. The hospital

implemented SAP state of the art ERP, patient management system, Electronic Health Record and new billing system tailored to the Lebanese market. In addition, the medical labs process was automated, so has the Radiology department. A new CCTV system and cameras were installed and CISCO call center was also installed to manage the incoming calls to the hospital and clinics. After the start of operations in LAUMC-SJH, all medical application at LAUMC-RH were extended to LAUMC-SJH such as the SAP Hospital Information System, Radiology system as well as the Lab automation system. This ensures a single identity for patients who receive treatment at both hospitals in addition to visibility of patients' record and treatment across hospitals which greatly contributes to patient safety and customer experience.

The IT environment at LAUMC-SJH is comprised of approximately 240 telephone extensions, 220 computers, 60 printers. IT has also implemented a virtualized infrastructure where more than 35 servers virtualized on 5 physical servers. A new CCTV system and cameras were installed and CISCO call center was also installed to manage the incoming calls to the hospital and clinics.

With cyber-attacks increasing in frequency and volume, IT dedicated more resources to run penetration testing for internal and external networks. All deficiencies identified are remedied in order to ensure a safe working environment. Additionally, all faculty, students and staff were enrolled in an IT security awareness campaign which allowed them to participate in online training sessions to help them recognize and respond to common attacks and social engineering attempts by pirates.

The LAU Libraries are dedicated to supporting and enhancing teaching, learning, and research by providing exceptional services and resources through the Riyad Nassar Library (Beirut), the Joseph G Jabbara Library (Byblos), and the Health Sciences Library (Byblos). These facilities include conference rooms, computer centers, group study areas, and extensive open stacks comprising a total of 397,160 print books. Additionally, the libraries offer an impressive digital collection, consisting of 664,744 e-books, 152,809 e-journals, 17,656 media materials, and access to 179 online and open access databases (numbers for 2021-2022). The total annual budget for the libraries in 2022-2023 was \$182,000 (capital) and \$2,871,615 (operating) with \$1,175,582 dedicated to the purchase of materials – both e-resources (~80%) and print materials (~20%). Included in the collection management strategy of the LAU Libraries is Demand-Driven Acquisition which allows for the immediate recommendation of a purchase by any member of the LAU community while browsing within the LAU catalog. In this way, LAU ensures that students, faculty, and staff have a vast array of scholarly resources readily available at their fingertips.

Access to materials is not sufficient without training on how to access these resources. To that end, the LAU libraries are staffed by 13 librarians and 15 professional staff members in addition to two part-time access services specialists and one part-time technology specialist. During the semester, the LAU Libraries also employs approximately 20 student workers. Working together, the Reference and Information Literacy Libraries along with the Access Services staff provide [multiple tours, training, and one-on-one consultations](#) on materials access each semester. The LAU Libraries also recently created a series of online research methods tutorials that faculty can be easily embed into Blackboard.

In addition to serving the traditional role of a university library, the LAU Libraries are currently undergoing a restructuring with the aim of expanding services to meet the needs of a modern research and teaching institution. Under this restructuring, three new services will be made available – a Data Analytics and Science Hub, Creative Spaces accessible to all, and Open Educational Resources.

To improve the standard of libraries and librarians and to encourage scientific and literary research in Lebanon, the Lebanese American University maintains library affiliations with local, regional and international associations and organizations. These include:

- The Lebanese Library Association (LLA), since 1995.
- The American Library Association (ALA), since 1985.
- The American International Consortium of Academic Libraries (AMICAL), since 2004.
- Lebanese Academic Library Consortium (LALC), since 2002.
- OCLC, since 2008 (a non-profit library service and research worldwide organization in which almost 25,900 libraries, archives and museums in 170 countries are members). Through the
- OCLC agreement, LAU libraries can now share resources with more than 4,000 libraries around the world for free.

### **Appraisal**

In a country which is [unable to provide access to electricity](#) for more than one to three hours per day, ranks [163 out of 177 in internet speed](#), and has only [four municipal public libraries run by NGOs](#), it is nothing short of a small miracle that LAU continues to provide 24/7 electricity and internet while allowing access to a robust set of library materials via its three libraries across two campuses, two medical centers, and one academic center.

The physical space at LAU serves the needs of most faculty, staff, and students. Nevertheless, as per Strategic Plan IV physical upgrades to the classroom facilities were prioritized. The majority of classrooms at LAU are set up for a traditional teaching style. In order to rectify this, IT and facilities worked with the Center for Innovative Learning to observe class sessions and participate in workshop with faculty on the design of their “dream classroom”. In this design workshop, a host of classroom improvements emerged – from basic (clocks in classes) to broad reaching (accessible and flexible designs). Moving forward, two classrooms (GB1106 and 1107) will become the prototype for a new hybrid and flexible teaching space. By prioritizing the work on these room, faculty will be able to begin teaching in Fall 2024 using the upgraded design – based on faculty feedback, continuous improvements will ensue in the rollout of 20 renovated classrooms over the next five years.

Through the work undertaken to identify critical classroom design needs, the need for an accessibility inventory came to the forefront. The timing could not be better for such an inventory given the many synergies with other offices on campus – most notably the Title IX office which is presently spearheading a policy on disability at LAU. Of note with regards to spaces at LAU, is the lack of access to the top floor of Safadi where a host of classrooms wait ready for renovation. The redesign of these classrooms can serve as a catalyst for much needed accessibility upgrades on LAU’s campuses.

Beyond the physical space on campus, three surveys in 2021-22 served to solicit feedback from faculty and students relative to IT and Library services. These surveys were launched by Faculty senate; University Library and Information Resources Council (ULIRC); and School of Medicine. The overall feedback was mostly good or satisfactory. The primary survey capturing both faculty and students and both IT and the Libraries were those launched by the ULIRC. Major findings from the surveys are discussed next, and the full reports are included in the Standard Seven electronic workroom.

The survey results pertaining to IT indicated that faculty were overall happy with the technology support provided by LAU. However, the frequency of equipment turnover, printing, and speed of help response stand out as areas for improvement. Both the equipment turnover and printing areas are double edged swords given that more frequent equipment replacement and greater access to printing

have detrimental effects on sustainability. In order to reach a compromise between environment and access, IT's policy on equipment sets a five-year renewal rate. IT did increase its part-time staff in order to react faster in case of a failure during class and to perform end of day reset of equipment and cables in order to ensure that they are ready for next day's operation.

The student results relative to the libraries indicate that the students are generally satisfied with the library services. Given the current economic situation in Lebanon, libraries play a crucial role as a vital resource for students facing issues with power or internet connection at home. However, there are areas that require attention, including opening hours, equipment maintenance and replacement, availability of stationery, and group study rooms. Since the survey, the LAU Libraries have been able to extend opening hours to 7:30am-8pm M-F. Additionally, to meet the needs of the students, 25 solid-state drive desktops were ordered to replace a host of heavily used desktop computers that were well beyond the five-year "end-of-life" designation.

In the outcome of the faculty survey, in general faculty members expressed satisfaction with the library services. However, several faculty expressed the need for access to additional journal subscriptions and databases for research purposes. While it is true that the LAU Libraries have worked to optimize the per hit cost in their databases, faculty do have access to any document they may want via the inter-library loan and document delivery service as well as demand driven acquisition. Recognizing that these concerns likely stem from a lack of awareness regarding the libraries' services, the LAU Libraries is reinvigorating their [Library Liaisons](#) program to provide greater awareness and access to Library services by faculty. In addition to supporting faculty in research the LAU Libraries are also launching an awareness campaign of their *Coursepack Review* program – in this program a librarian will review a faculty member's syllabus and offer recommendations on new(er) textbooks, more accessible textbooks (to reduce the financial burden on students), supplementary readings and videos, as well as guidance on copyright regulation in the dissemination of course material.

Finally, to return to the opening lines of this appraisal, researchers many years into the future might wonder how it was the LAU survived such a perfect storm of crises. Hopefully, they will find the answers in the LAU Libraries Archives. In order to ensure the preservation of this story, the LAU Libraries Archives unit has been restructured to become a steward of LAU's history.

### Projection

- ✓ Striking a delicate balance between maintaining or boosting enrollment levels, adjusting tuition rates, and gradually normalizing discounts, or potentially optimizing tuition revenues through a restructuring of the pricing model, presents a significant challenge. Finance, in collaboration with enrollment management, the Provost, *StratCom*, and Graduate Studies and Research, is tirelessly working on developing effective strategies to achieve this vital goal.
- ✓ Should the infrastructure in the country degrade further, LAU's ability to connect to the Internet may be hindered, so the IT Department will explore alternative internet connection options, such as *VSAT* that is being implemented and *Starlink*, which was stopped by the government.
- ✓ LAU's investment in sustainable energy through a substantial PV facility in both Beirut and Byblos should offset the cost of providing electricity to the Byblos campus. At the time of this report, 10% is being saved on each campus, and the next target is the medical centers.

## Standard Eight: Educational Effectiveness

### Description

The university places strong emphasis on providing education that prepares students for an ever-changing job market. This is complimented by its commitment to diversity, which is exemplified in its student body. The gender distribution of students is balanced, with an equal number of males and females. The majority of students (88%) originate from various regions across Lebanon, while international students make up 12% of the overall student population. These international students bring a global perspective to the university community. In line with fostering an environment of inclusivity, LAU offers specialized programs that provide full scholarships, enabling students of diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to access quality education. One such program is the University Scholarship Program (USP) designed for academically talented students from underprivileged backgrounds in Lebanese public high schools and technical schools. Another program is the Middle East Partnership Initiative-Tomorrow's Leaders (LAU-MEPI TL) program targeting exceptionally qualified local and international undergraduate and graduate students. These programs, enrolling 410 students in Fall 2023, are made possible with the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Furthermore, LAU provides financial aid packages to provide quality educational opportunities to students from all segments of the Lebanese community ranging from those in need to the academically talented. In AY 2022-2023, 80% of the student population received some form of financial aid [Exhibit\* 8.1].

The university recognizes the importance of providing a wide range of options to meet the diverse learning preferences and needs of its students. In Fall 2023, it offered a total of 63 degree programs. These include 34 bachelor's degree programs, 19 master's degree programs, 4 online master's programs, 2 professional degree programs, 2 online graduate diploma and 2 post-bachelor's diplomas. LAU is committed to provide its students with quality education and a comprehensive student-life experience. All seven schools within the university work cohesively, aligning their mission and goals with the overall institution's mission and its six core themes - academic excellence, student centeredness, civic engagement, the advancement of scholarship, the education of the whole person, and the formation of leaders in a diverse world - to ensure a unified approach in achieving educational objectives [Exhibit 8.2].

In line with its commitment to holistic education and preparing students for a rapidly changing world, LAU has developed a new interdisciplinary curriculum known as [Liberal Arts and Sciences \(LAS\)](#). This innovative curriculum aims to educate the whole person by not only focusing on academic knowledge and soft skill development but also promoting psychological well-being, ethical development, and social engagement. The courses offered are linked to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that students are equipped to contribute positively to global challenges and sustainable development. The LAS curriculum also integrates digital literacy and technology-driven skills to prepare students for a digitized world.

To uphold and promote academic excellence, the majority of programs have sought accreditation by specialized US accrediting bodies. The external perspective offered by accreditation is important because it brings objectivity and impartiality to the evaluation process. The undergraduate engineering programs, as well as the computer science program, have been accredited by Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET).

*\*Exhibits refer to the supporting documents in the Standard Eight Electronic Workroom.*



The architecture and design programs hold accreditation from both the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD). The nursing program has earned accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Additionally, both the graduate and undergraduate programs in the Adnan Kassar School of Business have achieved accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The Doctor of Pharmacy program has been accredited by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE). Furthermore, the MD program has received full accreditation from the Turkish Association for Evaluation and Accreditation of Medical Education Programs (TEPDAD). The BS in Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program (CP) has achieved candidacy for accreditation by the accrediting agency for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics in the US (E-series). These accreditations reflect the commitment of LAU to maintaining high academic standards across diverse disciplines.

To ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs that are not accredited - predominantly offered by the School of Arts and Sciences (SoAS) including most graduate programs, LAU has established guidelines for cyclical program reviews for both undergraduate and graduate programs [Exhibit 8.3]. The program review process, which is similar to accreditation, involves the completion of a self-study template and data forms by the program in question. The self-study serves as a comprehensive evaluation of the program's curriculum, teaching methods, student support services and other relevant aspects. Following the self-study, a virtual site visit is conducted by two external reviewers who possess expertise in the program's field. The external reviewers thoroughly evaluate the program's operations, meet virtually with faculty and students, and assess the program's adherence to quality academic standards and best practices.

All schools actively manage the curricula of their degree programs through school councils and committees and relevant university entities [Exhibit 8.4]. There are systematic processes in place for all phases of curriculum management including development, monitoring, evaluation, revision, and assessment.

To ensure transparency and clarity, all programs have clearly defined learning outcomes that are readily accessible on the schools' websites and in the Academic Catalogue (E-series) in addition to detailed study plans allowing students to understand the expected outcomes of their chosen programs and plan their educational journeys accordingly. Each program or specialized field of study has an advisory committee/board composed of industry representatives, employers and recognized alumni members that reviews the program learning outcomes periodically for relevance. The primary role of the advisory committee/board is to offer support to the dean of the LAU school in fulfilling its mission.

The program learning outcomes are aligned with specific course learning outcomes. Breaking down each outcome into measurable KPIs enhances understanding of the outcome and its connection to course content and delivery. All programs are designed in a way that advanced courses build on prerequisite or co-requisite courses, ensuring that students have the requisite knowledge and skills to succeed in advanced levels. All course learning outcomes are documented in course syllabi and shared with them at the beginning of each semester [Exhibit 8.5].

The School of Pharmacy is the only school that has longitudinally woven co-curriculum outcomes into the professional pharmacy years (<https://pharmacy.lau.edu.lb/educations/co-curriculum>). It aims at nurturing students' soft skills and builds on the learning acquired in the core curriculum that is directly linked to the program learning outcomes. The co-curricular activities are designed to complement academic studies and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate leadership, civic

engagement, and social responsibility. All schools offer a range of co-curricular activities to support their students, providing a solid basis for their professional development. These activities include community outreach projects and workshops held in collaboration with international institutions and NGOs tackling a range of contemporary issues. Unlike the School of Pharmacy however, there are no clear stated co-curricular learning outcomes and no formal assessment of attainment of these outcomes.

The evaluation of co-curricular learning outcomes extends to students' participation in extracurricular activities. Oversight of this assessment process is entrusted to the Office of the Dean of Students on both campuses. Each semester, one or two activities are selected for a comprehensive evaluation of co-curricular learning outcomes. Exhibit 8.6 encompasses the co-curricular learning outcomes defined at LAU, along with sample rubrics employed for the purpose of assessment. This structured approach ensures a thorough and meaningful examination of students' holistic development through their engagement in diverse activities beyond the traditional academic curriculum.

LAU has five simulation programs: 1) LAU Model United Nations - Lebanon, 2) LAU Model Arab League – Lebanon, 3) LAU Model European Union – Lebanon, 4) LAU Model Good Governance– Lebanon and 5) Global Classrooms International Model UN – USA). The first four programs include more than 200 LAU undergraduate and graduate students referred to as secretariat members in addition to 3,000 middle and high school students and 600 faculty advisors/school teachers referred to as participants. Participants are from 250 schools across Lebanon and region. The New York program includes more than 50 LAU secretariat members, 1,000 middle and high school students and 300 faculty advisors/teachers. Participants are from 50 schools from around the world (10 capitals & 22 U.S. states). The simulation programs have a well-formulated set of co-curricular learning outcomes to ensure that the students' volunteer work is recognized and validated. The assessment tools are also well-developed and implemented to evaluate the student's performance and achievement of these outcomes. LAU's simulation programs fulfil 3 out of the 6 pillars of LAU's mission statement - civic engagement, education of the whole person, and formation of leaders in a diverse world.

Similarly, students enrolled in the USP and MEPI programs – Tomorrow's Leaders Undergraduate Program (TLU), Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate Program (TLG), Tomorrow's Leaders Gender Studies Program (TLS) and Tomorrow's Leaders College to Work Pipeline (TLP) are expected to engage in community service activities and internships aimed to cultivate their interpersonal, leadership and professional skills, beyond their academic coursework [Exhibit 8.7]. These programs offer various supplemental activities including seminars, roundtable discussions, summer internships, community service initiatives, networking opportunities, leadership skill-building exercises, mentoring experiences and a capstone project. To ensure ongoing progress and identify areas for improvement, student performance is assessed regularly through a range of monitoring and evaluation tools integrated into the program implementation cycle. Exhibit 8.8 includes the pre-post assessment concluded in a gender course for TLG and TLS students). This assessment process enables the determination of level of achievement of co-curricular outcomes and facilitates necessary adjustments and improvements.

LAU assesses its co-curricular outcomes through a range of extra-curricular programs aimed at fostering students' leadership, personal skills, and cognitive, spiritual, and emotional growth. Each academic year, key activities are selected for evaluation in collaboration with the Student Life Project Managers at the Beirut and Byblos campuses, focusing on the eight co-curricular learning outcomes [Exhibit 8.9]. This ongoing assessment ensures that co-curricular activities are effectively contributing to student development and allows for continuous improvement in meeting educational goals.



All programs across LAU have embarked on a continuous improvement cycle, guided by a rigorous assessment process. Schools have set in place assessment plans to continuously monitor the attainment of program and course learning outcomes. The length of the assessment cycles varies between schools ranging from three to five years based on the program duration. Any curriculum changes are driven by assessment findings. Arising follow up actions and plans ensure closing the loop. These changes can range from simple adjustments, such as adding extra assignments or modifying prerequisites, to more complex decisions like adding or removing courses. All faculty are involved directly and indirectly in the assessment process. Assessment includes direct, indirect, quantitative, qualitative, formative, summative, standardized and comparative data. By triangulating these data sources, we ensure validity and reliability of the assessment, which in turn, allows for continuous improvement in student performance, faculty effectiveness and the program outcomes.

Student learning outcomes are measured and evaluated using a variety of instruments such as embedded assessment, rubrics, locally designed assessment exams, standardized exams, portfolios, and surveys. Surveys are used at different stages of the learning process to determine student satisfaction with their educational experience, such as course evaluations, the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE), exit survey and alumni survey [Exhibit 8.10]. Focus groups and surveys are used to collect feedback from external stakeholders such as advisory committees and employers. Evaluation of instructional effectiveness, student satisfaction and achievements are integral components of LAU's mission. Faculty evaluations are conducted on a yearly basis. The annual faculty evaluation process creates incentives for high quality and impactful teaching and research.

### **Appraisal**

LAU has in place various assessment measures to evaluate student success and the effectiveness of its educational programs throughout their academic journey and beyond graduation.

#### **i. Monitoring Students' CGPA or GPA**

The institution actively monitors students' academic performance by tracking their CGPA or GPA. Each semester, the Dean of Students Office works closely with schools to provide students whose CGPA falls below 2.5 with the necessary support. This support encompasses a range of services such as advising, counseling, tutoring sessions, and access to a writing center among other resources available to students. This monitoring system allows the institution to identify struggling students and provides them with the assistance needed to improve their academic performance.

Faculty members receive lists of students who are considered at risk and may choose to set up individual or group meetings with them. These meetings serve as an opportunity for advisors to offer academic support and guidance, particularly in relation to managing their workload and maintaining a balance between various commitments. The primary objective of the faculty meetings is to serve as an additional resource for students to access additional assistance and guidance in their academic journey.

#### **ii. Course evaluations**

LAU conducts course evaluations at the end of each semester or instructional cycle to assess students' satisfaction with the course delivery. The feedback from these evaluations is shared with the relevant faculty, chairpersons and deans, who carefully analyze the insights and implement appropriate measures to either maintain or enhance the quality of instruction. Moreover, the course evaluations are used in determining the recipients of the annual teaching awards, which recognize faculty members who demonstrate exceptional teaching quality [Exhibit 8.11].

Recently, a taskforce consisting of faculty representatives from LAU's schools, a representative from the CIL and student representatives from each of the Beirut and Byblos campuses has successfully completed the revision of our course evaluations, in accordance with SPIV [Exhibit 8.12]. During the Fall 2023 semester, we implemented two significant initiatives. Firstly, a newly developed mid-term course evaluation was introduced with the aim of providing valuable insights to faculty, enabling them to enhance the delivery of their courses [Exhibit 8.13]. Secondly, a dedicated course evaluation for internships was administered for the first time [Exhibit 8.14]. We are currently in the assessment phase, rigorously evaluating and gathering feedback on these tools to ensure their effectiveness and relevance. This thorough evaluation process is essential before officially incorporating these tools into our broader course evaluation system.

During the transition to emergency remote learning at LAU due to the COVID-19 pandemic, additional questions were included in the regular evaluations to assess students' satisfaction with their online learning experience. Following the first semester of online learning, it was observed that students exhibited higher levels of satisfaction in the subsequent semesters compared to their initial semester [Exhibit 8.15]. This improvement in satisfaction can be attributed to the efforts of the Office of the Provost as well as the Center for Innovative Learning (CIL) in providing essential professional development opportunities and the needed resources to enhance teachers' competence in utilizing technology for distance learning.

### iii. School Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

In order to monitor institutional effectiveness and progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the University / School goals and objectives, a specific set of KPIs are captured every year and tracked over a five-year period enabling the analysis of trends and long-term performance as well as facilitating benchmarking performance across schools. These KPIs cover four major areas: 1- Teaching (learning environment), 2- Research (quantity, quality, impact, grants), 3- School visibility and initiatives and 4- Student employability. They constitute both direct and indirect measures of institutional effectiveness [Exhibit 8.16].

#### 1) Teaching KPIs

The assessment of teaching quality encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of various critical indicators, including full-time to part-time faculty ratio, school and program faculty ratio, faculty to faculty administration ratio, student to faculty ratio and cost per student. These key metrics hold significance as they collectively contribute to the optimization of resource allocation, thereby ensuring the provision of adequate attention to both students and faculty members while maintaining fiscal prudence.

LAU's commitment to providing high quality education is underscored by a range of supplementary indicators. Among these, we assess the extent to which our curriculum integrates cutting edge technologies into our courses This includes utilizing its Learning Management System (LMS) and exploring XR tools for active learning, ensuring students are well-prepared for the modern world. In Fall 2023, there was a notable increase with 70% of all courses incorporating content on LAU's LMS (Blackboard) system, compared to 61% in Fall 2022.

Furthermore, in response to knowledge gaps among first year chemistry students, LAU's CIL in collaboration with the Department of Chemistry developed a self-paced online chemistry course using video lectures with annotations that served to cover each topic through a dynamic mix of theory and problem solving in addition to assessments to bridge educational disparities and boost student performance. More than 175 first year students have benefitted from this course.

Moreover, LAU addressed economic and mobility challenges by promoting virtual exchange programs. Through partnerships with Boise State University in the USA, Al-Akhawayn University in Morocco, and a program for pre-clinical medical students managed by Soliya, LAU facilitated cross-cultural communication and global engagement for its students. Over 100 students participated in these programs, resulting in enhanced cross-cultural communication skills and a broader global perspective among participants. In addition to these partnered courses, LAU’s business and nursing school’s faculty made progress towards initiating virtual exchange courses by completing training in virtual exchange offered by St. John’s University in New York.

At LAU, technology plays a pivotal role in streamlining the assessment process for a wide range of educational experiences. Beyond traditional classroom teaching, our academic programs encompass specific courses, clinical rotations and field experiences that entail on-site training involving external preceptors and assessors. This assessment process is efficiently managed through TK20, an assessment and accreditation software that serves as both a secure database and archive, storing data for trend analysis and continuous program improvement efforts.

Students actively engage in the assessment process by submitting assignments, projects and self-evaluations electronically, offering valuable insights into their performance. External preceptors evaluate students using predefined rubrics aligned with program objectives. This approach is applied across various schools including the SOP, the Nutrition and Dietetics Coordinated Program and Civic Engagement courses offered by AKSOB. LAU’s technology-driven approach to assessment ensures consistency and enhances the quality of education and program effectiveness.

Additionally, LAU’s commitment to enhancing education is evident through the introduction of novel curricular interventions, which encompass a diverse range of instructional methods. The methods include high-impact practices (HIP) such as internships, capstones courses, undergraduate research facilitated through LAU’s Honors program, study abroad program and civic engagement courses among other initiatives. Table 8.1 gives the number of students enrolled in internships, capstone courses, the Honors program, study abroad and civic engagement courses over the past four years.

	AY 2019-2020	AY 2020-2021	AY 2021-2022	AY 2022-2023
Internships	1895	2260	2278	2292
Capstone courses	907	1071	1186	1218
Honors program	340	426	486	499
Study Abroad	54	29	21	31
Civic Engagement Course	603	619	555	564

Table 8.1 Student Enrollment in High Impact Practices

LAU benchmarks its performance in HIP with peer institutions through the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). LAU benchmarks its performance in High-Impact Practices (HIP) against peer institutions using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). According to the NSSE 2021 results, first-year students at LAU showed significantly higher participation in HIP activities—such as service-learning, learning communities, research with faculty and participated in at least one or two HIP—compared to their peers at Canadian universities. Additionally, LAU's first-year students' participation in HIP was comparable to that of students from institutions classified as “Masters Medium” by the Carnegie Classification. LAU students excelled in service-learning, with first-year students demonstrating a notably higher participation rate than students from all institutions surveyed in NSSE 2020 and 2021 combined.

LAU senior students demonstrated higher participation rates than their Canadian counterparts in various HIP, including internships, learning community, culminating senior experience and involvement in at least one or two HIP. They also excelled in service-learning participation compared to Canadian students and all students in institutions participating in the 2020 and 2021 NSSE surveys. However, LAU senior students were less likely to have study abroad experiences, which has led to an increased focus on virtual experiences in courses as mentioned above. Additionally, they were less likely to engage in internships and field experience opportunities as well as conducting research with faculty compared to students from institutions in the same Carnegie classification. These insights provide valuable information for further enhancing the educational experience for senior students at LAU [Exhibit 8.17].

Other important KPIs captured under teaching include retention and graduation rates.

Retention rates: Examining institutional retention rates provides a comprehensive overview of undergraduate success. In fall 2020, the institutional retention rate stood at 86%, followed by a slight decline to 84% in fall 2021 and a subsequent increase to 87% in fall 2022. These rates are tracked across various parameters, including school, gender, and student cohorts such as full-time, part-time, and transfer students. Trends in retention rates for degree programs are also examined <https://dira.lau.edu.lb/assessment/students-success.php>. Together with progression rates, specifically from freshman to sophomore, sophomore to junior and junior to senior, which mirrors the institutional retention rates for undergraduate students, deans and chairpersons gain valuable insights into challenges that need to be addressed and areas in need of improvement. Table 8.2 gives retention rates by school over three consecutive years, while Table 8.3 provides the overall progression rates across the same period.

An encouraging observation is the improved retention rates for the fall 2022 cohort across all schools compared to fall 2020. However, it's noteworthy that there has been a notable decline in retention rates specifically within the School of Nursing and to a lesser extent in the School of Pharmacy over the three-year period. This trend, as depicted in Table 8.3, underscores the importance of directing focused attention towards addressing and improving the retention challenges within these specific academic domains.

	Fall 2020 <sup>2</sup>	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Architecture & Design	81%	90%	91%
Arts & Sciences	82%	80%	85%
Business	87%	87%	91%
Engineering	84%	80%	86%
Nursing	97%	82%	77%
Pharmacy	92%	87%	87%
Institution Rate	<b>84%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>86%</b>

Table 8.2 Undergraduate Retention Rates by School

	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Freshman to Sophomore	85%	82%	84%
Sophomore to Junior	83%	78%	82%
Junior to Senior	90%	85%	87%

Table 8.3 Progression of Undergraduate Students

<sup>2</sup> Fall 2022 retention rates refer to the fall 2022 cohort who returned in fall 2023.

LAU also monitors the retention rates for master’s students and these rates have exhibited a similar trajectory in parallel with the trends observed in undergraduate retention. Specifically, for full-time master’s students, the retention rate decreased from 81% in AY 2020-2021 to 75% in AY 2021-2022 and increased to 82% in AY 2022-2023<sup>3</sup> (Table 8.4). In contrast, the retention rates for first professional students (M.D. students) have remained relatively stable, ranging from 95% in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to and a high of 98% in 2022-2023 as portrayed in Table 8.5. These figures offer a comprehensive overview of the retention trends across various student categories.

	Fall 2020 <sup>4</sup>	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Architecture & Design	88%	100%	0%
Arts & Sciences	81%	80%	87%
Business	83%	73%	82%
Engineering	60%	60%	67%
Pharmacy	85%	100%	67%
Graduate Studies & Research	85%	100%	67%
<b>Institution Rate</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>82%</b>

Table 8.4 Graduate Retention Rates by School

	AY 2020-2021	AY 2021-2022	AY 2022-2023
Cohort Size	64	64	60
Retention Rate	95%	95%	98%

Table 8.5 M.D. Students

Graduation rates: LAU tracks graduation rates across multiple parameters, including 100%, 150% and 200% thresholds, at the level of the institution, individual schools and degree programs. It also tracks graduation rates for students graduating within the same program as initial enrollment or from a different program [Exhibit 8.18]. An analysis of the overall undergraduate degree programs at LAU reveals a fluctuating trend in the 100% graduation rate from 2012 to 2018. The initial rates show a decrease between 2012 and 2015, reaching the lowest point at 33.6%, but subsequently, there is an upward trend, culminating in the highest rate of 44.4% in 2018. Upon closer examination of individual schools, it becomes apparent that, while all schools generally exhibit positive trajectories and improvements over the observed period, SOE has undergone fluctuations or experienced declines with levels well below all other schools. In contrast, the Nursing and Pharmacy programs consistently maintain high graduation rates, ranging between 50% to 60% and 67% to 70%, respectively, over the last four cohorts. Notably, the Architecture and Design program achieved a remarkable increase in its 100% graduation rates, surging from 34% to 56% over a three-year period. This signifies commendable stability and success within these specific programs, warranting recognition and presenting potential insights for improvements in other disciplines.

An analysis of the 150% graduation rates across LAU's various programs reveals distinct patterns . Business consistently maintains robust graduation rates within this extended timeframe. Engineering not only mirrors the upward trends observed in Architecture & Design and Pharmacy but also demonstrates substantial progress, effectively catching up to all programs in the 150% graduation

<sup>3</sup> Retention rate is the percentage of new graduate students entering the institution as a degree-seeking from previous year's entering cohort and who are again enrolled in the same program in next fall term. Entering Cohort includes all new graduate students in corresponding Summer, Fall and Spring terms

<sup>4</sup> Fall 2022 retention rates refer to the fall 2022 cohort who returned in fall 2023.

rates. This is particularly notable considering its lower 100% graduation rates. This upward trend signifies notable improvement and resilience within the Engineering program, showcasing a positive trajectory in supporting students to successfully complete their degrees within an extended timeframe. In contrast, Nursing, despite demonstrating high rates in certain years, faces challenges, evident in a recent decline.

When comparing the 200% graduation rates to the 150% rates, there is an overall improvement across all programs. This indicates enhanced success in supporting students through more extended completion timelines, reflecting positive advancements in academic outcomes throughout the institution. Tables 8.6, 8.7, and 8.8 provide a detailed breakdown of the 100%, 150%, and 200% graduation rates across LAU's schools for cohorts spanning from 2012 to 2018.

School	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Architecture & Design	33.1%	38.9%	33.5%	33.8%	41.4%	48.4%	55.7%
Arts & Sciences	37.7%	37.9%	33.9%	36.2%	33.7%	40.1%	43.5%
Business	53.7%	44.9%	38.9%	36.0%	43.1%	41.5%	53.4%
Engineering	29.2%	20.1%	19.2%	18.8%	26.0%	17.4%	23.4%
Nursing	66.7%	36.0%	65.5%	50.0%	60.0%	51.6%	62.2%
Pharmacy	71.1%	76.5%	74.2%	66.7%	66.7%	69.7%	66.7%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42.6%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>	<b>33.6%</b>	<b>37.8%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>	<b>44.4%</b>

Table 8.6 100% Graduation Rates

School	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Architecture & Design	74.8%	80.9%	75.8%	81.8%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Arts & Sciences	76.1%	72.5%	68.2%	73.6%	69.7%	74.1%	n.a.
Business	85.8%	81.5%	79.2%	84.3%	80.9%	85.2%	84.0%
Engineering	85.2%	79.6%	75.4%	78.0%	80.5%	77.1%	n.a.
Nursing	90.5%	80.0%	86.2%	68.2%	90.0%	80.6%	75.6%
Pharmacy	82.9%	79.0%	84.9%	83.9%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>81.3%</b>	<b>78.1%</b>	<b>75.3%</b>	<b>78.7%</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>

Table 8.7 150% Graduation Rates

School	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Architecture & Design	85.0%	88.5%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Arts & Sciences	83.5%	79.2%	74.8%	79.4%	72.2%	78.2%	n.a.
Business	89.2%	85.2%	82.9%	87.6%	84.6%	87.1%	84.0%
Engineering	88.8%	83.9%	80.5%	83.0%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Nursing	100.0%	80.0%	86.2%	72.7%	95.0%	80.6%	75.6%
Pharmacy	82.9%	79.0%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>86.6%</b>	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>	<b>n.a.</b>

Table 8.8 200% Graduation Rates

The graduation rates for LAU’s Master’s programs, whether full-time or part-time, are essential indicators of LAU’s institutional effectiveness. Among full-time students there has been a positive trend from Fall 2019 to Fall 2022, with 150% graduation rates increasing from 78% in 2019 to 93% in 2023. This notable improvement can be attributed to the introduction of Graduate Program Scholarships in Fall 2020, which offered full tuition waivers and a stipend to support in enrolling full-time students. Conversely, part-time students showed some variation with rates fluctuating between 76% and 84% during the same period (See DDF Standard 8.4). However, these rates still demonstrate a level of success. Additionally, our professional MD program consistently achieved high graduation rates at 100% of expected time, ranging from 94% to 98% for cohorts of the AY 2014-2015 to AY 2019-2020. 125% graduation rate increased slightly, but remained constant thereafter. Similarly, the Pharm.D. professional program demonstrated high and consistent graduation rates, varying between 97% and 100% for cohorts from AY 2016-2017 to 2021-2022 and maintaining this level thereafter. Tables 8.9 and 8.10 provide the graduation rates for the M.D. program and the Pharm.D. program respectively.

Furthermore, LAU actively monitors the average time to graduation of its diverse degree programs, which does not exceed one year beyond the standard completion time for both undergraduates and graduates. Tables 8.11 and 8.12 give the average time to graduation of LAU’s undergraduate and graduate degree programs respectively.

Cohort	Entering Cohort	100%	125%	150%
2014-2015	47	95.7%	97.9%	97.9%
2015-2016	52	98.1%	98.1%	98.1%
2016-2017	56	89.3%	94.6%	94.6%
2017-2018	52	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
2018-2019	63	96.8%	98.4%	n.a.
2019-2020	63	93.7%	n.a.	n.a.

Table 8.9 MD Program Graduation Rates

Cohort	Entering Cohort	100%	200%
2016-2017	31	96.8%	96.8%
2017-2018	29	96.6%	96.6%
2018-2019	35	100.0%	100.0%
2019-2020	32	96.9%	96.9%
2020-2021	29	96.6%	96.6%
2021-2022	29	100.0%	100.0%
2022-2023	37	100.0%	n.a.

Table 8.10 Pharm.D. Graduation Rates

Another KPI that reflects student success is the licensure passage rate within LAU’s professional schools. Over the past three years, the national licensure passage rate has been exceptionally high, standing at 100% for students in SOP, SOM and ARCSON. However, it is important to highlight that the national licensure passage rate for the ARCSON experienced a minor decline, reaching 93% in 2021. Subsequently, the passage rate rebounded, achieving a perfect 100% for the three consecutive years that followed. High passage rates of 100% were consistently observed among SOP students in the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX). Additionally, within SOM, students

achieved success with passage rates ranging from 88% to 100% in STEP 1 and 92% to 100% in STEP 2 CK from 2019-2020 to 2022-2023. These accomplishments underscore the commitment to academic excellence and thorough preparation provided to our students within our professional schools (as illustrated in the Data First Forms 8.3).

		Graduation Year					
Level	Expected Degree Length	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Undergraduate							
	3 Year Program	3.64	3.55	3.62	3.57	3.47	3.56
	4 Year Program	1.86	4.68	4.78	4.89	4.82	4.85
	5 Year Program	5.57	5.26	5.39	5.46	5.35	5.43

Table 8.11 Average Time to Graduation: Undergraduate Level

		Graduation Year					
Level	Status	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Graduate	Full-time	2.12	2.12	2.37	2.04	2.02	2.20
	Part-time	3.38	3.09	3.18	3.16	3.05	3.15

Table 8.12 Average Time to Graduation: Graduate Level

## 2) Research KPIs

In the context of LAU’s KPIs, our focus shifts to the realm of research, encompassing factors like quantity, quality, impact and grants associated with LAU’s academic pursuits, all of which significantly influence student success. A robust research environment not only enhances faculty expertise but also enriches the educational experience for students. It provides them hands-on involvement in cutting edge projects and access to resources that foster their academic and professional growth.

The findings of the 2022-2023 Exit survey, conducted among graduating senior students, clearly highlight the importance of research KPIs in assessing the university’s commitment to providing students with a comprehensive and enriching educational experience. This is evidenced by the overwhelming 91% of students who acknowledge the importance of research. Although a relatively modest 32% of students have engaged in research activities with faculty, an impressive 94% of these students affirm the positive impact of this experience on their learning. Remarkably, 84% of graduating students believe that research-active faculty can enhance their post-graduation job prospects, with 91% recognizing its benefits for pursuing further studies. Encouragingly, 72% express an interest in participating in faculty research, highlighting its appeal within the university.

## 3) School visibility and initiatives KPIs

Within LAU’s framework of KPIs, our attention now shifts to enhancing the visibility of our institution and its schools. At LAU, we firmly believe in the importance of providing students with a well-rounded education that goes beyond the traditional classroom. We recognize the significant value that extra-curricular activities bring to our academic programs, offering students exposure to global ideas and practices. These activities complement their educational journey and provide diverse opportunities for growth and enrichment. The range of extra-curricular activities is diverse and includes annual lectures series by prominent speakers, conferences and symposia, participation in local and international students’ competitions, exhibitions of students’ and alumni work and projects.



In addition to our commitment to extra-curricular enrichment, we nurture entrepreneurship and innovation within our academic environment. Many of our students have demonstrated remarkable entrepreneurial acumen by applying their educational experiences, creativity and knowledge to establish thriving businesses and start-ups. These efforts show how our education translates into tangible success, emphasizing our commitment to preparing students for real-world careers and entrepreneurial pursuits. A recent addition to our efforts is the Vertically Integrated Projects (VIP+) program. It aims to instill entrepreneurial confidence in students and empower them to launch successful startups.

In the most recent alumni surveys conducted among alumni within 12 months of graduation, it was found that 8% of 2018-2019 graduates and 6% of 2020-2021 successfully transformed their final projects into star-up ventures. Additionally, approximately 10% of alumni from the 2018-2019 cohort and 11% from the 2019-2021 cohort have embarked on the journey of establishing their own businesses.

#### 4) Employability KPI

One KPI that significantly correlates with student achievement pertains to their employability. LAU closely monitors student employability within 12 months of graduation. Table 8.13 provides a comprehensive five-year overview of this crucial metric.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Employment rate within 12 months of graduation	71%	71%	61%	52%	61%	63%
In full-time further study	16%	13%	11%	21%	16%	14%

Table 8.13 Employability rates

An examination of the data reveals significant trends. The employment rate within 12 months of graduation remained steady at 71% for graduates of the academic year 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. However, in 2018-2019 there was a notable decline to 61%, which further decreased to 52% for graduates of the academic year 2019-2020. Encouragingly, there was a resurgence in the employment rate for graduates of the academic years 2020-2021, effectively restoring it to 61% and experiencing an increase to 63% in 2021-2022.

It is worth highlighting that LAU’s transition in Fall 2020 from an in-house career portal to JobTeaser, an open portal accessible to students of participating universities globally, has expanded employment opportunities for LAU students beyond Lebanon. The adoption of JobTeaser appears to have positively impacted LAU’s ability to connect graduates with employment and internship opportunities.

Additionally, it is worth highlighting that a notable proportion of graduates opted for full-time further study within the 12-month timeframe as depicted in Table 8.13. This percentage experienced minor fluctuations over the five-year period, with a low of 11% for graduates of the academic year 2018-2019 and a peak of 21% for graduates of 2019-2020, before returning to 16% and 14% for graduates of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 respectively. This trend demonstrates a commitment to continued education and skill development among a significant portion of graduates, aligning with the common mission of many degree programs at LAU.

LAU prioritizes strong student-alumni connections that pave the way for future employment and further education opportunities. The Alumni Relations Office works in close collaboration with LAU

schools and the Career Development Office to secure internships and job opportunities from willing alumni. On-campus recruitment sessions, including those with alumni employers, facilitate direct interaction between students and potential employers. LAU's commitment to bridging the gap between academia and the professional world equips students for successful careers.

iv. Benchmarking activities

LAU recognizes the absence of a national database for comparing performance with peer institutions in Lebanon. However, the university proactively participates in regional benchmarking activities through its participation in the Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium (HEBC). This consortium serves as a valuable tool for LAU and other higher education institutions that follow the American educational model, allowing them to assess their performance across a set of over 50 indicators, enabling program enhancement and progress towards achieving strategic objectives [Exhibit 8.19].

Rankings constitute another significant benchmarking activity in which LAU actively engages. Through rankings, LAU can benchmark its performance against other universities at the national, regional and international levels. These rankings encompass a wide range of indicators such as academic reputation, research excellence, international outlook, and employability, providing a comprehensive assessment of LAU's standing and achievements in the global academic landscape. Importantly, this commitment to improvement has been intentional, as LAU has used the results of various assessment and benchmarking activities to strategically plan for positive change, ensuring continuous progress and excellence in its educational endeavors.

*Students' perspectives on LAU's educational effectiveness*

Insights from a recent focus group, involving students from various LAU schools, shed light on the university's educational effectiveness and its contributing factors. These students unanimously applaud LAU's commitment to delivering a well-rounded education that seamlessly combines theoretical and practical learning. This holistic approach encompasses internships, capstone projects and field experiences, equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle real-world challenges effectively.

LAU's distinguished faculty members, known for their expertise and commitment to research, significantly contribute to student growth. They actively support student initiatives, fostering leadership skills and character development, which are integral to success in any field.

According to student feedback, the institution delivers a top-tier American education, offering valuable insights into US practices and exposure to cutting edge technologies through state-of-the-art facilities. LAU's professional accreditations enhances graduates' competitiveness in the global job market. Furthermore, the multicultural environment at LAU cultivates social skills and a global perspective among students.

These insights align with the findings of the 2021-2022 Exit survey, where more than 80% of students perceive LAU's strengths in reputation, campus life, social environment, student-faculty interaction, and institutional and program accreditation.

Regarding the quality of teaching, students at LAU express high satisfaction, praising faculty members for their expertise and professionalism. Unique and effective methods enhance the overall educational experience. A key contributor of effective teaching is the clear communication of course learning outcomes at the beginning of each semester, guiding students and fostering an interactive environment. These student responses align with the findings of the 2021 NSSE survey, where both

first-year and senior LAU students expressed higher satisfaction with the learning strategies and effective teaching practices compared to their counterparts in Canadian institutions, Carnegie Masters institutions and the participating NSSE institutions in 2020 and 2021.

However, opinions vary concerning assessment methods. While some students find them fair and reflective of their abilities, others prefer more subjective and open-ended exam questions. This preference reflects a belief that such assessments would better showcase in-depth knowledge and critical thinking skills. These differing viewpoints highlight the importance of flexible assessment approaches to cater to diverse needs of students, continually improving the educational experience.

Insights from the focus group highlighted areas where LAU can enhance its support systems and reduce disparities. Students observed variability in faculty support, particularly among part-time faculty. Nevertheless, LAU is generally perceived as adequately preparing students for future careers and advanced studies. There was consensus, however, on the need for more efforts to assist students in securing internships and job opportunities, alongside suggestions for LAU to take a more active role in helping students build portfolios and CVs to enhance employability.

Encouragingly, discussions revealed no significant disparities in educational approaches based on factors such as race, gender, or socioeconomic status. Recommendations for improvement included strengthening affiliations with practice sites and institutions, enhancing faculty competences, fostering more comprehensive career opportunities, internships, and support for student interactions. Moreover, the insights underscore the importance of expanding counseling services to effectively address students' well-being and academic progress.

### **Projection**

- ✓ Currently retention rates for all schools' range between 85% to 91%. The School of Nursing stands out with a retention rate of 77%. Recognizing the significance of this metric and its impact on future graduation rates, the School of Nursing aims to improve this rate to align with the prevailing standards of other schools. At the same time, all schools within LAU are committed to maintain a retention rate of 85% or higher, thereby ensuring a consistent and elevated level of academic performance across the university.
- ✓ Currently, the on-time completion rate or 100% graduation rate for undergraduate programs stands at approximately 44%, showing variations across schools. Notably, engineering has a lower completion rate at 23%, while nursing and pharmacy excel with a 62% and 67% rate respectively. All schools share a collective commitment to elevate their school's 100% graduation rate and ultimately the institutional rate to 50% within the next 3 years, or to maintain and enhance their current standing if already above 50%. Specifically, engineering aims to incrementally improve its 100% completion rate, setting a target to reach 50% over the next five years. This strategic initiative places a strong emphasis on providing early and continuous support for student success within the program and aims to improve 150% and 200% graduation rates.
- ✓ LAU's employment rate currently stands at approximately 60%. In the pursuit of enhancing this metric, LAU is dedicated to reinstating the previous 70% employment rate achieved for graduates of the academic years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. To achieve this goal, LAU will strategically fortify its career services by actively cultivating new partnerships with local and regional businesses, organizations, and industries aligned with each academic program. The aim is to establish 5-10 new partnerships each year, thereby expanding students' opportunities for internships, field experiences, and job placements, with a target of increasing these opportunities by 10% annually.

- ✓ LAU will broaden its array of workshops and seminars, encompassing essential areas such as resume-building, interview skills, and job search strategies across schools. Additionally, dedicated academic advisors will be assigned to assist students in effectively presenting their academic and extracurricular achievements through portfolio development. The objective is to expand its reach to an additional 5 percent of students each year over the next 5 years. Concurrently, to support these proactive initiatives, LAU will focus on enhancing the capabilities of its Career Guidance Office staff and academic advisors through ongoing professional development initiatives. This ensures their readiness to effectively undertake these tasks and contribute to the overall success of students in their career pursuits.
- ✓ To address students' mental health and wellbeing needs effectively, LAU will take the necessary steps to reduce wait times for students seeking support. The university will also proactively promote awareness of available counseling services through campus-wide campaigns and orientations conducting these campaigns at different intervals throughout the academic year. Mental health and well-being workshops and seminars will be provided to further support students in this regard with the aim of expanding its reach to an additional 5% of students each year over the next five years.

## Standard Nine: Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure

### Integrity

#### Description

All policies governing the recruitment and promotion of faculty and staff and the recruitment of students are published on the University website <https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/policies.php>. The regularly updated [Faculty Handbook](#) and [Faculty Integrity Handbook](#) delineate the rights and responsibilities of faculty, while underscoring the centrality of ethical and professional conduct. The Office of the Provost provides all new faculty with an Orientation Manual that includes the most updated information on the policies and procedures that govern faculty conduct. All new policies and procedures that pertain to faculty, including academic honesty and professional conduct, are regularly communicated to faculty through, inter alia, the CD minutes. In March 2019, the BOT approved a [policy on Intellectual Property](#). In 2022, the BOT approved a number of policies to supplement the University Code of Conduct with the purpose of ensuring that faculty and staff working “on sponsored awards” comply with the conditions of the granting agency <https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/policies.php>.

LAU has well-established [policies](#) and practices regarding recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement that prohibit discrimination on any grounds. Through [Title IX](#) campaigns on campus and in social media, LAU promotes its vision of a diverse and inclusive community. Several on-campus activities, whether sponsored by Departments, Institutes, the Deans of Students Offices, or Student Clubs promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Faculty members have the freedom to research any topic related to their area of expertise and to select the appropriate methodology and dissemination venues. In the classroom, they decide on the appropriate pedagogy to achieve program and course learning outcomes. Students can enroll in any program of study as long as they fulfill the program’s admission criteria.

Faculty and students engaged in research are expected to conduct themselves ethically and in accordance to best practices in their disciplines. Any research involving human subjects, their data or biospecimens, requires the prior approval of [LAU’s IRB](#). The LAU IRB is registered under the Lebanese Ministry of Health as well as the US Office of Human Research Protection. An [IRB policy](#) is in place. All investigators (Faculty, staff, students) undertaking research involving human subjects must complete the CITI Human Subject Research training that is pertinent to their research. SDEM maintains transparent and regular communication with current and prospective students and their families through webinars and focus groups on Admissions, Financial Aid, Registration, Advising, Orientation, etc. Elected members of the Student Council are represented on key university councils, including the Student Integrity Committee. Students and their parents are encouraged to visit LAU campuses and are provided with regular links to major SDEM websites, which are also promoted through social media.

All activities on campus (conferences, workshops, trainings, film screenings, guest lecturers, cultural activities by student clubs) require the prior authorization of the pertinent unit (School, Academic Department, Institute, Deans of Students). The sponsoring unit is responsible for ensuring the appropriateness and the integrity of the undertaken activity. External guest speakers are generally vetted to verify their credentials and their compliance with the requirements of external mainly US-based funding agencies.

Finally, policies are in place for grievances, and Title IX Office works closely with all pertinent university units, as appropriate, on all discrimination and harassment cases involving faculty, students and staff. The Deans of Students Offices rely on the Student Code of Conduct for the fair resolution of student grievances.

### **Appraisal**

The University abides by its charter and by the provisions of the New York State Board of Education and the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Designated University officers communicate regularly with the New York Board of Education and the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education to ensure that all degrees are properly registered. Recently, the Council of Deans reiterated that, “new and revised programs requiring MEHE and/or NYSED registration approvals cannot be posted on the web before the necessary clearances are obtained.” Procedures for program registration with MEHE and NYSED, respectively, were adopted by the CD in September 2023 and are posted on the LAU faculty portal.

Since the 2019 Interim Report, the University has taken several initiatives to bolster ethical and professional conduct by all constituents. Staff and faculty policies regarding ethical conduct currently specifically reference non-discrimination and the right to work in an environment that supports excellence with zero tolerance for any discrimination. LAU’s updated (2019) [Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Prevention policy](#) governs all cases of discrimination and harassment, as well as the gender-focused work of the [Title IX Office](#). To assess how well LAU supports gender equality, LAU launched its first Gender Equity Plan (GEP) to describe and assess policies, practices, and conduct that support gender equality at the institution. The plan was [launched](#) in Spring 2022, and is available in the Standard Nine electronic workroom.

LAU’s [Student Code of Conduct](#) underwent significant revisions between 2019 and 2022. It currently provides detailed and specific expectations of student conduct and the consequences of misconduct. The University Students Academic Integrity Committee – which includes the campus deans of students, chair of the faculty senate, pertinent staff and representatives from the elected student councils – considers all issues pertaining to academic honesty and the ethical and professional conduct of students and proposes amendments to the Student Code of Conduct. Moreover, to ensure more consistency across related policies including Title IX, the faculty grievance policy was revised and updated during AY 2022-23.

In addition, students in health care fields receive orientation on professional conduct, including protection of patient privacy, in different courses (e.g., in Nursing 201). Nursing students must follow the ICN (International Council of Nurses) and [Order of Nurses in Lebanon Code of Ethics](#). Before commencing their clinical training, pharmacy students must acquire the HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) certification. Nutrition students must participate in an orientation session where they receive detailed information about the policies and procedures that must be adhered to during their dietetic internship at affiliated sites. At the end of this orientation session, students are requested to sign a confidentiality agreement form, which is kept on record in their files.

Under the leadership of the Provost Office, and with the participation of SDEM and the Schools, the University has been moving in earnest to establish and disseminate guidelines that would provide a timely framework for faculty on the use of Artificial Intelligence tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in research and in teaching and student learning. Two separate set of guidelines for research and teaching and learning, respectively, were proposed in Fall 2023 and approved by the CD on September 28, 2023.

The documents were shared with all faculty and published on the LAU portal. The issue of AI use will be revisited regularly to ensure flexibility that aligns with evolving international best practices and keeping the balance between making use of new technology while maintaining integrity in research and teaching.

To further bolster academic honesty among faculty and students engaged in research, the BOT approved at its March 2019 meeting [The Responsible Conduct of Research and Responding to Allegations](#). In addition, the CD mandated Responsible Conduct of Research training as a graduation requirement for all LAU graduate students. Finally, a presidential initiative is under way to place all initiatives to promote integrity and ethical and professional integrity under one umbrella. This strategy will enhance awareness of pertinent policies and procedures amongst all University constituents.

## Transparency

### Description

The LAU website provides comprehensive information on LAU's academic programs, extracurricular activities, locations and facilities, admission requirements, and tuition. The information offered was enhanced and reorganized as part of a main website redesign that started in 2019; and has been expanded and revised to keep it updated. Additionally, another website was launched by our partner Wiley University Services regarding our new [online programs](#).

Information on student admissions, tuition costs, financial aid, student housing is found at <https://www.lau.edu.lb/apply/>. The annually updated Academic Catalog <https://catalog.lau.edu.lb/2022-2023/> lists all rules and regulations governing the academic standing of students, while the Student Code of Conduct addresses the conduct of students inside and outside the classroom. Faculty and staff openings are posted at <https://www.lau.edu.lb/employment/>. Student complaints and appeals are handled by the pertinent department (for academic cases) and by the deans of students (on non-academic cases).

All inquiries are handled by the pertinent units. Admissions and Financial Aid units handle all inquiries by prospective students. The academic departments handle student inquiries about programs and courses offerings, while the Deans of Students handle student inquiries regarding extra-curricular activities and life on campus.

The annual President's Report <https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/governance/president/presidents-report/> provides an annual overview of academic, enrollment, and advancement initiatives in addition to a summary of financial information. LAU provides notice as to the availability of audited financial statements. The Academic Catalog lists all the academic rules and regulations concerning graduate and undergraduate students and provides descriptions of all courses. It is annually updated by the Registrar's Office based on input from the Council of Deans and SDEM. Online editions of past years' catalogs are found at: <https://catalog.lau.edu.lb/archive.php>. Existing paper copies of prior years' editions are found at the Riyad Nassar Library, Beirut.

### Appraisal

Information on Student Learning Outcomes is available per program and is included on the program webpage. Achievements of faculty (i.e., faculty recent publications, received grants, awards) are posted on the program webpage. The annual [President Report](#) also highlights faculty achievements. Policies and procedures relevant to faculty, staff, and students are posted on the website or on the LAU Portal. Information on grade litigation and the policy for grade review, however, is not readily available for students.

Mainly for environmental reasons, the institution has been moving away from paper publications and increasingly relying on digital ones. Each unit (department, school, institute...) is responsible for the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information it provides. Said units periodically review their websites and other means of digital communication to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. While there is close coordination between the academic departments, the Office of the Registrar, and the Deans of Students on all matters pertaining to students, coordination regarding website and online Catalog updates among said units, particularly between the Office of the Registrar and the Schools, can be streamlined further.

## Public Disclosure

### Description

Information about the institution is found on its webpage. Schools publish the names and short biographies of all full-time faculty by academic program. Names and affiliations of members of the [BOT](#) and the Executive Officers are found at: <https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/governance/>. [DIRA](#), which centralizes institutional data, publishes updated information about the student population, financial aid, graduation and retention rates and degrees conferred. Recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published. The total cost of education and net price, including the availability of financial aid and the typical length of study are also transparently displayed on the website.

Individuals acting on behalf of LAU indicate so and specify the role they play in the institution when interacting with external entities through a contractual or other written agreement, and updated information about LAU accreditation status is available at <https://www.lau.edu.lb/about/accreditation.php>.

### Appraisal

The Academic Catalog does not list any course that has not been taught in the past two years and will not be taught in the third year. Departments ensure that faculty on sabbatical or on leave are indicated as so on the Department webpage. Nevertheless, the University would benefit from clearer guidelines on the schedule for updating web content by concerned units.

Until Spring 2024, student success data used to be posted online under DIRA on the university website. As one outcome of the self-study, it was clear that to an external audience, "DIRA" is not readily transparent or understood, so it was moved under "offices and services" and spelled out as Institutional Research and Assessment. Moreover, to ensure better ease of access to student success data, it was recently created as its own entity on the main website, entitled "[Student Success Indicators](#)."

### Projection

- ✓ As a follow up to our appraisal of transparency, the procedure for grade review needs to be updated and relayed to students more transparently and clearly. The *Office of the Provost* and *SDEM* will follow up on this issue during AY 2024-25.
- ✓ The CD will explore in AY 2024-25 the inclusion of a training workshop on ethical and professional conduct as a graduation requirement.
- ✓ The University may want to consider including all the existing safeguards on academic freedom in one document: i.e., establishing a policy on Academic Freedom.
- ✓ The Office of the President will set an implementation schedule for the Gender Equity Plan starting AY 2024-25.



- ✓ In Fall 2024, a committee comprising representatives from *StratCom*, the *Office of the Provost*, and the *Registrar* will review the website, primarily to regulate the process of updating web content and propose a clear procedure for the coordination between said units with regard to the alignment between the Academic Catalog and what schools and departments list about courses and faculty on their webpages.

## Area of Emphasis: Assessment of the Transition to a Research-Active Faculty and Its Impact on Student Learning Outcomes

By prioritizing research as an integral part of its educational mission, LAU has enhanced its competitiveness and reputation, improved student learning outcomes, and established itself as a leading institution of higher learning. The steps taken to make the transition, including developing a [research](#) strategy, investing in research infrastructure, supporting faculty development, and promoting research collaborations, have all contributed to positive outcomes. This section assesses the transition to a more research-active faculty at LAU and its impact on student learning outcomes. This transition aims to enhance the educational experience and academic environment at the university, cultivating a vibrant ecosystem of research and exploration.

LAU has made significant progress in fostering a vibrant research culture and empowering undergraduate students with valuable research experiences across various academic programs. A noteworthy initiative is the incorporation of research elements into undergraduate curricula through the implementation of Vertically Integrated Projects (VIPs), which encourage collaboration and multidisciplinary problem-solving as students from different academic levels pool their expertise and perspectives to tackle real-world challenges. VIPs were discussed at length in Standard Four and Standard Eight.

Additionally, LAU has curated specialized undergraduate courses like “Research Methods” and “Undergraduate Research Methods,” specifically dedicated to equipping students with essential research skills. These courses focus on research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, nurturing students' ability to conduct independent research and critically evaluate existing literature. Through hands-on research activities and close faculty mentorship, students are inspired to explore their academic interests, foster critical thinking skills, and actively contribute to knowledge advancement in their respective fields. More details about these courses are provided in Standard Four.

To bolster [graduate](#) education, LAU has taken concrete measures, progressively reducing graduate tuition, particularly for programs that incorporate research components, by increasing the percentage of graduate assistantships. The university's commitment to supporting graduate students is further evident through the renewal of the Graduate Program Scholarships (GPS) program, renamed [Graduate Research Scholarships \(GRS\)](#) in 2024, for the fourth consecutive year. This program offers full scholarships along with a monthly stipend of \$350 to outstanding LAU and non-LAU graduates seeking to pursue their graduate studies at LAU. More details about this program are provided in Standards Four and Five.

To galvanize research engagement among both undergraduate and graduate students, LAU has established a range of research awards. Building on the success of a previous initiative, the university continued to recognize outstanding student research achievements in Spring 2023 through the presentation of the yearly “Outstanding Researcher Award” and the “Young Researcher Award.” These distinguished honors are categorized into five broad disciplines and are granted based on peer-reviewed scholarly work. Moreover, LAU proudly inaugurated its “Research Day” during the same period, providing a platform to showcase and celebrate exceptional research contributions. In Spring 2024, the [Centennial Research Day](#) was a university-wide event featuring the distribution of “Best Oral Presentation Awards” to accomplished graduate students from diverse fields such as Business and Economics, Engineering, Technology and Physical Sciences, Health Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Additionally, undergraduate students' noteworthy research endeavors were celebrated with the “Best Poster Award” in the fields of Engineering, Technology and Physical Sciences, Health Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Through these proactive measures and initiatives, LAU remains steadfast in its commitment to cultivating a culture of research excellence and providing its students with valuable opportunities to engage in transformative research experiences.

To gather data and assess the impact of the transition to a more research active faculty, a mixed-methods approach was employed by a task force collecting data over the past 3 to 5 years. In addition to the comprehensive data and analyses provided in Standard Eight that clearly reveal student learning outcomes over the past few years have been consistent and improving, the following methods were further utilized to assess the particular impact of transitioning to a more research active faculty on student learning outcomes:

- a) Surveys of student satisfaction: Surveys were conducted to gauge student satisfaction with the research-oriented approach. Findings consistently indicated a positive correlation between research involvement and overall satisfaction.
- b) Research-related courses in various programs: New courses focusing on research skills and methodology were introduced across multiple programs. Enrollment and student feedback indicated a high level of interest and engagement in these courses.
- c) Focus groups with undergraduate and graduate students: Focus groups were conducted to capture narratives and testimonials from student participants. Students expressed appreciation for the hands-on research experiences, improved critical thinking abilities, and increased confidence in their academic pursuits.
- d) Focus groups with faculty: Discussions were held with faculty members to gather their views on the impact of the transition. Faculty highlighted the positive effects on student motivation, intellectual curiosity, and the overall academic culture at LAU.
- g) Post-graduation outcomes: Tracking the progress of students who pursued research endeavors after graduation indicated a significant number successfully continuing their research careers or gaining admission to prestigious graduate programs.

The data collected revealed the following key findings; the raw data is available in the Area of Emphasis electronic workroom:

- Student satisfaction: Surveys consistently showed a positive correlation between research involvement and student satisfaction, indicating that the transition to a research-active faculty positively impacted their overall experience. In particular, the analysis of the Faculty Research survey conducted among graduating students in the AY 2022-2023 reveals valuable insights into their perceptions of the institution's educational landscape. With a response rate of 81.9% and participation from 1,892 out of 2,310 students, the survey highlights the significance of research in shaping students' learning experiences. The results indicate a high level of satisfaction, with 89% of students expressing contentment with the overall quality of instruction. Furthermore, 91% recognize the importance of research in enhancing the education they receive. The survey also demonstrates a positive connection between students and faculty engagement in research, with 67% of students being aware of faculty research activities and 32% having actively participated in research themselves. This hands-on involvement is reported to have a positive impact on learning, as confirmed by 94% of students. The findings highlight the crucial role of a research-active faculty in elevating the institution's academic standing, as perceived by 92% of students.

Moreover, students acknowledge the practical value of research, with 84% believing that a research-active faculty could enhance their job prospects, and 91% recognizing its potential in facilitating further educational pursuits. The survey reveals a strong interest among students in future research opportunities, with 72% expressing their eagerness to engage in scholarly endeavors.

Overall, the findings underscore the ability of a research-oriented environment to enrich students' academic journey and shape their future prospects.

- **Research-related courses in various programs:** All undergraduate programs at LAU across six of the seven component schools of the university (namely, School of Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Architecture & Design, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Medicine – except for the Business School's undergraduate programs) now include a senior/capstone course as part of their curricula. For most of the programs, the capstone course can be either applied (P) or research-based (R) in nature. Research methods courses were introduced to some undergraduate programs, such as Bachelor in Education, reinforced in others like Bachelor in Business, Pharmacy, Engineering, and Nursing, and extensively expanded in programs like Bachelor in Political Science and International Affairs to comprehensively address both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Moreover, all graduate programs across the seven component schools of the university (except for the MBA) now include as graduation requirements either a mandatory thesis (6 cr.) or applied project (3 cr.) as well as mandatory research methodology course(s). All such courses aim to enhance both undergraduate and graduate student learning experiences by shaping their critical and analytical skills and individual thinking to benefit them in their future careers in academia or the industry, with student feedback revealing high interest and engagement in these courses. As of 2021, the university introduced the vertical integration project (VIP) courses into its undergraduate programs in the Business School, Engineering, and School of Arts & Sciences. These courses are taken by undergraduate students as part of their major elective/free elective requirements (for the Business school and Arts & Sciences) or as part of their signature/technical electives (for Engineering). VIP courses provide undergraduate students the opportunity to work on an applied project under the supervision of both a faculty member and an industry partner and aim to enhance students' analytical and entrepreneurial skills. During the two years since their inception, these classes have seen growing enrollment and student interest.
- **Student engagement:** Focus groups and testimonials demonstrated increased student engagement, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills as a result of research-related courses and extracurricular activities. In particular, the focus group meetings on research activities revealed valuable insights from 12 students representing different disciplines at the School of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Pharmacy. The discussions revolved around the impact of research on students' learning experiences, classroom performance, post-graduation career plans, and suggestions for encouraging more students to engage in research. The findings highlighted the significance of research in developing skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, time management, and self-motivation. Research involvement was perceived as positively influencing classroom performance, bridging theory and application, improving understanding of course material, and enhancing critical thinking skills. Students credited research experiences for shaping their post-graduation career plans, including identifying research interests, pursuing fully funded PhD programs, and establishing entrepreneurial ventures or industry collaborations.

To encourage more student engagement in research, the participants recommended promoting interdisciplinary research, implementing a rotation-based model, enhancing advertisement of research opportunities, and highlighting the benefits of research engagement. By implementing these recommendations, the university can cultivate a research-driven environment that supports students' personal and professional growth.

- Faculty perspectives: Faculty members recognized the positive impact of the transition, noting improved student motivation, intellectual growth, and the development of a vibrant academic culture within their departments. The focus group findings with research-active faculty at LAU encompasses four major areas: support for research, student involvement in research, the impact of research on students' academic and professional development, and the impact of faculty involvement in research on their teaching and professional development. Regarding support for research, the findings indicate a mix of positive experiences and areas requiring additional support, including the need for increased investments in specific sectors, streamlined processes, and expanded support mechanisms. Student involvement in research faces challenges in effectively communicating opportunities, but strategies such as targeted communication, financial incentives, and curriculum enhancements were proposed to enhance engagement. Research was found to have a positive impact on students' academic and professional development, equipping them with valuable skills, enhancing employability, and aiding in career decision-making. Faculty involvement in research enhances teaching, management, and professional skills. However, balancing research and teaching responsibilities presents challenges, and a clear framework and streamlined approach to research involvement were suggested. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of research support, student engagement, and faculty involvement to foster a thriving research environment at LAU.
- Research output: Graduates who pursued research endeavors showcased notable achievements, such as published research papers, conference presentations, and successful admission to renowned graduate programs.

LAU's strategic transition to a research-active faculty has yielded significant positive impact on student learning outcomes. Through innovative initiatives and dedicated efforts, LAU has effectively bridged the gap of challenges encountered during this transition. The institution's commitment to enhancing graduate education, supporting faculty members, and providing adequate resources has played a pivotal role in fostering a vibrant research culture within the university.

Understandably, the transition was initially met with some resistance from LAU stakeholders including faculty members and students. In response, LAU demonstrated unwavering support by providing teaching load release to some of its faculty members. This crucial support allowed faculty to adapt their teaching methodologies and effectively integrate research-based pedagogical approaches into their classes. Consequently, this shift fostered a more engaging academic experience for students. The increased emphasis on research activities necessitated additional resources, including funding, staffing, laboratory space, and research equipment. Subsequently, LAU proactively allocated resources, including the establishment of the President Intramural Research Fund. This strategic allocation has been instrumental in providing the necessary financial backing for research initiatives and empowering faculty and students to undertake groundbreaking research endeavors. LAU remains committed to further investments, ensuring the continued growth of research activities and fostering a vibrant research culture within the institution.

LAU acknowledges the importance of research integrity and ethical conduct among its academic community. As such, the institution provided comprehensive training through the renowned Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program). As a new requirement, all graduate students and faculty seeking any form of internal funding are now mandated to undergo CITI training, reinforcing LAU's commitment to research integrity. Additionally, LAU deployed Turnitin, a plagiarism detection software, for thesis submission, further upholding academic integrity and ensuring high standards of original research among its academic community.

To address the challenge of communication skills essential for engaging in research activities, LAU took proactive measures by providing comprehensive training and support through a specialized course. The university's Writing Center also plays a crucial role in supporting students' writing proficiency, offering valuable guidance and assistance. To further bolster communication skills development, LAU introduced significant improvements in English courses at the sophomore level, focusing on academic writing skills. A new academic English writing course was made available to graduate students free of charge, ensuring all students have access to necessary resources for academic success.

During this transformative journey, LAU has encountered challenges in sustaining graduate student enrollment despite the commendable achievements of the Graduate Program Scholarships (GPS) program for the fourth consecutive year. To address this challenge, the university took proactive measures by increasing its investment in the graduate student research program. This renewed commitment aims to attract highly qualified students dedicated to academic research, offering them an average of 85 percent assistantships in 14 programs. To strengthen graduate education, the appointment of an officer for graduate studies by the GSR office in May 2023 paves the way for developing a comprehensive strategic plan to enhance graduate student enrollment and foster an enriching academic environment for their research endeavors. More details about graduate enrollment and graduate education are provided in Standards Five and Four, respectively.

To further enhance this transition, LAU recommends continuous evaluation and updates to research-related courses, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthening faculty development programs, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing assessment and feedback from students. By implementing these recommendations, LAU can continue to enhance its research-active environment, further benefiting student learning outcomes, and contributing to the university's academic excellence in line with its mission and strategic directives.

## APPENDICES

Affirmation of Compliance Form

E-Series

Financial Statements

Auditor's Management Letter

List of Supporting Documents Provided Electronically