

Editorial

Rethinking Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century

Amal BouZeineddine, Department of Education and CTL

It was during the time of ancient Greece and ancient Rome, the Greco-Roman world, when Liberal Arts was regarded as the core of education which would produce a free individual engaged in civic life. At that time, the liberal arts curriculum covered three subjects: grammar, rhetoric and logic, collectively known as the trivium. Four further subjects were added in medieval times: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, named the quadrivium. Trivium preceded the considerably more difficult quadrivium, and quadrivium was in itself the preparatory work for the more serious study of philosophy and theology. The aim of liberal arts education in medieval universities was developing students into citizens who are virtuous, ethical, highly articulate and knowledgeable in various fields.

In our modern times, liberal arts education persists under the same basic principles as those in the medieval era: producing well-rounded and global citizens who are life-long learners and active members in their communities; the claim is that liberal arts education enhances students' social responsibility, intellectual and practical skills - such as numerical, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking skills- which students should transfer to a real world experience. Today, the approach to liberal arts education typically incorporates both a general education curriculum for the comprehensive learning in different disciplines and a more in-depth study in a specific major. Nonetheless, this approach raises questions: is liberal arts education- in its current practices- adapting to 21st century needs? Does liberal arts education prepare students for the job market in a perpetually fluctuating global economy? Should there be rethinking of the value of liberal arts education philosophy and approach to learning?

The literature reports that recently there has been an escalating dissatisfaction with reducing liberal arts education to a simplistic assortment of course offerings in general education. This trend of disconnecting general education curriculum from a student's specialized study makes the

student's learning experience less likely coherent and integration of intellectual and practical skills in a student's coursework less likely transferrable. In the same vein, restricting leaning to the classroom formal academic instruction severed from application in an authentic community beyond the classroom limits students' meaningful learning authentic skills in civic engagement. The solution is an integrative approach to liberal arts education as has been well stated in a draft Document titled Principles and Practices of Integrative Liberal Learning by Ann Ferren and David Paris, 2012.

"Many colleges and universities are drawing lessons from interdisciplinary courses, majors, and programs to create broader, more intentional, problem-centered curricular designs that better integrate general education and the major across departments and throughout students' experiences to engage them in their learning and demonstrate its relevance. They are also experimenting with more sophisticated ways of linking co-curricular and service-learning activities to specific learning outcomes and of connecting these experiences to coursework."

An integrative liberal arts curriculum has become a need in the 21 century, so should AUB rethink its approach to liberal arts education and adopt principles which take into account the student as a whole, the student who is a responsible citizen prepared to tackle complex problems?

*This editorial is a synthesis of 4 articles available at CTL upon request:

1. Who needs liberal education?
2. What is a 21st century liberal education?
3. Principles and Practices of Integrative Liberal Learning
4. Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning

Teaching Excellence Award

Safa Jafari Safa, Office of Communications, AUB

Two professors have been awarded AUB's Teaching Excellence Award for the academic year 2015 - 2016: Dr. Bilal Kaafarani of the Department of Chemistry, and Dr. Farook Hamzeh, of the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering.

Every year, the AUB community nominates individual faculty members who exhibit exemplary teaching practices and have guided students into avenues of critical thinking and creativity in their academic fields. Nominees are requested to present their teaching portfolios and submit files based on identified criteria. The selection of awardees is finalized after three months of deliberations by the Teaching Excellence Awards Committee, an anonymous selection committee composed of members of all AUB's six faculties, a student, and an alumnus, and chaired by the Provost (ex-officio nonvoting member). Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Dr. Saouma BouJaoude is vice-chair of the committee and also an ex-officio nonvoting member.

Provost Harajli presented this year's awards in a ceremony attended by students, faculty, administration, and friends and families of the awardees at the Faculty Lounge of Ada Dodge Hall. "Quality teaching is one pillar of the mission of AUB that complements research and service," said the Provost. "These two outstanding colleagues were selected from a very strong cohort of candidates whose nominations signify their excellence. Dr. Bilal Kaafarani and Dr. Farook Hamzeh follow an impressive group of AUB faculty members who have won the award and whose excellence in teaching and improving student learning has left its mark on the lives of many students."

Dr. Bilal Kaafarani is an AUB graduate in Chemistry who earned a PhD from Bowling Green State University, Ohio in 2002. He joined AUB in 2004 as an assistant professor and became associate professor in 2010. An active researcher in his area of specialization, Dr. Kaafarani is also involved in students' academic life through the thriving Organic Chemistry Club. He hosted the first Organic Chemistry Competition in Lebanon (OC1) in 2011 at AUB under the patronage of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He is an enthusiastic user of digital technology, hosting a popular YouTube channel aimed at students.

The nominations included testimonies by students who described Dr. Kaafarani as a very creative teacher who strives to convey the hardest concepts in the clearest and easiest way possible. "Academically, Dr. Kaafarani is the most professional, organized, and enthusiastic professor I have ever met," wrote one student. "Dr. Kaafarani teaches

every semester as if it is his first semester: Full of enthusiasm, passion, and energy," was another testimony.

"The credit for this award and all the initiatives I worked on goes first to the students," said Dr. Kaafarani in his acceptance speech. "Since 2010, I have been assembling students to work with me on so many activities that we organize. These teams are just too good to be true. They surprise me every day with their talent and dedication, their hard work, their enthusiasm, and above all, their trust, love, and loyalty."

Dr. Farook Hamzeh took his BE in Civil Engineering (1997) and Masters of Engineering (2000) at AUB. He then continued his education at the University of California, Berkley where he earned a Masters and a PhD in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Project Management. Dr. Hamzeh joined AUB in 2011 after two years of teaching at Colorado State University. Described by his colleagues as an excellent teacher who is highly committed to his students' learning, Dr. Hamzeh is known for his motivating, clear, and capturing delivery style in his lectures. He uses the latest technologies to enhance student engagement and interaction and puts a lot of effort preparing for his lectures and paying attention to all detail.

Nominations described Dr. Hamzeh as always available to help students in and outside of the classroom; professional, strict, yet friendly and approachable, and possessing the technical and interpersonal skills required to be an effective life-long educator. "Dr. Hamzeh is a true inspiration," wrote one student. "He not only delivers his course innovatively but also passionately stimulates his student to innovate."

"What is best about Dr. Hamzeh is that he is his students' friend. Yet he is that friend that one cannot but respect and appreciate," wrote another student.

Upon receiving the award, Dr. Farook Hamzeh spoke about the importance of critical thinking and developing a learning process where "students are free to question the status quo, to think outside the box, and to unleash their creative abilities."

"Great teachers inspire students to learn about themselves and about life in its subtleties, pains, and beauty," he said. "While students may not always remember classroom material, they do get inspired by a good teacher who makes them believe in themselves and overcome the fear they have inside."

The AUB Teaching Excellence Award was established in 2002-2003. Twenty-eight faculty members have been awarded to date.



Teaching Excellence Award Speech

"Teaching as a Mission"

Bilal R. Kaafarani, Department of Chemistry, FAS

Thank you Provost Harajli for the kind words.

I consider teaching more than just delivering a lecture. Teaching is indeed a "mission". It is about making a substantial change in the lives of the young minds. It is about engraving an impact in the students' academic journey.

I had the privilege to introduce three unique initiatives at AUB:

- a. The Organic Competition- we published a paper about it.
- b. The Medical Research Volunteer Program (MRVP) - we recently got a paper accepted about the MRVP.
- c. The Haddadin Endowment

The credit for these initiatives as well as for this award goes to:

1. First to my students. I believe that every student is talented and that it is my role to provide them with the platform to shine and think outside the box. The teams of students, I have been assembling every year since 2010 to assist me in conducting the many activities at AUB, are just too good to be true. They continue to surprise me every day with their passion, creativity, dedication, enthusiasm, hard work and above all their trust, love and loyalty. Many of them are sitting in this room and I am very grateful to all of them.

2. The support I get from the different offices at AUB for my teaching activities: the IT Academic Services Department, the Multi Media Unit, the Office of Development, the Communication Office, the Office of Advancement, the AUB security and many others. I have been keeping them very busy for the last 12 years!

What is so beautiful about these people is that they don't check their job description before helping us with the tasks with which we need their assistance. Somehow they see the light in what we are doing and just go out of their way to make things happen.

3. Last but not least, the credit goes to my wife Dr. Brigitte Wex. Any other woman would have divorced me long time ago because I am hardly home! Brigitte said to me once that she feels she is the second wife and that AUB has always been and will always be my first wife! The best compliment I received since I joined AUB twelve years ago was from an AUB security guard who told me as I was driving my car into Hostler parking early in the morning on a Saturday a few weeks ago. He said, "Dr. Bilal, don't you ever get tired?!"

I thought it is only my office neighbor, Dr. Haddadin, who is keeping track of my working hours! It turned out that AUB security is watching as well! I love my job at AUB and I will not give it up for anything in the world... Thank you.

CTL Staff

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Teaching Excellence Award Speech

“ Let There be light ”.

Farook R. Hamzeh, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, FEA

Provost Mohamamad Harajli, Dean Makram Suidan, CTL Director, Dr. Saouma Boujaoude, President's Club Member Mr. Mounir Hamzeh, fellow AUB faculty, dear students, family and friends.

“Let There be light”. This was the beginning. This primordial light exemplifies knowledge, love, tolerance, understanding, justice, and peace. Light that can conquer the darkness inside a human. It all starts with knowledge which is the foundation of all good. With knowledge humans can be just and virtuous. Real knowledge that embodies these values is what enables a society to exist in harmony. But acquiring this knowledge requires proper education.

Education is the cornerstone for building civilizations where the educator's role is more of a mission than a mere job. Great teachers inspire students to learn about themselves and about life in its subtleties, pains, and beauty. While students may not always remember the classroom material, they do get inspired by a good teacher who makes them believe in themselves and overcome the fear they may have inside.

Some questions often come to mind “What do we educate our students for?” Is it enough to graduate students to be leaders in a system that will recreate the same problems and issues that the world currently faces? How can we teach them to solve the current problems without creating new and more grave ones? and How can we teach them empathy? I believe that it is our duty as teachers to guide students to discover their role in creating a better world where “serving humanity and the planet” is the goal and not the “control of humans” or “managing humans as consumers”.

Today's ceremony is to honor education and educators. To celebrate education is to recognize the role of a teacher as a leader and an agent of change in society. As a teacher, I see teaching as a mission with a noble goal to help students develop a sound character, grow a passion for a career where they can contribute to society, guide them to become independent learners in their journey of self-discovery, and facilitate their growth as active thinkers who create better solutions for humanity and planet earth without jeopardizing the sustainability of the human race and the ecosystem.

Isn't it true that “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically?” (Martin Luther King, Jr). Isn't critical thinking about reasoning, analyzing, evaluating, problem solving, and decision making? How can we expect students to develop critical thinking when there is a huge focus on memorizing information? How do we expect

our students to acquire such skills if our education does not help students develop such qualities? I believe that giving a bigger role to students to experiment with their learning, question several models, investigate patterns, and make mistakes while trying is part of the learning process. I believe in putting students in an environment where they can study conflicting views and perspectives of the world. After all, “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it” (Aristotle). This process starts with the educator who takes students out of fear for the grade and of being losers in society to an environment where students are free to question the status quo, to think outside the box, and to unleash their creative abilities. This is because a “free man ought not to learn anything under duress. Compulsory physical exercise does no harm to the body, but compulsory learning never sticks to the mind” (Plato).

Today, I am honored to receive the teaching excellence award for 2016 and I humbly accept it in appreciation of the great efforts and sacrifices of AUB teachers. Also as an act of gratitude for the educators and teachers who I have learned and continue to learn from. I thank the Center of Teaching and Learning (CTL) for promoting and supporting excellence in teaching and learning at AUB. I want to thank the teaching excellence award committee and the faculty learning communities at AUB. A big thank you goes to my family members who are always supportive. Finally, a profound thank you goes to my students who have nominated me for this award and to my students who always inspire me to be a better teacher and person. I want to thank all those who believe in me as an educator who brings a different perspective of engineering education, who guides his students to know themselves better, and who leads them to discover their role as engineers and leaders in the world. Thank you all.



Keeping IT Relevant a AUB

Yousif Asfour, and Clara El Mchantaf Office of the Chief Information Officer, AUB

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is constantly working towards achieving its mission of providing excellence in education and advancement of knowledge through world class research. With the proliferation of e-learning, mobile devices and cloud services, Information Technology (IT) at higher education institutions needs to adapt to remain relevant amongst all the advancement of technology in learning and teaching. IT's strategy at AUB is to transform itself from being merely a service provider to becoming a strategic partner with the academic and research community.

IT plans on accomplishing its vision by ensuring quality customer-centered services, utilizing the cloud for commodity services, building a flexible infrastructure, transforming its staff into consultants and by engaging directly with the global research and education community. In addition to working on delivering exceptional service, IT needs to create an environment where faculty and students are encouraged to utilize technology in their work. This entails creating an (Any) infrastructure where anyone, from anywhere, through any device, can connect to any resource, at any time to do anything.

IT also needs to shift its focus from managing infrastructure to creating research and teaching services. The most efficient way to achieve this is for AUB to join the global Research and Education community through membership in regional and global National Research & Education Networks (NRENs). To that end, IT at AUB has joined GEANT and Internet2 – the European and North American NRENs respectively and is working with other universities in Lebanon to establish a Lebanese NREN. These NRENs are non-profit organizations providing advanced network services that enable efficient and reliable data communications and networking services, and facilitate collaboration among the research community.

The ultimate purpose of an NREN is to serve scholars and innovators, ensuring that research and development in Lebanon is contributing to the local and global economy. Joining the NREN community will enable IT to achieve its vision by sharing technology, services and resources with other NREN members. It will also enable AUB to utilize external services such as Eduroam, educational databases, shared libraries, specialized computing, collaboration services and MOOCs. Joining a community of education and research organizations not only opens regional and global collaboration opportunities for AUB, but also helps put the University on the map by contributing to the development and distribution of education and research services.

Making Excellence Inclusive: From Theory to Practice

Tia Brown McNair, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Student Success Association of American Colleges & Universities Washington, DC (USA)

How are institutions preparing all students for the kinds of challenges they will confront in life, work, and citizenship? How can we help students to integrate and apply their knowledge and skills to complex, unscripted problems and new settings? How can campus educators design innovative curricular pathways that provide students with intentionally designed experiences to help prepare them for success? How does an institution identify and design the high-impact practices that are best suited for meeting the educational needs of students? How can we build capacity for educators to ask and respond to questions about diversity, equity, and inclusion? These are questions that shape the work of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) in Washington, DC (USA). I was honored to explore these ideas with participants as one of the keynote speakers at the "Sixth International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning" at AUB in February.

At AAC&U, we challenge our member institutions (AUB is a member) "to make liberal education and inclusive excellence the foundation for institutional purpose and educational practice in higher education" (AAC&U Mission Statement). To achieve this goal, we must commit to translate our values into measurable and sustainable action. This, of course, requires continual reflection of our roles as educators and the willingness to be leaders of change. The questions listed above guide that reflection process. A team of campus leaders from AUB recently participated in AAC&U's Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success at the University of California Los Angeles with 35 other campus teams from across the United States and one campus team from Vietnam. The AUB team developed a comprehensive action plan focused on how the institution can achieve inclusive excellence for all students, and promote a campus environment that embraces diversity and difference. I look forward to following up with the team and to learning about the wonderful work that will emerge from our collaboration.

Faculty Learning Community on- Thinking in the Discipline

Colin Smith, Department of Biology

Faculty learning communities are a means to encourage faculty experimentation and conversation about teaching and learning. Reflecting on the liberal arts mission of the university, in which we help students develop their full potential, we wanted to explore teaching activities that not only fostered higher-order thinking, but did so with recognition of the diversity of perspectives, questions, and approaches of different disciplines. Thus, the name "Thinking in the Discipline" was chosen to reflect our interest in forms of higher-order thinking with specific importance in member disciplines. For this reason, faculty diversity was sought. We have members from the disciplines of Archeology, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Economics, Engineering, English, and Nursing.

The FLC started in fall 2014, so we are ending our second year. We tried to meet fortnightly for lunch in the faculty lounge with the idea that members might not be able to attend every meeting, yet an occasional free lunch in a pleasant space would have some priority. We met 11 times during each academic year, and when the Faculty Lounge was not available, we met downstairs in the student cafeteria. Members were encouraged to conduct a project to help students learn some aspect of critical thinking in their discipline combined with some assessment of whether the project was effective. Although some members conducted projects intended for publication, most of us conducted small-scale trials of instructional activities with simple surveys of student responses to the activity. A standard meeting would be one or two members discussing updates in their projects, others providing feedback, support (such as

for Institutional Review Board applications), and salient anecdotes, with conversation meandering broadly. Once, we tried a "journal club" format in which we read and discussed a specific article. Inviting guests was strongly encouraged, and though not every meeting had a guest, they brought fresh insight, expanded the conversation, and two stayed as members.

Most tangibly, the FLC encouraged individuals to try teaching and learning activities that they might otherwise never have attempted. Several FLC members have presented at the CTL's International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Less tangibly, but arguably more transformative, was the experience of regularly discussing teaching and learning, supporting each other's projects, and reflecting on the essential role faculty have bringing the educational mission to fruition. It was valuable to relax the focus on the immediate details of daily teaching, assessment, grades, ICEs, and credits and to consider what is really being learned, how, and why. Thus, the role of collegiality in teaching and learning is hard to overestimate. We did not embark on any group projects, though we discussed how we might articulate and promulgate learning outcomes about critical thinking.

If I may suggest advice to those interested in FLCs, it would be to recruit members willing to commit with vigor; to insist on everyone having a defined project or having clear roles for everyone in a group project; to be prepared for scheduling difficulties; to keep at it; to recognize what is accomplished by myriad small contributions.





Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) *Seminars, Workshops, and Brown Bags*

During Fall 2015-2016 CTL staff organized a panel and gave a presentation in the New Faculty Orientation on Aug. 26. Moreover, CTL hosted a workshop on October 6 entitled Flipping Your Classroom to Increase Student Engagement and Learning. Two workshops were offered in October 27 and November 10, respectively entitled Interactive Lecturing in Large Classes on and Capstone Courses. A seminar on Compiling and Assessing Teaching Portfolios on was offered on December 1. Additionally, in collaboration with the IT-Academic Services (IT-ACAD), CTL organized two brown bag sessions titled Social Media: Ban or embrace? On October 13 and How Did You Make that (Digital) Literary Geography? on November 24, in addition to a brown bag on Creative Critical thinking on November 3rd. CTL also offered a workshop for the Interprofessional Education (IPE) initiative at the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Hariri School of Nursing on November 24. Most of these activities were first discussed in a meeting with the CTL Advisory Committee held on October 19, 2015.

During Spring of 2015-2016, CTL organized a panel and gave a presentation in the New Faculty Orientation on January 20 and another presentation for the Lebanese Army Officers on May 11. Moreover, in collaboration with Jafet Library, CTL conducted a workshop entitled Managing your research using Endnote on April 25. CTL also organized its annual faculty Seminar on Teaching and Learning Excellence. The seminar included seven sessions and was held every Tuesday from 5:00 to 7:00 pm between March 1 and April 12. Each session discussed a different topic. Participants in the Seminar included 29 faculty members and PhD candidates. Moreover, other faculty guests attended a number of sessions because of their interest in the session topic.

Other Activities

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grants. Year five of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) grants program was organized and four proposals were supported within the framework of the SoTL initiative managed by CTL.

Annual Conference. CTL organized its Sixth annual conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in collaboration with IT-Academic Services (IT-ACAD), and the Communication Skills program of the English Department. The Conference was attended by around 130 participants from Universities in Lebanon and other Arab countries.

Faculty Learning Communities. One faculty learning community (FLC) on Higher Order Thinking was active during academic year 2015-2016. CTL introduced a new FLC on Digital Humanities which started its activities during the spring semester.

AUB Teaching Excellence Award. Thirty four faculty members were nominated for the Award this year. The portfolios of these candidates were reviewed by the Teaching Excellence Award Committee which voted to present this year's AUB Teaching Excellence Award to Dr. Farook Hamzeh from the Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture and Dr. Bilal Kaafarani from the Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Individual Consultations. A number of individual consultations based on faculty requests were held during the academic year 2015-2016. These consultations covered program learning outcomes, course syllabus design, compiling a teaching portfolio, and writing proposals for conducting scholarship of teaching and learning. In addition, CTL provided feedback to HSON and FHS on their proposed Interprofessional Education initiative.

REP Consultations. CTL worked with REP on preparing training manuals and conducting workshops on a variety of topics for Princess Noura Bint Abdel Raman University in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, CTL conducted workshops at Ahfad University for Women in Sudan.

For more information on CTL activities, visit CTL website <http://www.aub.edu.lb/ctl/Pages/index.aspx>



Sixth International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

For the sixth year in a row, and in collaboration with the IT Academic Services Department, and the Communication Skills Program at the American University of Beirut, the International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was held on February 12 and 13, 2016. The conference was divided into five strands: (1) Assessment of Program and Course Learning Outcomes in Higher Education; (2) Community-Based Learning and Community Service; (3) E-learning and Pedagogy; (4) Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures in Higher Education; (5) Writing Instruction and Research in Higher Education.

The Conference included five pre-conference workshops entitled: (1) Assessment by Case Studies presented by Dr. Amal BouZeineddine; (2) Storyboarding for Instructional Design presented by Ms. Rayane Fayed; (3) Teaching with Multimodal Assignments presented by Drs. Jennifer Nish, Malaki Khoury, and Zane Sinno; (4) Enhancing Critical Thinking through High Impact Instructional Strategies presented by Dr. Saouma BouJaoude; and (5) Kick your Storyline Skills up a Notch! presented by Ms. Rana Al Ghazzi.

Moreover, three speakers presented keynote speeches at the conference: (1) Globalization of English and Changing Definitions of Proficiency by Dr. Suresh Canagarajah, Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Applied Linguistics, English, and Asian Studies at Pennsylvania State University; (2) Moving from My Work to Our Work: High-Impact Practices and Integrative Learning across the Curriculum by Dr. Tia McNair, Associate Vice President in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Student

Success; American Association for Colleges & Universities, and (3) Teaching in a Digital Age: Developing Knowledge and Skills for 21st century by Dr. Tony Bates, President and CEO of Tony Bates Associates Ltd.

The conference also had a featured speech by Dr. Yussif Asfour, AUB Chief Information Officer titled "Keeping IT Relevant at AUB". Moreover, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of AUB the Conference hosted a luncheon presentation by Dr. Waddah Nasr titled One Hundred and Fifty Years of Commitment to Excellence in Teaching: An Enduring Tradition at AUB?

The conference included 22 presentations by presenters were from AUB and other universities in Lebanon as well as colleagues from international universities such as King's College, London, American University in Cairo, and Miami University, Ohio.

For more information about the conference, please visit the website at <http://www.aub.edu.lb/conferences/ctlhe/Pages/index.aspx>

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