# Strengthening Research at AUC

Report of the Research Advisory Council

May 2005

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## 2004-2005

Research and creative endeavors represent an important commitment of The American University in Cairo. Faculty are expected to be involved in scholarly activities, and they are considered as an important factor in promotion and tenure decisions. Faculty also consider research to be necessary for their credibility and for promoting their academic career. It is generally agreed that both teaching and research activities interact to strengthen each other rather than merely competing for faculty time. Research is also an important part of the services provided by the University to society.

In support of faculty research, the university provides a variety of funding opportunities in the form of conference, research, research development, teaching enhancement, and mini grants. In 2004-2005, about 200 faculty members benefited for such grants, which amounted to more than $400,000.  OSP also helps faculty locate possible external sources of funding for their research projects.

This report presents some of the work and discussions of the Research Advisory Council during the academic year 2004-5 and is divided into the following recommendations:

1. **Provide additional support for faculty research:**

   a) Increase the time available to faculty for research, attachment 1.
   b) Help faculty develop a realistic research agenda at AUC, attachment 2.
   c) Compensate faculty more adequately for thesis supervision, attachment 3.
   d) Provide additional incentives to departments to encourage their faculty pursue research by changing the way overheads are calculated and allowing departments to receive a portion of the overhead charged to externally funded grants, attachment 4.

2. **Maximize the effectiveness of the university funds used to support research:**

   a) Departments and schools should enforce the reporting procedure, which is published in "Faculty Support Grants" to ensure that there is an acceptable outcome.
   b) Departments and schools should consider the outcome from earlier grants, including resulting publications, when vetting a new application.
   c) Encourage faculty to apply for the Research Development Grants, as described in "Faculty Support Grants" in order to prepare proposals for external funding for their research.

3. **Encourage faculty to write proposals for external funding of their research:**

   a) Streamline some of the processes involved in administering research grants. The Principal Investigator Handbook, which was prepared by the Office of Sponsored Programs in March 2005, will be the starting point for RAC discussions next fall.
   b) Allow faculty to apply for both AUC and external grants on the basis of cost sharing.
   c) Organize regular proposal writing workshops for faculty
   d) OSP and schools should give faculty more help in identifying sources for external funding

**4. Strengthen the ties between AUC and the outside community:**

a) Organize an international interdisciplinary conference: Water resources in Egypt and the Nile basin: the way forward, attachment 5.
b) Continue to hold the AUC Research Conference. The 13th conference will be held next year under the theme: Higher Education and Research in Egypt: the Way Forward, see attachment 6.
c) Create new faculty support grant: Coordination of a conference/workshop grant, attachment 7.
d) Bring research outcomes to the rest of AUC and outside community (publications, theses, funds, etc.). Attachment 8 gives the form for collecting faculty research and publications which will be distributed in early fall.

**Plans for next year:**

1. Establishing departmental benchmarks for research productivity: A questionnaire has been sent to departments and some responses have been received. This issue will be high on the agenda of next year.
2. Training program for research assistants: The outline of a training program to prepare research assistants has been developed and will be implemented in collaboration with the library starting next year.
3. Based on the administrative procedures outlined in the Principal Investigator Handbook by OSP, recommend ways of making it easier for faculty who receive research grants to navigate their way through the AUC system.
4. Look more closely at the issues associated with TAs and RAs.
5. Look more closely at the reasons for the present weak relationships between research centers and academic departments at AUC.

*Strengthening of research at AUC is an ongoing process. The Research Advisory Council intends to continue its discussions of this issue next year and welcomes suggestions for improvement.*

**Attachment (1)**

**Increase the time available to faculty for research**

One of the main barriers that AUC faculty face in their research is lack of time.  Faculty in many disciplines need periods of uninterrupted time in which they can focus on their scholarly work and research. The following suggestions are meant to help faculty make better use of the time they do have and to help departments create more opportunities for their faculty.

**Reduce the teaching load:**

Faculty members may apply for release from a certain fraction of their teaching load in a given semester according to the guidelines in "Faculty Support Grants".  Faculty receiving such release should not be allowed to carry a teaching overload.

Faculty may also buy additional research time from externally funded grants. In preparing the budget, faculty members may include an amount to buy out of teaching one or more courses. Allowing more flexibility to take into account the size of the grant and the granting agency, the funds for buying out one course can range between 1/6 of the annual salary and the amount needed to pay the replacement who will teach the course.

Another alternative is for a faculty member to request partial payment for partial teaching load (partial leave without pay)

**Stack courses:**

In consultation with their department and depending on the staffing and scheduling conditions, faculty members may find it beneficial to pursue ideas along the following lines:

1.  Condense the teaching load in order to free up a future semester exclusively for research. Examples include (4+4+4+0) or (4+4+1+3).
2.  Cluster the courses in two or three days a week.

**Improve support to teaching:**

Having a good teaching assistant can save a faculty member the time taken up by administrative chores, grading of some quizzes and assignments, lab supervision, and answering some of the students' routine questions:

1.  Departmental and schools in collaboration with the Center for Learning and Teaching should organize training programs for TAs.
2.  Improve the reliability and continuity of service of TAs by giving them better pay.

**Make most of the summer:**

In writing research proposals for external funding, faculty members may include a summer salary in the budget since their contracts are for nine months.  Alternatively faculty may apply for an AUC research grant that provides up to 30 days per diem for travel. Faculty members may receive compensation of up to 50% of their LE salary in support of an acceptable summer research proposal to be carried out locally.

**Make better use of your time:**

Faculty members may use the time they allocate for research more efficiently if they pursue ideas along the following lines:

1. In preparing your research proposal, include a budget item to pay for research associates or assistants. Having a good research assistant can save a faculty member the time taken up by administrative chores, doing repetitive legwork and calculations, looking up references in the library, etc. Organizing periodic training programs for RAs would be helpful in this regard.
2. You may also include a budget for P/T secretarial support for dealing with the financial system at AUC.
3. Seek partnership with national institutions who can receive CAPMS approval for surveys more easily.

**Take advantage of sabbatical leaves:**

Tenured faculty are entitled to sabbatical leaves. Faculty should take advantage of the sabbatical by making research-intensive plans. Preparation for tenure awards are available for non-tenured faculty in their third year at AUC who plan to apply for tenure.

**Opportunities for new faculty:**

New faculty at AUC find it time consuming to adjust to the system and should, therefore, be given the opportunity to establish their research agenda and program. Examples of the opportunities for new faculty include:

1. Assign mentors from among the senior tenured faculty to help new faculty adjust academically and socially.
2. Avoid or limit committee assignments for the first year or two.
3. Avoid assigning 3 different courses each semester to a new faculty member.
4. Give partial release from teaching in the first semester or two if possible. This is especially important for new assistant professors.
5. Departments should be discouraged from giving new faculty, especially assistant professors, a teaching overload.

**Attachment (2)**
**Helping Faculty Develop a Research Agenda at AUC**

Having a realistic research agenda that matches the faculty member's research interest with the available resources is an important first step towards a more focused and productive research effort, especially for new assistant and associate professors. The following are recommendations to help such faculty develop or update their research agendas at AUC:

1. Whenever possible, hire faculty with well established research record, or with high potential for research, and help them adjust to conditions at AUC and Egypt.
2. Departments and schools should make faculty aware of the importance of research in contract renewal, promotion, and tenure decisions. This issue should be included in the general orientation of new faculty and in the seminars recommended in point 3, below.
3. OGSR will encourage schools and departments to organize regular research seminars in which more established faculty discuss their research agendas and the results of their research projects. OGSR will provide support if needed.
4. RAC will develop interdisciplinary areas of research and invite faculty to participate in team research projects.
5. OGSR will encourage schools and departments to organize seminars/conference in collaboration with local institutions to help faculty network with colleagues in Egypt. OGSR will provide support if needed.
6. OSP will encourage faculty to make use of the search results of IRIS and SPINS within their field of interest.
7. OSP in collaboration with OGSR will organize regular proposal writing workshops for faculty.
8. Deans and department chairs should encourage faculty to give serious thought to filling out the research section of their annual faculty reports and should give them appropriate feedback.
9. OGSR will make faculty aware of the funding and release time opportunities offered by AUC.
10. LLT will make faculty aware of the resources for research in the library.

**Attachment (3)**

**Faculty Load for Thesis Supervision**

According to the current PPP document: "Serving as supervisor or advisor for more than two successfully completed master's theses in any academic year equals one-half credit hour of teaching per thesis."

Although the above language gives the monetary awards, it does not mention academic rewards.

Although it is widely agreed that thesis supervision is an integral part of the responsibilities of full-time faculty, it is left up to the faculty member to volunteer for this task. As a result, the load of thesis supervision can be unevenly distributed in some departments.

The faculty load for thesis supervision can vary according to discipline and according to the type of student. However, the fact that the university charges the student for the equivalent of 6 credit hours over two semesters (9 in ECON) plus an additional 1 credit for each extra semester, should give some idea about the expected amount of student work and the accompanying faculty load in supervision. The intensity of the work required for thesis supervision is recognized in the TEFL program, where faculty teach 5 courses per year.

The load involved in reading graduate theses needs also to be recognized.

**Recommendation:**

Modify the PPP statement to read "Serving as supervisor or advisor for a successfully completed master's thesis equals one-half credit hour of teaching. This credit may be received in the form of an overload payment or as a release time from teaching."

**Attachment (4)**

**Recommended Incentives for Departments to Support Research**

We also need to introduce incentives for departments so that they encourage their faculty to be involved in research. The following initiatives are recommended in order to provide additional incentives for departments.

1. Allow departments to receive a portion of the overhead charged to externally funded grants. Overhead rates ranging to 45% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) should be considered and requested on all grant proposals where the funding agency will allow indirect costs (these rates should be considered on all non-federal proposals). The current approved rate should be charged on Federal Projects. MTDC is based on all direct costs other than Participant costs (stipends, books, tuition, and fees, any equipment purchases in excess of $5,000, and any subcontracts in excess of $25,000). Indirect costs should be charged on all other cost categories, i.e. salaries, wages, fringe benefits, supplies, equipment, travel and other.
2. With externally funded grants involving release time, allow departments to have access to the difference between the money received by the university to buy out courses and the money used to hire a replacement.
3. Encourage faculty to include funds for research assistants, which will be used to hire and/or pay some of the tuition fees for graduate and undergraduate students from the department.

# Water Resources in Egypt and the Nile-Basin: The Way Forward

An International Interdisciplinary Conference

**Saturday and Sunday April 29-30, 2006**

**Rationale**:
Several conferences and a lot of recommendations have been made on how to solve water problems in Egypt, yet many of the problems still persist. A major difficulty with the current water problems is that they are multi-dimensional and need a holistic/integrated approach for their solution. This conference takes a fresh look at the problems, tries to find out why they have not been solved and explores some interdisciplinary ways forward.

**Topics of discussion:**
Whenever possible, a holistic approach will be used in discussing the issues that pertain to water resources in Egypt. Possible topics of discussion include but are not limited to:

   a) Water resources in Egypt and the Nile-basin: historical and cultural perspective, survey of the problems and the solutions that have been proposed.
   b) Distribution and allocation of water: political and economic issues, irrigation and agricultural issues, water resource planning, water consumption and property rights.
   c) Social and health considerations: poverty issues, sanitation and awareness issues.
   d) Efficiency of utilization: environmental issues, water management, conservation, drainage, recovery and reuse.
   e) Current and emerging challenges: rising water table, accumulation of toxic substances, water scarcity, etc.

**Format:**
Contributions to the conference will consist of institutional survey papers, invited contributions, research papers and interdisciplinary panel discussions.

**Outcome:**
As a result of the action-oriented discussions, it is expected that some high priority problems will be identified and holistic solutions will be proposed. Whenever possible, teams will be formed and timeline for implementation will be proposed. An edited book will be published after the conference combining presentations, discussions and recommendations.

**Venue:**　　　　Ewart Hall, Oriental Hall and 6$^{th}$ floor Hill House, AUC

**Deadlines:**

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| Announcement: | May 2005 |
| Indication of interest: | 22 September 2005 |
| Abstracts (about 250 words): | 15 November 2005 |
| Acceptance of abstract: | early January 2006 |
| Full-length papers (about 10 pages): | mid March 2006 |
| Proceedings (full-length papers and invited contributions): | distributed at the conference |
| Book of conference (a selection of edited papers): | December 2006 |

**Organizing Committee:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Salah Arafa | Michael Lewis |
| Abdelghani Elimam | Rodrigo Seda |
| Sherif Elmusa | Edward Smith |
| Mahmoud Farag, chair | Rick Tutwiler |
| Amr Goneid | Suzan Watts |
| Nicholas Hopkins | Mohamed Yousif |

*The American University in Cairo*
*Office of Graduate Studies and Research*

13<sup>th</sup> AUC Research Conference

# Higher Education and Research in Egypt: The Way forward

Sunday and Monday

## April 2 - 3, 2006

Call for Papers and Panel Discussions

The AUC Research conference provides an opportunity for AUC faculty and graduate students to discuss research issues of common interest and a forum for informed debate. The conference also helps strengthen the relationship between the university and other organizations and institutions in the region. AUC faculty and graduate students are invited to present papers or propose topics for panel discussion on recent research or work-in-progress at the conference. Possible topics of discussion include but are not limited to:

a) Current status of higher education in Egypt: Is it fulfilling its mission?
b) Higher education: quality versus quantity.
c) Assessment and accreditation
d) Quality higher education as a cornerstone for development in Egypt
e) Human resource development, training and job opportunities
f) Higher education: public versus private sectors
g) Role of the international universities
h) Models of higher education: what works and what doesn't?
i) Role and mission of research in Egypt: Is it fulfilling its mission?
j) Academic integrity, intellectual property, ethics
k) Funding of research
l) Role of research centers, industry and private sector
m) Impact of social climate: cultural issues, diversity, gender concerns, etc.
n) Knowledge generation and dissemination: research, education, and training.
o) The path for the future

### DEADLINES

November 24, 2005   Indication of interest in giving a presentation or participating in a panel discussion

December 22, 2005   Submission of abstracts (250 - 400 words)
   May 8, 2006          Submission of full length papers for publication in the conference proceedings

*For communications or more information, please contact the Office of the Vice Provost, ext. 5185,*
*email:* mmfarag@aucegypt.edu

**Attachment (7)**

**Coordination of a Conference/Workshop Grant**

As a means of strengthening the role of AUC as a bridge to bring people of different backgrounds together, faculty members may apply for support to coordinate or organize conferences/workshops independently or in collaboration with colleagues from other institutions. The grant may cover the cost of administrative support, mailing and advertising, refreshments, hall rental, and/or honoraria to keynote speakers. The Office of Graduate Studies and Research can also help with the conference logistics.

**Attachment (8)**

**Faculty Research and Publications**
**2004-2005**

*Dear colleague*
*Please provide the following information in order to help update the university website on research activities of the faculty and in order to bring your research outcome to the attention of the rest of AUC and the outside community.*

Name:
Email:
Link to your website if available:
Department/unit:
Academic specialization:

**Current Research Areas:**

**Recent Scholarly Contributions/ Creative Work/ Conference Presentations (the last 5 years)**

*Please follow the following format if possible. You may use the standard reporting format in your field, if different from the proposed format:*
- *Books and book chapter: Author(s), (year) Title of book. Edition, chapter( ), Publisher, Country.*
- *Papers in Journals: Author(s), (year), Title of article, Name of Journal, vol. ( ), pp. xx-yy*
- *Presentation in a conference: Author(s), (year), Title of article, Name and location of the conference*

**Recently Completed MA/MS Theses:**

*Please follow the following format if possible:*
- *Title of thesis, Student name, (year), Specialization, department.*

**Research grants and Contracts Received in the last 5 years.**

*Please include topic, sources of funding and amount, and duration.*

*Message from OSP*

*AUC has a program that allows Faculty to access funding sources for sponsored research. The Sponsored Programs Information Network (SPIN) is an Internet based system that can be accessed through a web browser such as Netscape through the website: http://europe.infoed.org or from the Office of Sponsored Programs' web page. The SPIN can be accessed from any computer as long as an AUC PPP account is used. User and password is: unicairo.*

*The SPIN includes an email alert feature known as SPINS Matching And Research Transmittal System (SMARTS) whereby faculty create their own personal profile using keywords that they input to describe their research interests ensuring they receive opportunities tailored specifically to their project needs. Each time a relevant funding opportunity is added to the system, a notification will automatically be directed to his/her email address. Please contact OSP for additional information.*

**Please return this form to: Dr. Mahmoud Farag, Vice Provost, mail code 131**
This form is also available in soft copy. Please write to: mmfarag@aucegypt.edu