

For Immediate Release



AUB's new VP for IT zeroes in on streamlining the University's administrative and academic processes

Beirut, Lebanon- 25/02/2011 -AUB is in the process of enhancing the digitization of both its academic and business processes and has already succeeded in encouraging the adoption of computer-assisted learning in the majority of courses.

Since Rita Khayat-Toubia's appointment as first vice president for Information Technology/chief information officer at AUB, the institution has directed its efforts to strategic, cross-campus IT initiatives. One of the top priorities on Toubia's Information Technology (IT) reforms agenda is to optimize business and administrative processes. Appointed in June 2010, Toubia is responsible for defining IT strategy, as well as identifying and evaluating emerging IT solutions and deploying best practices.

Her 20 years of entrepreneurial and IT executive management experience on an international level stands her in good stead to overcome strategic hurdles.

"The vast majority of our institution's business activities are very straightforward but we haven't done enough work in defining, streamlining, automating and integrating them," Toubia said.

But AUB is on the right track to achieving key IT milestones, the VP added.

Currently over 90 percent of classes are registered and structured using Moodle, the official Learning Management System at AUB, Toubia said.

"Online teaching and learning is becoming a powerful tool to complement traditional methods," Toubia said, underlining the importance of Moodle for both students and professors.

But Toubia has big ambitions for the University and plans to invest in people, processes, and systems.

"The necessary automation and process optimization always result in requiring people to change the way they have been working in the past. Naturally, no one likes to change," she said, adding that her office plans to develop people skills to help propel the automation process.

"When I look down to the bottom layer of the organization I see a lot of untapped talents and high potential people," she said. "Within AUB, we have people with a lot of energy and education but they lack the experience and exposure to best practice."

Nevertheless, the process has been launched and progress is being made. Toubia's team is proposing integrated and global solutions that will produce better results.

"What organizations used to do in the past is [tackle] processes in a specific department. However, the best way to optimize processes is to look at them from beginning to end across several departments," she said.

For instance, she said, that her team will aim to streamline AUB's invoicing process since invoices currently have to go through at least five departments before they are paid to the vendor.

Finally, Toubia noted that the university was declared an official e-waste collection point for the AUB campus and the surrounding neighborhood.

“AUB is working on taking collecting electronic equipments to either refurbish them or give them to charitable organizations,” she said, adding that once this project is fully operational, then Lebanese companies would not need to send their electronic waste abroad for recycling, thus saving time and money.

Toubia believes that AUB is capable of creating a successful awareness campaign in this field because of its large community.

“If you add 8000 students, their families and over 4000 employees and their families in addition to the physicians and contractors then we can make a difference on this level,” she said.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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