

Service Statement

Wassim El-Hajj

While at the American University of Beirut (AUB), I heavily contributed to the University, Society, and Profession.

Services to the Computer Science Department & University

Since September 2019, I have been serving as the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences (FAS) taking on the following tasks: (1) leading the eLearning and Distance Education strategy in FAS, (2) leading the entrepreneurship strategy in FAS, (3) handling students' concerns, noting that FAS is the largest faculty in AUB, (4) ensuring the academic continuity in times of crisis, and (5) leading the automation efforts of all FAS processes. In eLearning for example, I am leading the efforts of converting key FAS courses into blended/online format and creating online Diplomas that would attract international audience such as Computing in Education and Modern Middle East. When AUB had to switch to online education due to local unrest in the country, I led the efforts in coordination with the IT Academic Services to ensure that faculty members are equipped with the technical knowledge needed to teach online. Online workshops on online teaching were conducted in addition to managing an FAS webpage that gives hints and provide resources on teaching online. This experience proved to be very useful when AUB had to switch online again due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In my capacity as the Associate Dean for Students, I handled all FAS students' concerns and problems. Hence, these concerns increased dramatically during the online learning period, but I was able to handle each and every case fairly. I have also been leading the efforts to automate the FAS processes, for example, change of grade process, study abroad process, course equivalency process, among many others.

For a period of six years, from September 2013 till September 2019, I served as the chairperson of the computer science department. The duties I performed while Chairperson extend far beyond the regular chair duties, to include: fund seeking, donations, establishing sponsorship programs, aggressive outreach activities, school and university visits, and engaging AUB and the Lebanese community in CS-related workshops, seminars, and activities. When I first became Chair, the total number of computer science students was 243, 18 of which were MS students, and the students were admitted at a low composite score of 500 (a score that combines the SAT score and school grades). In Fall 2019-20, the number of students increased to 366, 38 of which are MS students, and the admission score became 585, the second highest admission cutoff score in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences after Biology. My Chairmanship tenure resulted in the dramatic enhancement and improvement of the computer science department from all the fronts of research, visibility, reputation, academic strength, and impact. The department has now the second highest admission cutoff score in FAS; the second biggest MS program in FAS, and the second biggest undergraduate program in FAS. The department's student teams have been winning the major programming and problem solving contests in Lebanon and competing well worldwide. Take for instance the prestigious ACM Lebanese Collegiate Programming contest, which the department has been winning since 2015, competing against all other universities in Lebanon. During the past few years, and specifically during 2017-18, I opened up to many departments in AUB to establish academic and research collaboration; these departments include, Media Studies, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Graphic

Design, and multiple departments in the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine. The department already started offering specialized computing courses for these departments, and some research projects are launched while others are in progress.

In September 2017, I was elected to serve on the university Senate until September 2020. During the senate first meeting, I was elected to serve on the AUB Senate Committee for Faculty Affairs (SCFA) which during academic year 2017-18 had important contributions to the Tenure guidelines, policies, and contract. Starting September 2018, I started serving as the Senate Secretary. Then in February 2020, I was elected again as a SCFA member, then SCFA Chair. As SCFA Chair and due to the economic situation in the country and the COVID-19 outbreak, I lead many tasks including:

1. Worked closely with the Benefit Office to ensure that COVID-19 testing and admission is covered by the AUB health coverage plan.
2. Ensured that the faculty benefits will be grandfathered for all those currently benefiting from what AUB offers
3. Finalized the SCFA bylaws amendments, presented them to the senate, and which were then approved by the Board of Trustees. The new amendments involve SCFA representatives in all academic decisions as opposed to the previous bylaws which involved SCFA only in Benefits.
4. Worked with the administration to finalize a support/retention package for professorial rank faculty members.
5. Worked with the administration to draft a support/retention package for full-time instructors and lecturers.

In addition to my service to AUB as Senator and to the department as Chairperson, I served on the following committees:

- Chair of the department's recruitment committee (2013-2019)
- Chair of the department's assessment committee (2013-2019)
- Committee member in the AUB-wide academic assessment committee (2017-18)
- Committee member of the CCTV policy committee (2016-17)
- Committee member in the Teaching Excellence Award Committee (2014-15 and 2015-16)
- Member of the Department Self-Study Committee (2013-14)
- Committee Member of AUB & AUBMC Network Redesign Project (2012-13)
- Member of the University General Education Committee (2012-13)

For the purpose of strengthen the department's outreach, visibility, and academic merit I have organized and hosted in AUB many events and workshops. Hence, the majority of these workshops were open to AUB community as well as students from other institutions. A sample of these events include:

- 2017 ArabWIC 5th Annual International conference on Arab Women in Computing, Aug. 2017
- Development summer camp for kids aging 11-17 in collaboration with the Continuing Education Center (CEC) at AUB. *Summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018.*
- the 3rd National VEX Robotics Contest in April 2016.
- 3-day workshop entitled "*Introduction to Computer Modeling and Simulation*" in January 2016
- 3-day workshop entitled "*Enterprise Architecture*" in January 2016
- Winter school for one full week entitled "*Winter School on computational neuroscience*" in January 2016

- Organized and hosted the *Microsoft Tech Days* on December 8, 2015
- A two-day workshop entitled “*Deep Learning: from theory to practice*” in January 2015.
- An 8-day workshop entitled “*Building Rich Internet Applications*” on January 2015.
- 5th and 6th ACM Lebanese Collegiate Programming contest, LCPC 2013 & LCPC 2014.
- mini-course on "*Optimizing multi-threaded algorithms and code targeting hardware accelerators: data locality and parallelism overheads*", in June 2014
- three-week workshop on *mobile app development* in January 2014
- a Week on Cloud and Scalability , January 2013

On the advising front, I have served as a Freshman Advisor in 2011 and 2012 advising around 40 students per year. My responsibilities included helping students pick the appropriate courses for their intended major, following up on their progress, and addressing the problems they encounter. I also served as a CMPS student advisor in Fall 2011-12 advising around 50 students. Moreover, I have been the advisor for all graduate students and a secondary advisor for all undergraduate students since 2013. I also volunteered to coach students interested in participating in the ACM Collegiate Programming Contests, and coached students interested in competing in the Microsoft Imagine Cup.

Services to the Society

I did three major services that also include a teaching component.

1. During 2019, I met and agreed with the Director of the Secondary School at the International College (IC) to offer as a service one mandatory session of programming to grade 10 and 11 students. His objective and mine is to make programming a mandatory subject in all secondary school classes. My bigger objective is to have problem solving skills and programming be introduced in IC starting at the elementary school, and hopefully other schools will follow. I taught for free Python to grade 10 students for one full year.
2. In partnership with the World Food Program (WFP) and the Civic Engagement Center at AUB, I lead a program called Tech for Food, which aims to teach Syrian refugees and underserved Lebanese digital skills. The program started end of 2016 as a proof of concept and only at AUB (still ongoing). Soon after that, two centers opened in Lebanon (Aley and Bekaa) taking on 100 students each in every cycle (2 months). The good students were selected to remain for another advanced cycle where programming and advanced skills are taught. Mid of 2018, WFP decided to open yet another two centers in the North and the South. My role was to create the curriculum, update it continuously, hire and train the instructors, hire center coordinators, and evaluate the program as a whole. The program that I developed and the ideas that we introduced in Lebanon have been adopted by WFP in other countries like Iraq and Jordan.
3. I was awarded in 2012 a Computer Science for High School (CS4HS) fund which I used to run train-the-trainer workshops to train high school and middle teachers in Lebanon computer literacy and programming, with a commitment from the teachers that they will disseminate the information to their students. The training which we called CS Blossoms was held in December 2012. Almost 5 months later, on May 14, 2013 the students along with mentors (the teachers that attended the workshop) gathered in the CMPS department to showcase their projects that were

created using the technologies we introduced to their mentors. The event was a big success and valuable prizes were distributed to the winners.

Services to the Profession

- *Associate Editor* of The ACM Transactions on Asian and Low-Resource Language Information Processing (*TALLIP*), Fall 2019-20-ongoing
- *General Chair* of the 4th Arabic Natural Language Processing Workshop (*WANLP 2018*), a highly respected research venue for work related to Arabic NLP.
- *Program Chair* of the 3rd Arabic Natural Language Processing Workshop (*WANLP 2017*) co-located with EACL 2017, Valencia, Spain.
- *ACM Senior Member since 2015.*
- *IEEE Senior Member:* In December 2012, I was elevated to the grade of Senior Member of the IEEE. This is the elite rank of IEEE and the highest professional grade for which members may apply. Only 8% of IEEE members have achieved this level.
- *Tutorial presenter* at the 9th international Wireless Communication and Mobile Computing Conference - IWCMC 2013
- *Co-Chair of the Wireless Sensor Networks Technical Track* in the fourth International Conference on Energy Aware Computing (ICEAC 2013).
- *Publication Chair* in the 3rd International Conference on Communications and Information Technology (ICCIT 2013), Beirut, Lebanon 19-21 June, 2013
- *Publication Chair* in the third International Conference on Energy Aware Computing (ICEAC 2012)
- *Co-chair of a workshop entitled “High Performance and Energy-Aware Solutions with Data Mining and Wireless/Mobile Applications”* in conjunction with the 7th international Wireless Communication and Mobile Computing Conference (IWCMC – 2011)
- *Reviewer of research proposals* submitted to National Council of Scientific Research (NCSR) and AUB University Research Board
- *Technical Program Committee (TPC) member* and *Reviewer* for many IEEE, ACM, and international journals and conferences