

Editorial

Listening to President Waterbury deliver the State of the University speech, I was proud to note how 'in-tune' IBSAR is with the strategic goals and guidelines envisioned for the future of AUB (<http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~webpres/speeches/2004/souaddress-23feb04.pdf>; pp. 17-18). One such goal is the emphasis on community service. The president argues that it "is not enough to provide a good education to our students" but that AUB must "seek ways to benefit the broad communities in which we live". IBSAR's very conception stems from a recognition that biodiversity is a regional asset that can benefit local communities. The multidisciplinary structure of the initiative allows for the development of economic opportunities related to biodiversity through research, biotechnology and sustainable landscape planning. Whether researching a single plant, developing a dietary product or planning a large rural site the underlying theme for IBSAR's holistic approach is community capacity building and economic empowerment.

IBSAR exemplifies another specificity of AUB, namely, "that excellent research and superior teaching go hand-in-hand". The multidisciplinary structure of IBSAR attracts research opportunities that could not have been undertaken by any one faculty/department alone. In turn, IBSAR offers infinite challenges to faculty members, undergraduate and graduate students fostering a mood of scientific collaboration across the different disciplines.

The call for individual faculty and academic units to strive towards self finance is yet another cornerstone of IBSAR. From its inception, IBSAR has realized that it cannot rely on AUB financially and that the **faculty must share in the search for outside research funding**. In the two years since its inception IBSAR has attracted funds amounting to 1,384,463 USD. Self finance equally implies developing a business plan, planning for short and long term projects, diversification in services to allow for core services to financially sustain research.

Striving to become "a model of sustainable urban growth" is another strategic goal, however one that needs to be more broadly interpreted to embrace not only 'urban growth', but equally, rural, regional development. Sustainable development is the key to bioprospection as defined in IBSAR's mission statement. Sustainable development is not a choice but a necessity when considering Lebanon's biological wealth and the fact that the country is a world biodiversity hotspot. IBSAR has succeeded in building national credibility not only for high quality research, but equally innovative approaches to the sustainable utilization of natural and cultural resources.

IBSAR is but an outcome of the values, tradition and aspirations of our institution. Hopefully, it will become another proof of AUB's "commitment to innovation" and "what will protect our credibility in the future".

Dr. Jala M. Makhzoumi

News

New members join IBSAR.

Dr. Khouzama Knio will be collaborating with Dr. E. Abou Fakhr Hammad on botanical pesticides studies;

Dr. Medhat Khattar will be collaborating with Dr. E. Barbour on microbiological studies.

The 'National Biosafety Framework for Lebanon' Project is up and running

The UNDP/UNEP-GEF project on the Development of National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs) is one of the main components for the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The objective of the Protocol is to contribute to the safe transfer, handling and use of LMOs that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, human health, and specifically focusing on transboundary movements.

The development of NBF for Lebanon project has been contracted to IBSAR by UNDP (for 18 months). Started in February 2004, the project main activities among many others are:

- Survey, analysis and creation of database relevant to biotechnology, biosafety issues
- Storage and management of gathered information to promote public participation
- Creation of a database listing national experts in fields related to biotechnology and biosafety, risk assessment and risk management of LMOs
- Organization of national workshops targeted to relevant stakeholders including public and private sectors and national legislators for awareness purposes and other
- Production of public awareness materials and publishing of inventories and guidelines.

Preparation of a NBF, including procedures for the safe application of biotechnology in accordance with administrative, legislative, risk assessment and public participation systems

For more information contact:

Elsa J. Sattout, IBSAR associate member and
National Project Coordinator

Ext:4509 - E-mail: es13@aub.edu.lb

For your precious contribution to this invaluable newsletter..., including the editorial section contact M. Daouk at me11@aub.edu.lb
Submission deadlines 20th of each month.

IBSAR initiates the 'Top-up Biodiversity Enabling Activity' Project

Lebanon has signed and ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in early nineties. In its mandate, the MOE developed a National Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) for Biodiversity Conservation including specific recommendations to achieve short, medium and long term conservation goals with the support of UNDP/GEF..

Initiated by MOE and UNDP and contracted to IBSAR, the Top-up Biodiversity Enabling Activity Project aims at assisting the MOE to further assess national capacity building needs and priorities and at analyzing institutional and functional capabilities and determine mechanisms to protect national biodiversity in accordance with the NBSAP recommendations, as well as Conference of the Parties guidelines.

The project activities are:

- Guiding and supporting the production of the NBSAP addendum including legislation
- Assessment of capacity building needs in biodiversity monitoring including taxonomy
- Establishment of the National Biodiversity Advisory Group members and designing a mechanism for its operation
- Preparation of necessary reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties
- Building a database compiling lists of publications relevant to biodiversity
- Updating the MOE website
- Organization of various national awareness workshops/seminars targeted to public and private sectors
- Production of awareness material
- Development of guidelines indicators to monitor the impact of projects and activities related to conservation

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Focusing on clinical trials

IBSAR members have met with Dr. Kamal Badr, Chairman, Departments of Internal Medicine and Physiology. The meeting included briefing Dr. Badr on IBSAR's research agenda followed by a discussion on the prospects for partnering with members from the Department of Internal Medicine for clinical research

What's in the product? IBSAR has developed protocols to confirm the presence of a compound/s in herbal mixes or a plant extracts (for more information contact N. Saliba)

Meetings, contacts & Seminars

"IBSAR annual review" Meeting of March 15. Presentation by S. Talhouk in which she gave an annual review including IBSAR mission, vision, objectives, activities, on going projects and future prospects. (Presentation is on the web).

"Investigating the use of Bioinformatics in Bioprospecting"

Meeting of March 29. Presentation by Dr. K. Khalaf (Faculty advisor of the Computational Sciences and Bioinformatics Lab), Dr. H. Khachfe (Bio-informatics director of the Lab) and Mr. H. Merheby (Manager of the Lab). Dr. K. Khalaf introduced the Computational Sciences and Bioinformatics Lab. Dr. H. Khachfeh gave a general view on Bioinformatics and a briefing about on going projects at AUB. Mr. H. Merhbeby presented currently available tools and softwares.

"What it takes to get a plant-derived pharmaceutical drug to the market?"

Dr. C. Schmidhauser owner and senior statistician of la Volta Statistics co, Switzerland, specializing in statistical analysis, modeling and data interpretation for pharmaceutical companies and banks led a discussion group to investigate prospects for releasing plant based medicines in the market.

IBSAR meetings Mark your calendar! IBSAR meetings have resumed and the schedule for the spring semester 2003-2004 is as follows:

Date*	Subject	Speakers
Mar. 15	IBSAR review	Dr. S. Talhouk.
Mar. 29	Bio-informatics	Dr. K. Khalaf. Dr. H. Khachfeh and Mr. H. Merheby
Apr. 19	Research activities and prospects	Dr. H. Mohtaseb and Dr. F. Homaidan
May 3	Outreach to the society	Dr. N. Hwalla and Dr. J. Makhzoumi
May 17	Outreach to the private sector	Dr. N. saliba and Dr. N. Kabbani
May 31	AUB presentation	IBSAR

*Time @ 4:20pm

Executive committee meetings.

IBSAR executive committee meetings schedule is set for the Spring semester 2003-2004. Minutes of meetings are published on IBSAR website.

Date*	Date*
Monday, 4 Feb	Monday, 23 Feb
Monday, 8Mar	Monday, 5 Apr
Monday, 19 Apr	Monday, 17 May
Monday, 31 May	Monday, 14 June

*Time@ 8:00-9:30 am

Want to know more about available plant extracts?
 Connect to IBSAR website:
<http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~webibsar/information/extraction.htm>

