

September 3, 2018

Response to the report of the Committee for the Evaluation of the Mechanical Engineering Study Program at Ariel University, dated 25 June 2018

We appreciate the Committee's thorough evaluation of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics and find its constructive criticism and recommendations as useful guidelines for our future progress and improvement.

We also enjoyed interacting with the Committee in a special meeting with the ME department chairs for a discussion of issues common to the ME departments in Israel.

The committee's report and recommendations were first discussed by the departmental faculty and then raised in a meeting with the University's top administration, which lent its full support for the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

The following is a summary of our response to the Committee's recommendations:

	Committee Recommendation	Steps toward implementation
1	Suspend growth in student numbers and focus on student quality.	We fully agree with the committee. After a period of rapid growth, we have no intention to further grow the student body. We have already tightened the admission of candidates who take the preparatory program for not meeting the admission criteria and are enforcing tighter measures on advancing students from first to second year of study. In addition, we embarked on a program to encourage and support outstanding students, as part of a schoolwide program, called Top Ariel, intended to acknowledge and encourage excellence.
2	Increase the faculty size and stabilize the undergraduate program before pursuing additional graduate degrees.	We understand the committee's concerns and recommendation. We are making constant efforts to recruit new faculty members. We took seriously the committee's comments regarding the study program and are reevaluating our course offerings. In addition, we are restructuring our teaching laboratories in terms of content and infrastructure.
3	Develop senior leadership that can continue to drive progress after the term of the current Department Chair expires.	We are fully aware of the need to develop senior leadership from within the department. To this end, we are promoting qualified young faculty members to the rank of Associate Professor. Together with new hires, we expect to have by the end of the next academic year at least four Associate Professors who are potential candidates for the position of Department Chair when the term of the current chair expires.
4	Increase the quantity and quality of lab and office space.	This issue was discussed with the University's top administration. We are expecting a significant improvement in office and laboratory space by the end of the coming academic year, following the completion of new buildings being now constructed on campus.

5	Add a more structured faculty mentoring program.	This Department Chair, in coordination with the Dean of Engineering, has devised a new faculty mentoring program at the Faculty level, which consists of a yearly workshop on the promotion process and the responsibilities and expectations in teaching and research, given to all junior faculty members in the Faculty of Engineering. This will be followed by individual meetings with the respective department chairs to provide specific guidance and advice on how to utilize the existing resources to best advance along the academic career path.
6	Determine if changes in admissions or student supervision are required to improve the undergraduate drop-out rate.	We plan to study the issue of student dropouts and determine the main causes for failure, after which we may update our admission criteria.
7	Consider implementing a periodic internal self-evaluation process.	The current self-evaluation process prompted an in-depth look into our study program, which we plan to continue on an ongoing basis until stabilizing our undergraduate program and establishing a Master degree program. We have already appointed several departmental committees to re-evaluate our teaching labs, to proposing a mechanical design specialization, and to update our electronics courses.
8	Consider enhancing the connection between the Department and its alumni.	We are taking this recommendation seriously as it is in our interest to keep track of our graduates and enhance our study program based on their experience. We conducted several surveys among our past and recent graduates and plan to do so on a regular basis. In addition, we are planning to hold regular seminars by our graduates to pass on their experience to our students. Eventually, we wish to hold a periodic gathering of our graduates.

In summary, we wish to thank the committee for its genuine efforts in improving the quality of our study program in Mechanical Engineering and Mechatronics and are looking forward to future interactions with the committee members.

Sincerely,



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