

*August 22, 2011*

Dear Colleagues:

The Committee for the Support of Teaching, the Provost's Advisory Committee on Assessment, and many other faculty members recognize that the first year of college is a time when students often feel unsure how to approach their highly regarded, and somewhat intimidating, faculty members. While most Brandeis students do connect with faculty by the time they graduate, we'd like to think that we could do better in the crucial first year, and in this letter we have several ideas to help faculty connect and interact with their first-year students.

- Make an effort to learn the names of as many students as possible, calling on them by name in class, or greeting them by name, out of class. Ask students to write brief comments about their background on cards collected at the end of class, and in smaller classes, to introduce themselves to you and to one another on the first day of instruction.
- Share a bit of information about yourself with students in your courses, or those you meet outside of class. If you tell students something about your research and other interests, colleges and universities you've attended, and alums with whom you maintain contact, it helps them to see you as an individual with whom they might build a connection.
- Let first year students know about Brandeis colloquia, lectures and events you plan to attend, and ask them about their interest in learning more about your department/program.
- In smaller classes, invite or require all (or all first year) students to meet with you during office hours, just to introduce themselves. Students might be asked to come at scheduled times with "three questions about anything, not necessarily related to the course."
- In larger classes, schedule extra office hours at the beginning of the term, and invite or require all (or all first year) students to meet with you in smaller "scheduled" groups. Again, students might be asked to come with "three questions about anything, not necessarily related to the course."
- In larger classes, visit each of the section meetings at least once, and ask the students to introduce themselves again.
- Announce, with enthusiasm, that you will eat breakfast or lunch in Sherman or Usdan once a week/month and invite all (or all first year) students to meet with you, perhaps by sign-up.
- Meet with first year students who are prospective departmental/program majors before the spring early enrollment period to discuss spring course options and opportunities within the major.

- Participate in residence hall activities organized around your academic, professional, and personal interests. By interacting with students outside the classroom on an informal basis, unique learning opportunities arise. If interested, please complete the Residence Hall Involvement form at <http://tinyurl.com/instinv>
- Organize a class activity which facilitates interaction outside of the classroom (for example, visit the Rose Art Museum or a Waltham community agency together).
- Attend an event organized by Student Activities during the fall semester, such as (in conjunction with the Interfaith Chaplaincy) the 10th year commemoration of 9/11 on Sunday, September 11 at 1:00pm at Chapel's Pond, followed by a BBQ at 1:30 on the Great Lawn, or the Undergraduate Theater Collective 24 Hour Musical, on September 11, at the Shapiro Campus Center Theater at 7:00pm, or the "All Arts" Celebration on September 19, 2011 from 5-7pm on the patio outside of Slosberg, or a "Soccer Sundae" on Friday, October 14 (men's game at 4:00pm and women's game at 6:30pm) with free ice cream at the soccer field. Or mingle with students and play a game of pool or ping pong at mid-day any weekday in the Usdan game room.

These suggestions all aim to lower the barriers that inhibit faculty/first year student interaction, and create opportunities for faculty to learn more about individual students and help students learn more about Brandeis and its faculty. During the second or third week of classes, a letter will also be sent to all first year students, suggesting ways in which they might proactively reach out to and interact with faculty.

Thanks for your efforts on behalf of our students.

Yours sincerely,

Faculty Members of the 2010-11 Committee for the Support of Teaching

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