BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

Meeting of the 2012-13 Faculty Senate
This meeting was held on March 21, 2013 from 12:00-2:00 in the Shapiro Student Center Room 313.

Present: Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, Eric Chasalow, Elif Sisli Ciamarra, Joseph Cunningham, Barry Friedman, Matthew Headrick, Marya Levenson, Thomas Pochapsky, Liuba Shrira, Harleen Singh Cindy Thomas, Joseph Wardwell
Absent: Charles Golden, Andrew Molinsky, Carol Osler, Esther Ratner, Fernando Rosenberg, Ellen Schattschneider,
Guests: Andrew Flagel, Senior Vice-President for Students and Enrollment

Approval of Minutes
Minutes of the January 16th Faculty Senate meeting were approved.

Discussion of University Librarian Handbook Amendment
The Faculty Senate discussed the proposal to amend the language in the Faculty Handbook that speaks to the appointment of a University Librarian. The current language lists the position of University Librarian as a rank within the tenure structure. The practice of hiring at universities varies widely, including the traditional faculty tenured appointment, appointment outside the tenure track as well as hiring as a member of senior administration. Much of the variation is due to the merger of libraries and technology services, and the changing nature of university libraries.

After consulting with Eric Chasalow, the Provost’s Office has drafted two suggested two options for adjusting the handbook language to allow for this flexibility at Brandeis. The first option would continue to list the University Librarian as a tenured position, but to include it also as a rank outside the tenure structure. Having the position appear in both structures would allow Brandeis to advertise the position as “open rank” and thereby consider applicants who have pursued a traditional academic career path, but also those who have garnered impressive credentials in a different professional sphere.

The second option would be to remove University Librarian as a rank from the Faculty Handbook. This option would recognize that the title is honorific and could be held by either faculty or staff at the university. In this case, if a candidate were from a traditional academic background, the terms of the appointment could encompass a tenured faculty appointment, subject to the approval of the provost and to the support of senior members of the appointee’s prospective academic department. The candidate would then be appointed to the faculty with a traditional academic rank and the title of University Librarian would be honorific. Should the candidate come from a different professional sphere, they would be appointed as University Librarian, a position that would carry no teaching obligations, and would not be located in a department. This option is in keeping with past hires to this position at Brandeis.

Both options still support the idea of a tenured faculty appointment should there prove to be a qualified candidate. The members of the Senate agreed that the flexibility both options allowed would be desirable in a search process. Many felt that the first option would signal to candidates that the research and scholarship aspect of the University Librarian position was necessary in an applicant, not just knowledge of library technology. However, the second option seemed to provide the most flexibility in hiring as it does not require that the candidate receive a faculty appointment.
The point was raised that if option two were chosen, the language would need to specifically reflect the process by which tenure could be granted.

There was unanimous agreement that changes needed to be made to the Handbook to allow hiring without a requirement of appointment. The Faculty Senate Handbook Committee will continue to discuss these options and will draft language to present to the Senate as soon as possible.

**Score-Optional Policy**
Andrew Flagel, Senior Vice-President for Students and Enrollment, met with the Senate to discuss a proposed Score-Optional Pilot program. This program would be following the lead of several liberal arts colleges, most notably Bates College which instituted a policy in 1984. This policy would allow applicants to Brandeis to choose the traditional application or elect the Test-Optional path, which would allow students to submit other test scores (such as AP scores or subject tests) and/or essays and teacher evaluations.

The goal of this program would be to expand and diversify the Brandeis applicant pool, to improve the quality and profile of admitted students by de-emphasizing the importance of standardized tests, and to enhance Brandeis’ reputation by taking a leadership role among elite institutions modeling the best practice for use of standardized test in the undergraduate admissions process. The research and data supports that testing is not necessary for predicting academic performance when the student has outstanding academic records, as seen in strength of school and challenging coursework as well as grades. Students in urban and rural areas tend to take tests such as the SAT’s later in their high school career and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds on average only take the SAT test fewer times before applying to colleges, putting them at a disadvantage where test scores are concerned.

In this pilot program, drafted by a committee chaired by Susan Lovett, the admissions office would seek to admit no more that 10% of the entering class through this route and would then evaluate the effectiveness after two years. It would be made clear to students applying through this route that they must be able to present an excellent academic record to be considered. The Admissions Office would continue with the same holistic approach that they apply to all applicants, which include scans for plagiarism, double readings of essays, and review of overall academic record.

Outcomes from Bates College have shown that the difference in graduation rates between the two groups was 0.1%, the program attracted applicants with stronger high school records with average GPA’s being 0.05 higher than traditional applicants, and test score-optional admissions sharply increased application rates from students of color and women as well as those from low-income and blue-collar backgrounds.

The Faculty Senate unanimously supported drafting a resolution in support of this pilot program to be brought to the next Faculty Meeting. While this is not a Handbook issue, and therefore does not have to be put to the faculty for a vote, there was strong agreement that a statement of support from the Senate was appropriate and would be valuable as this program moves forward.

**Strategic Planning Discussion**
The Faculty Senate discussed the latest draft of the Strategic Plan. There were general concerns raised about the “vagueness” of the document, and questions as to why this did not speak more to tactical decisions. The Senate discussed the purpose of the strategic plan and the goal held by the Steering Committee to make this document serve as a reference on the process of evaluating new initiatives, not to recommend specific initiatives. It was clarified that the specific initiatives that
were brought to the Steering Committee would be included in the Appendix of the plan, and would be available for discussion once the plan moves into an implementation phase.

One recommendation was that the plan should affirm the strengths of the university. For example, in discussions of “transformative teaching” it was stressed that in many areas this kind of teaching is already taking place and that the plan should address this. In general, the feeling was that the plan should put more of an emphasis on affirming the strengths of the institution as a way of stating that, in the implementation phase, these would be the core strengths that the university wishes to maintain.

It was also mentioned that there are several groups currently drafting changes to language in the plan and/or additions to the plan. For example, there is work underway to draft specific language related to the Social Sciences and Humanities. One suggestion was an addition to the plan that would discuss the role of the Faculty Senate in the implementation of proposals. Many felt this would be an important addition to assure faculty that there will be a role for the faculty voice in the implementation phase. There was great support among the Senate for the section devoted to alumni, and the hope that the inclusion of such a section in this plan would encourage faculty to stay in touch with alums.

Eric Chasalow will chair a subcommittee of the Senate to suggest possible edits and changes to the document. This committee will include Carol Osler, Liuba Shrira, Harleen Singh and Cindy Thomas.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.