BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

Meeting of the 2012-13 Faculty Senate
This meeting was held on September 24th, 2012 from 10:00-12:00 in the Shapiro Student Center Room 313.

Present: Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, Eric Chasalow, Joseph Cunningham, Barry Friedman, Charles Golden, Matthew Headrick, Carol Osler, Esther Ratner, Fernando Rosenberg, Liuba Shira, Harleen Singh, Cindy Thomas, Joseph Wardwell

Absent: Elif Sisli Ciamarra, Marya Levenson, Andrew Molinsky, Thomas Pocahpsky, Ellen Schattschneider

Guests: President Fred Lawrence

Approval of Minutes
The Faculty Senate approved the minutes of the May 2nd, 2012 meeting. The members of the Senate Council provided the following updates.

1) The outgoing and incoming Senate Councils met with the Provost over the summer and discussed two of the issues that were left outstanding at the end of the 2011-12 Academic Year. One of which concerned the instituting of background checks for faculty. It was decided that in lieu of background checks new hires would be given a questionnaire to complete that inquires about any past criminal convictions. Information would be voluntary, but the hire would also be asked to sign an agreement allowing Brandeis to perform a full background check should the need arise. This questionnaire will be distributed to the Senate to review. The issue was raised of specifying whether or not a criminal conviction was domestic or international, as well as the reason for the conviction.

2) The second issue concerned Sexual Violence and Harassment on Campus. The outgoing and incoming Senate Councils discussed the idea of creating a committee to investigate sexual violence on campus and to provide recommendation to the Faculty Senate. The Provost has agreed to create such a committee.

Change to Format of Faculty Meetings
Faculty Senate Chair Eric Chasalow updated the Senate on proposed changes to the structure of faculty meetings. In meeting with the President, the idea of establishing topics for discussion at each meeting was put forth. The meeting would begin with informational reporting, but would leave time at the end for an open discussion of the meetings topic. These topics would be widely disseminated prior to the meeting. Faculty should be encouraged to propose topics for discussion through the Senate. A change in venue was also discussed, potentially for the spring semester. The issue was raised regarding the overlap between the faculty meeting schedule and teaching schedules. It was mentioned that when the block schedule changed, the initial proposal was to have the faculty meeting times rotate as well, to allow for participation by all faculty regardless of teaching schedule. The Senate agreed that this should be addressed.

Chasalow mentioned that much of this year, and therefore much of the discussion at faculty meetings, will potentially revolve around strategic planning. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee will be meeting with various groups around campus, beginning in October, to discuss issues and to report on the work of the committee.
Handbook Committee
Chasalow mentioned that one of the responsibilities for the faculty senate this year would involve some small, but important revisions of the Faculty Handbook. In order to do this, a Handbook Committee must be formed within the Senate. Some of the changes have already been discussed, and language has been drafted, but it would be the role of the committee to review and approve these changes. Barry Friedman has volunteered to serve on this committee.

Strategic Planning Process
Eric Chasalow and Fernando Rosenberg, both members of the Strategic Planning Committee, reported to the Senate. The committee’s draft plan is due out on October 10th. There was discussion of the role of the Senate in this process, and it was stressed that it was vital to encourage colleagues to read, digest and discuss the document. They made it clear however that this is a broad framework that makes no specific recommendation regarding programs and departments. After the period of presentation and discussion, the draft plan will be adopted by the trustees and will then go into an implementation phase. At that time, many of the task force recommendations will be revisited, as these contain much more specific ideas and recommendations.

Discussion of Online Learning
Brandeis has been approached by a for-profit online learning consortium, and the idea of contributing courses to this group is currently being discussed. Brandeis would be joining Vanderbilt, Emory and Northwestern in this consortium. Brandeis would contribute one to three courses per year.

The question was raised as to why Brandeis was considering partnering with this particular group, as opposed to other companies, and whether or not being contracted with this company would forbid collaboration with other groups. There was a summer committee that looked at materials from various for-profit companies to compare the functions and services.

Discussion with President Lawrence
President Lawrence met with the Faculty Senate to discuss the appointment of Steve Manos as Chief Operating Officer. The President addressed the faculty concerns over this hire. Steve Manos, as SVP/COO, reports directly to the President, consistent with the "strong Provost model" under which the Provost is the "first among equals" of the direct reports to the President, and the chair of the Integrated Planning and Budget Committee. This position will not make strategic decisions; rather it will serve as an advisor to the President and Provost.

He also addressed the concern over the lack of process in this hire. While the nature of this hire did not allow for a full process, similar to the other upper administration hires that have occurred during President Lawrence’s tenure, he assured the Senate that he did reach out to various groups for feedback on the hiring decision, but did acknowledge his regret in not having consulted with the Chair of the Faculty Senate as well.

The issue of diversity in hires was raised. The President spoke very strongly about his desire to encourage diversity in hires. He assured the senators that this is an issue he takes very seriously and one that he considers with every hire.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.