Meeting of the Faculty Senate December 3, 2009

The Faculty Senate met from 10:00-12:00pm in the Heller Building, Room 163

Present: Bishop, Burt, Dibble, Herzfeld, Hickey, Hill, Garnick, Gittell, Mann, Meyer, Moody, Morrison, Nelson, Troen, von Mering

Absent: Flesch, Mapps, Parmentier,

Guests: Malcolm Sherman, Chair of the Board of Trustees
       Meyer Koplow, Chair of the Presidential Search Committee, Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee of the BoT, and Board of Trustees Member

Communication Between the Faculty and the Board of Trustees
The meeting began with introductions of the Senate members to Malcolm Sherman and Meyer Koplow, and vice versa.

Sabine von Mering offered up ideas developed by the Senate as a means to improve communications between the Trustees and the Faculty. One suggestion made was to host a reception during commencement week for the faculty and the BoT members. Sherman suggested that a reception be held prior to the March Board Meeting, instead of during commencement week, which holds many events competing for Board Members’ attention. Sherman has agreed to put this into the schedule.

The next suggestion put forth by the Senate was to invite BoT members to sit in on classes during the academic year. Koplow added that they have encouraged Trustees to visit classes in the past, but that they need to develop a system that facilitates this action and moves beyond mere encouragement. He stressed that it is important for the Trustees to see “Brandeis in action.” Sherman suggested returning this to the Academic Affairs Committee of the BoT to address the logistics. Koplow proposed adding a third hour to one of the two hour Academic Affairs Committee meetings. This hour would be spent visiting classes. This would most likely occur in March.

Koplow suggested having the Physical Facilities Committee of the BoT meet with the Senate to develop a priority list of building and facilities in need of immediate attention. This would be used to assist the administration in their planning. He stressed that it would be important for the students to develop this type of list as well.

Von Mering also mentioned the idea of having one-on-one lunches between the Trustees and individual Senators. Koplow mentioned that the Brandeis students have already instituted this system with moderate degrees of success. He clarified by saying that most of the Board members do not live in Boston. The local members do attend these
functions, and are eager to do so, but it is more difficult when they must travel into the area for one day with multiple meetings on their agenda. Von Mering suggested that these lunch meetings could also occur outside of Boston whenever faculty are traveling to conferences. If a Senator were required to travel in an area where one of the Trustees were located, it would be possible to arrange for a lunch meeting at that time. It was agreed that contact information would be provided for this purpose.

Koplow suggested that a schedule of meetings should be established for the Executive Committee of the BoT to meet with the Faculty Senate. He expressed that he feels strongly that there needs to be more communication with the faculty, and that would occur through the Senate. Koplow and von Mering will arrange this. Sherman agreed this should happen at least once a year. Koplow will arrange for a smaller group from the Executive Committee to meet more frequently with the Senate.

Role of the Advisory Committee in the Presidential Search
Von Mering reported on the first meeting of the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Presidential Search Committee. An election was held to elect the chair of the committee, resulting in the election of co-chair Anita Hill and co-chair Robin Feuer Miller. Von Mering reported that all members of the committee are ready to begin their work and eager to participate in the search process to assist in identifying and attracting the best candidates for the position. She suggested that since the chair of the Student Advisory Committee has been added ex-officio to the Presidential Search committee that the same system be set in place for the Faculty Advisory Committee.

Koplow agreed to set up a meeting with the Faculty Advisory Committee soon. He will arrange a meeting between the full Presidential Search Committee and the Faculty Advisory Committee in January. Koplow stressed that he views the faculty committee as a valuable tool, and an adjunct to this process that will be important in getting the person they want to accept the presidency at Brandeis.

The question of a timetable for the search process was raised. Koplow said that at this point the search committee is “on a listening tour”, meeting with staff, students, faculty, alumni, and donors to the university. Koplow said after meeting with all departments the next phase will be conversations with major donors and alumni, as well as senior administration. This information gathering phase will probably last through late January. The hope is to select a search firm by February. Koplow stated that a very valuable aspect of this search process will be to send search committee members across the country to talk to other university presidents. This will enable members to uncover candidates who might not have previously been thought of and, in some instances, to be brought into contact with people who weren’t thinking about Brandeis, but who might be terrific choices. The committee will then be able to begin the process of narrowing the field of candidates, and will be vetting resumes and conducting interviews soon thereafter. Koplow cautioned that it is not unusual for the first candidate selected to turn down the offer, so it will be important to allow time to go through that process. He added that it would be ideal to have both the new president and President Reinharz in residence for a
period of time so that there can be a transfer of knowledge. Many search committee members are beginning to clear their schedule through 2010. Koplow stressed that he feels it is more important to get it right than to get it done fast.

The question was raised as to the participation of graduate students in the process. Koplow stated that so far there had only been one graduate student who had spoken out at one of the meetings with students. The offer was made to organize a graduate student forum.

The suggestion was made of John Isaacson to be asked to handle the search, as he successfully completed the search for the new Dean of the Heller school. Koplow agreed to look into the possibility.

Creation of a Case Statement
Von Mering expressed the Senate’s interest in participating in the creation of the Case Statement for the search. Koplow believes that a draft will be proposed by the search committee soon. That draft would then make its way to the different advisory committees. The participation of the Senate does not need to be formal, as the search committee plans to listen to all comments and suggestions put forth by the faculty. He stressed that the more details put into the description, the narrower the field of candidates who can meet all of the qualifications. Therefore, it will be necessary to prioritize what are considered the most essential qualities and which attributes are secondary. The case statement is not only a job description, but it is a critical recruiting document. Koplow has already asked the Brandeis students to give him their description of the university. He feels that it is important for the description of Brandeis to come from the inside, rather than having an outside view of the institution. It is his hope that the Brandeis students can bring their excitement to this and that some of that excitement can be captured in this document.

Sherman suggested looking at the document created for Heller, as he felt it did capture much of Brandeis, and therefore, it might not be necessary to start completely from scratch. Koplow agreed, but said that the statement needed to be generated from within. It was mentioned that Isaacson did conduct interviews as a base for the Heller case statement and has overseen several searches at Brandeis.

Discussion of the University Budget
Koplow was asked, as the Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee of the BoT, to give a brief overview of the financial state of the university as he currently understands it. He stated that as someone who is new to this problem, and coming in with an outsider’s perspective, he was struck by the fact that the budget issues at Brandeis have been a never-ending saga. On average, there is a 25 million dollar difference between what we have and what we need to operate each year, and it is easy to see the effects of this in the various facilities needs on campus that are not being addressed, as these are not things that will close down the university if they are not immediately paid for. The halting of
contributions to the retirement plan is another manifestation of this problem. The difficulty is that the same problems will exist next year, after the immediate cuts are made, and there currently isn’t a long-term plan to close the budget gap. He stressed that it isn’t possible to continue to ask the faculty and staff to pay a penalty each year because of this problem.

Koplow said it is necessary for Brandeis to develop a plan that will allow the university to be put on a firm foundation. He stated that it might be necessary to bring in an outside evaluator to examine ways of generating revenue or making additional cuts, or both. An outside evaluator could identify things that we are currently doing well, what our strengths are, and how we can build on these resources. Koplow stressed that we are part of an institution of higher education whose values are not strictly limited to education. A major pillar of this university is the mission of social justice, and this could be pushed more to the forefront and integrated into many of the programs. He stated that we should be looking to use our strengths to build a sustainable foundation.

The question of the recommendations made by CARS was raised. Koplow responded by saying, while the work done by CARS was admirable, most of the recommendations are not being implemented. So while it was a valuable exercise to have this report generated by the faculty, the inclusion of an outside perspective could generate new ideas or give more credence to the ones already produced in the CARS report.

"Vision for Brandeis 2020"
Von Mering said that the Senate collected lots of data generated by the faculty at large in the three open Senate hearings and the online Faculty survey, regarding a positive “Vision for Brandeis 2020”. She suggested that a compiled document could be created that could be shared with the Search Committee. However, the Senate would first have to ensure that the document contains no confidential information. Koplow suggested that this data be shared with the entire Board.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45am.