Year-end Letter to the Faculty from the Senate President

June 21, 2016

“Summer afternoon – summer afternoon; to me these have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language.”

- Edith Wharton

To me, too! And so I write this year-end message on this first day of summer 2016 to highlight some of the work of the Senate this year and to invite your thoughts, joys and concerns for Senate consideration in 2016-2017. It has been a great privilege and a great adventure to serve as Senate President this year, and I am honored to have been unanimously elected for a second term. Thank you for your confidence and kind words. I look forward to continuing our work together in the year ahead.

First, a thank you to the Senate and Council 2015-2016:

The Senators 2015 - 2016

- Ulka Anjarla
  English

- Daniel Bergstrem
  International Business School

- Joe Cunningham
  Psychology

- Susan P. Curran* (Chair)
  At-Large (The Heller School)

- Elizabeth Ferry
  At-Large (Anthropology)

- William Fleisch
  At-Large (English)

- Kathryn Graddy
  Economics

- Jena Hillscher
  International Business School

- Eli Hirsch
  Philosophy

- Adrianne Kristansky*
  Theater

- Sarah Mead
  Music

- Paul Miller
  Biology, Computer Science

- Susan Parish
  At-Large (The Heller School)

- Thomas Pochapsky
  At-Large (Chemistry)

- Jeffrey Prottas*
  The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

- Laurence Simon
  The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

- Joseph Wardwell
  Fine Arts

- John Wardle*
  Physics

* 2015-2016 Faculty Senate Council Member
A special thanks to “retiring” Senators: Ulka Anjaria, William Flesch, Jeffrey Prottas and Joseph Wardwell, who served their terms with distinction.

And a welcome to the Senate and Council 2016-2017

The Senators 2016 - 2017

Daniel Bergstresser
International Business School

Joe Cunningham
Psychology/Social Science

Susan P. Curran (Chair)*
At-Large (The Heller School)

Jane Ebert (Newly elected)
International Business School

Elizabeth Ferry
At-Large (Anthropology)

Kathryn Graddy
Economics/Social Science

Elie Hirsch
Philosophy/Humanities

Adrienne Kratsky
Theater/Creative Arts

Sarah Mead*
Music/Creative Arts

Paul Miller
Biology/Computer Science/Science

Kate Moran
At-Large (Philosophy)

Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Susan Parish
At-Large (The Heller School)

Thomas Pochapsky
At-Large (Community)

Rajesh Sampath
At-Large (The Heller School)

Laurence Simon*
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Faith Smith
African & Afro-American Studies & English/Humanities

John Wardle*
Physics/Science

* 2016-2017 Faculty Senate Council Member

Congratulations to the new Senators: Jane Ebert, Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, Kate Moran, Raj Sampath and Faith Smith, and to Senators who were elected for a second term: Daniel Bergstresser and Susan Parish.

Many of you will recall that we started last summer and fall with a “call-to-action” – what I called an “Engagement Challenge” to all Faculty. I asked you to respond to three questions:

1. What is one thing – your highest priority – that you hope the Senate can address and get done this year?
2. What kind of information would you like shared at Faculty Meetings?
3. What kind of influence would you like to have in University governance?
Well, you did respond, via email and a series of 1:1 conversations. More than 150 Faculty offered their ideas to help the Senate steer, navigate and prioritize in our work with the President and Provost to explore university systems, policies, structures, constraints and possibilities.

Specific concerns spanned a wide range of governance, administrative and cultural topics: The high cost of higher education • Wanting to learn more about the Brandeis approach to tuition fees and discounts/scholarships • Faculty compensation disparities/salary equity by gender and rank • Emeriti eligibility, roles, voting rights, benefits and transparency regarding retirement incentives and options • Imperative to decrease our campus carbon footprint • Diversifying the Faculty and Board of Trustees • More meaningful engagement with the Board of Trustees, e.g., Senate President liaison with Chair of Trustees or ex officio • Engagement in the Presidential search and selection • Assessing equality in rights and responsibilities of tenure, tenure track and multi-year contract faculty and parity of researchers and faculty in terms of benefits • Restructuring Faculty Meetings to be led by Senate • Partial tenure options for professional schools • Availability and affordability of childcare for junior faculty • Targeted assistance from the University Development Office to faculty • Clarification of Senate role in Dean and Interim Dean appointments • Use of fair search waivers and effect on diversity plan • Influence of block scheduling, especially in Humanities • Interest in establishing a “Staff Senate” • Deep dive into the financial health of the University and understanding University budget and tradeoffs • Workplace conflicts and potential need for new anti-bullying policy development – and faculty ombudsperson • Visibility and role of Senate at commencement ceremonies • New Sodexo contract terms and conditions for low wage workers • Use of the Faculty Club by Faculty • Revisit “No Tipping” policy with transparency and focus on compensation for veteran staff • Tuition remission benefits adjustment/increase for faculty – to double the amount • Review/clarify decision making for appointments, promotions, sabbaticals • Review growth in administration and apparent decrease in faculty • Executive salary schedule and justification • Meet and greet between Arts & Sciences and Professional Schools • FMLA comparative policy review with other universities • Community building.
Beyond specific interests, you called us to be proactively engaged in co-governance of the University – “to shore-up the power, visibility and faculty participation in Senate and University governance,” to lead in an “informed activist way,” to work to restore the “broken trust” between Faculty, Administration and Trustees. This breach of trust was the overarching issue, having its roots in decision making that occurred at Brandeis during the global financial crisis (see link to Senate Resolution below).

The Senate proposed three goals for rebuilding a sense of shared ownership:

- **Share information** between Faculty, Administration and Trustees with greater transparency
  - Monthly meetings with Senate Council, President and Provost facilitates some of this as well as Faculty Representatives on the Board of Trustees.

- **Share influence** in decision making on matters important to the Faculty
  - Historically, the Senate has been in an “advise and consult” role with Administration. Our goal is to have more joint discussions and shared decision making.

- **Share a deeper understanding of the financial stake** we all have in this great place
  - New work by the University Budget Committee is a step in the right direction and offers a building block for future efforts.

In short, we all agreed to bring the faculty back into governance and to rebuild trust by working together on an array of issues challenging and confronting the University.

It has been a busy year and the Senators have provided a steady compass for navigating both new and familiar waters.
Three of the larger issues addressed included:

- **Unionization**

  Early in the process of on campus organizing, the Senate prepared an educational document at the request of many faculty: Senate Information Brief on Unionization Process (Oct. 20, 2015)

  The Office of the Provost is the point of contact for further information from the University at this time.

- **Occupation - #FordHall**

  The Senate wrote and disseminated a solidarity document with specific commitments, Faculty Senate Resolution Supporting Change, Equality and Justice in Response to #FordHall2015 Movement (Nov. 30, 2015)

  The Senate keeps this as a “live” accountability document for its diversity work.

- **Reaccreditation**

  The Senate presented formal comments in two letters to NEASC defending the role of faculty, academic freedom and addressing the role of adjunct/part-time faculty, Senate Letter to NEASC Regarding New Proposed Accreditation Standards (Nov. 4, 2015) and Second Senate Letter to NEASC Regarding November 24, 2015 Proposed Accreditation Standards (Dec. 14, 2015)
The reaccreditation process is underway with advisory groups established and is overseen by the Office of the Provost.

**Legislation Issues** were considered, some changes were made, others are pending further deliberation. For example, part-time multi-year contract faculty are now formally eligible for the Senate and also eligible for interest-free loans supported by the Yonina C. Weiss Law ‘79 Family Endowed Faculty Chesed Fund.

Moving from *ad hoc* to a standing committee for tenure-related decisions in Arts & Sciences continues to be debated.

**Senate Resolutions and Proclamations** were drafted and presented to faculty and administration leadership, including the *Faculty Senate Resolution to Express Consensus on the Matter of "No Tipping" at the Faculty Club (Nov. 12, 2015)*, and the *Senate Resolution to Express Consensus on the Matter of Broken Trust and Lost Contribution to Faculty and Staff Retirement Funds (Apr. 8, 2016)*. The Senate will revise the latter based on a robust discussion at the April Faculty meeting. The Senate expects to present the revised resolution to the Faculty, Administration and the Board of Trustees in September.

The Senate unanimously voted to recognize and celebrate the leadership of Interim President Lynch and presented her with a proclamation, *Senate Proclamation to Honor Interim President Lisa M. Lynch (presented Apr. 21, 2016)* at a special end of year reception, co-sponsored by the Senate and Provost.
Committee Appointments & Elections

There are several standing committees identified in the Faculty Handbook (http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/faculty-info/pdfs/faculty_handbook_march_2016.pdf, p. 29-32). This year, the Senate made appointments to the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities (CFRR), adding Kate Moran, Philosophy; and the University Budget Committee, adding Barry Snider, Chemistry.

Elections were held for the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC), Michael Strand, Sociology and Paul Miller, Biology & Computer Science were elected; and for the faculty representative to the Board of Trustees, congratulations to Daniel Bergstresser, IBS.

In addition, several Senators took seats on the following: Information Technology Governance 2015 & Beyond – Thank you, Paul Miller and John Wardle; Campus Sustainability Task Force – Thank you, Paul Miller; Sexual Misconduct Panelists, Advisors, Advocates – Thank you, Daniel Bergstresser and Adrianne Krstansky; and Work-Life Study Committee – Thank you, Sarah Mead.

The Senate also called for nominations for several search committees: the COO, Chief Diversity Officer and VP for Human Resources. The process resulted in 18 faculty members stepping up and the Provost established the committees, including Senate nominees.
Discussions of Note

The Senate heard, read and discussed implications of several reports and initiatives in addition to those noted above:

- Faculty Work-Life Survey, [http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/guidelines/faculty-work-survey.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/guidelines/faculty-work-survey.html) – The implications warranted the Provost to invite formation of a joint UAC-Senate Faculty Work-Life Committee
- Brandeis University Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Misconduct, [https://www.brandeis.edu/president/pdfs/campus-climate-report.pdf](https://www.brandeis.edu/president/pdfs/campus-climate-report.pdf)
- Research Policy for review from the Vice Provost for Research – Senate commented with recommendations
- Task Force on Senior and Emeriti Faculty – Senate invited discussion on the report (Faculty Senate website, [http://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/minutes/Senior%20and%20Emeriti%20Task%20Report.pdf](http://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/minutes/Senior%20and%20Emeriti%20Task%20Report.pdf)) at the May 19th Faculty meeting (PowerPoint Presentation by Prof. Sue Lanser, Report of the Task Force on Senior and Emeriti Faculty, Sept 2014)
- University Budget Committee – Reports and workshop – Senate invited and reinforced development of workshops. [May 18, 2016, University Budget Committee Tutorial PowerPoint Presentation](https://www.brandeis.edu/)
- Lemberg Childcare Center – Access, budget, opportunity
- Development Office role and capacity to assist faculty
• Vision for the sciences – Summary from Senate members of the University Advisory Committee. The draft may be attained from the Dean of Arts & Sciences.

Thank you to staff and colleagues for your guidance and for taking the time to inform, and work with, the Senate in small and big ways on various issues:

And, a special thank you to Senate Administrator extraordinaire, Lanni Isenberg.

To all named and those who assisted in between, thank you!

“Strong is what we make each other.” – Marge Piercy

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Dispute Resolutions

Several worrisome confidential cases of faculty interactions have been brought to the Senate for consult and advice. Due to the nature of the interactions, the Senate will be considering recommendations for a faculty ombudsperson and a workplace anti-bullying
policy. One of the disputes led to a full review process in which the Senate President served as mediator for a 10-day negotiation period per the Faculty Handbook (http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/faculty-info/pdfs/faculty_handbook_march_2016.pdf, pp. 33-34). The process revealed the need to clarify the Handbook language to ensure ease of access.

There are of course other aspects of the Senate’s work. Altogether the President facilitated more than 100 meetings this year and engaged in more than 1400 email exchanges with Faculty and Administration leaders. The full Senate met 8 times, subcommittees met between sessions, and the Council had monthly meetings with the President and Provost to share information. In part, the work of the Senate is community building as much as co-governance and collaborative problem-solving.

The work goes on. The context shifts – at Brandeis and in higher education generally – and the students and the Brandeisian principles are worth all our investment, debate, work and service.

Heraclitus observed that, “No one steps twice into the same river”; and centuries later, we are challenged to rediscover the reality of change in our academic, political, economic, social, technological and environmental life. A renewal of spirit, action and innovation is underway. Our future will be shaped with a steady confidence and your inexhaustible energy as a faculty committed to social justice, the democratic process, excellence in education and scholarship. We are prepared to welcome and engage our new President, Ron Liebowitz and new Chair of the Board of Trustees, Larry Kanarek and, of course, our tireless Provost Lisa Lynch, in July.
I hope this end-of-year message helps, in part, to answer the question: What does the Senate do? And I hope it inspires you to stay engaged and share your thoughts, joys and concerns with us.

I take my closing words from the Senate’s response to #FordHall2015:

“This call-to-action is for University leadership inclusive of Faculty, Administrators, Staff and Trustees to join students in this historic moment to address systemic institutional change in our culture and martial the resources, respect, love and compassion to be uniquely Brandeisian change agents. In the spirit of honoring our legacy and creating a future defined by equality, justice and excellence in education, we have no alternative but to lead with the courage of our convictions and prove it is possible to transform Brandeis into a truly 21st Century University.”

With gratitude,

Professor Susan P. Curnan, President, Brandeis Faculty Senate

Director, Center for Youth and Communities http://cyc.brandeis.edu/
Heller School for Social Policy and Management