

**BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE**

Minutes of the Seventh Meeting

23 March 2006

The seventh meeting of the Faculty Senate was held at 3:00 p.m., 23 March 2006, in the Shapiro Center Conference Room 315. Senators present: Marc Brettler, Bulbul Chakraborty, William Flesch, Richard Gaskins, Ira Gessel, Jane Hale, Harry Mairson (Chair), Leonard Muellner, Richard Parmentier, Laura Quinney, Aida Wong. Senators absent: Steven Cecchetti, Jon Chilingerian, Jytte Klausen, Margie Lachman, Robert Moody.

Chair Harry Mairson reported that the Senate Council met with Provost Marty Krauss on March 2, to discuss two items: the timeline and progress of the ten-year reaccreditation review by the New England Association for Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the protocol and procedure for Senate participation in dean searches, specifically, for the International Business School.

NEASC Reaccreditation

At the March 2 meeting, the Provost stressed the importance of the reaccreditation process and particularly the self-study document being prepared; she emphasized also that the interaction with the visiting committee was an opportunity to discuss appropriate priorities and goals for the University. The process was likened to a department review, but at a larger level.

The Chair observed that the reaccreditation process and the self-study report can be given a minimal or a maximal interpretation. The minimal interpretation is that the goal is reaccreditation, and the self-study document reflects the conscientious work of individuals who have attempted to take a sounding of the University. A maximal interpretation is that the document is a defining blueprint of what the University is and what its priorities are. The difficulty with the latter interpretation, the Chair emphasized further, is that the self-study document necessarily discusses many issues and priorities where there are differences of opinion and interpretation, where communal consensus is lacking, or there is standing process for approving what has been proposed, but that this process has not been invoked.

These issues and priorities include, but are not limited to, commitment to the humanities, globalization of the curriculum, experiential learning, assessment procedures, the Science initiative and its financing, writing and numeracy issues in the curriculum, and the nature of Jewish institutional identity. The self-study report is genuine in its exploration of what important forces and issues are facing the University, as perceived by individuals, but it does not delineate the way forward. The Senate Council has been asked to provide a critique of the document under preparation; the Chair asked the Senate what appropriate responses might be. The following discussion ensued.

How does the Senate calibrate the priorities of the administration as reflected in the self-study document? How might the document be used? It was noted that the Provost has said that, although time consuming, the study presents an opportunity to be self-reflective: where is the university strong, where is it weak.

The study should be viewed as an expression of confidence in the university. It is not a contract but a rhetorical document. It does not replace policies that are in place. It should not replace or supplant existing documents, nor should it pre-empt future planning efforts. At the end of the discussion, Senators agreed that the Chair will write a response to the Provost's request and review it with the Council.

Protocol and Procedure for Dean Searches

The Chair also reported on discussion of this issue with the Provost at the March 2 meeting. The issue is pressing with the procedural difficulties of the Heller dean search in the recent past (reported on in the Senate minutes from February 9), an IBS dean search underway, and a dean search for the Graduate School pending resolution.

The Faculty Handbook specifies (V.B.2.b) “At the earliest reasonable date the Provost consults with the Council of the Faculty Senate concerning possible candidates and their credentials. The Council of the Senate then reports to the Senate.” The Chair reported on extensive discussion he has had with Prof. Gomes-Casseres (IBS), the chair of the IBS dean search, on the interpretation of this rule. They reached agreement that together with the Provost, Prof. Gomes-Casseres would report to the Senate Council on candidates on the short list, including presentation of their CVs, and why they were chosen. This reporting would continue on a rolling basis if necessary. Prof. Gomes-Casseres pledged continued communication with the Senate Council regarding the search.

Handbook section (V.B.2.d) reads, “The Provost recommends to the President only a candidate whose name has been discussed with the Council and in the Senate.” What is the interpretation of this rule? Prof. Gomes-Casseres has communicated that this item should be a matter between the Provost and the Senate.

The Chair suggested that because of confidentiality concerns, the discussion of the final candidate could be conducted with the Senate Council. Several Senators felt that communication with the full Senate is mandated by the Handbook language. Senators discussed at length the appropriate interpretation of Handbook language, and the importance of clarifying the process in the IBS dean search, especially as a precedent guiding future dean searches. Their observations included the following:

The search committee chair and Senate Council should meet to discuss the short list of candidates, and before a final offer is made. Heller and IBS deanships are important positions, and it is appropriate that candidates for those positions speak with faculty in the school of arts and sciences. Because time is of the essence, it is unreasonable to wait for a Senate meeting to discuss a final candidate; the Provost could nonetheless allow time for the Senate to have an email discussion. There are real issues of confidentiality if a first choice candidate turns down the job; not so with a short list. The Senate desires consultation during the discussion process, as well as when the short list is finalized. This would make the procedure more efficient. Regarding Handbook item (d), since there is not a process to discuss the name of a candidate with the Council, the following was suggested. Prior to an offer being made, the candidate of choice is discussed with the council, and earlier discussion of the candidates will have taken place with the Council and the Senate. The Senate should be notified before an offer is made. Finally, how can the Senate act both collaboratively and constructively, without wasting anyone’s time?

It was agreed that the Senate should take responsibility for clarifying these procedural aspects of the appointment process. Additionally, the Senate should be central to any discussion (along with the Provost and the Dean of Arts and Sciences) of the creation of a deanship---most pressing, a dean of the Graduate School. Discussion on these matters continues with the Provost and Dean of Arts and Sciences.

In the discussion of the procedure for the search for deans, Prof. Marc Brettler noted that the Handbook gave certain responsibilities to the entire Senate, and not just the Senate Council. In that connection he noted that the Senate Council has been acting independently of the Senate for much of the year, and he voiced concern about whether

the Council is in all respects a representative body for the entire Senate. The Chair assured the Senate that the Council had done nothing which contravened or went beyond its mandate, and consulted the Senate on all relevant issues.

Family/Medical Leave and the Tenure Clock

Reporting for the Tenure Working Group, Prof. Richard Gaskins noted that on April 6, the Faculty will face a second vote on a new Handbook provision for tenure-clock postponements based on family and medical issues. Assuming the vote is affirmative, they suggest that the Senate Council should confer immediately with the Provost to set up a faculty task force on family/medical leaves (to include administrative staff support, consultation with Legal Counsel, and others as appropriate). The Senate might ask members of the Rosbash Committee (among others) whether they would like to serve.

This task force should make a progress report to the Senate in late fall 2006, with the expectation that concrete recommendations for new guidelines would be brought to the Rights and Responsibilities Committee for their approval early in 2007. Whether or not these guidelines entail further alterations to the Handbook, either the Senate or the Rights and Responsibilities Committee should bring them to the floor of the faculty, at an appropriate time, for comments and suggestions. Other forms of soliciting faculty opinion should also be considered by this new task force.

Faculty Rights and Responsibilities Committee

Prof. Bulbul Chakraborty reported that the committee has received revised guidelines for target of opportunity appointments from the Provost and will meet with her to discuss them on March 27. The new guidelines separate the procedures for external target of opportunity appointments and any conceivable conversion of contract faculty to tenure track positions.

Further Areas for Handbook Revision

Prof. Gaskins, reporting for the subcommittee on Handbook review, asked for guidance from the Senate on further areas for Handbook revision. He said that his committee has received many suggestions from faculty for changes to the Handbook. Several call for further Senate deliberation---for example, a suggestion to make all seats on the Faculty Senate open to tenured and untenured faculty members. Prof. Gaskins asked for the Senate's judgment on how to proceed. Handbook revision has been delayed by other matters of substance during the past academic year. It was decided that Prof. Gaskins will meet with the Senate Council for further discussion of the matter.

Reports from Faculty Committees

The Chair said that he plans to request brief report summaries from faculty committee (Budget, Admissions and Financial Aid, Faculty Rights and Responsibilities, Arts and Sciences school councils) to be circulated and discussed at the next Senate meeting. He also urged Senators to encourage colleagues to stand for election to the Senate.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.