Brandeis National Committee (BNC)
National Executive Committee Meeting
Monday, June 1 – Wednesday, June 3
Brandeis University

Monday, June 1

Welcome reception and dinner to welcome the committee. Associate Professor of Psychology Don Katz gave talk and presentation on illusion and perception.

Tuesday, June 2

Welcome by National President
Barbara Sander

President Barbara Sander called the meeting to order and reviewed upcoming agenda.

She led a discussion on BNC’s Philanthropic Culture to include challenges and how we resolve them. We discussed what makes Brandeis unique as well as opportunities for the future.

It was suggested that we seek to engage new members in the first year so they will want to renew. A mentor program in the chapter is also helpful for involving members.

Many believe that in the future it is important to be able to respond to issues or rumors immediately, before they take over. It would also be helpful to have timely explanations and talking points for controversial issues.

While it was suggested that we tell others that Brandeis is the only Jewish founded university and has strong Jewish values, it was also important to emphasize we are a university with diverse ideas and open to everyone, as is BNC.

The participants discussed what needs the BNC served for members. Everyone agreed that BNC members enjoy learning and growing. They also have a need to belong to something and be part of something bigger than themselves. Through membership an individual helps make the world a better place by supporting Brandeis. Members also feel relevant as well as useful and get to make contributions through their time, talents and resources.

The NEC also discussed how to connect our members to our philanthropic mission to support Brandeis. One suggestion was to have donors at chapter meetings or events share why they support Brandeis and what it means to them. It was suggested that chapters make an effort to recognize donors so they feel special. The participants also discussed the need to have stories that pull at the heartstrings, have emotional appeal and demonstrate as well as explain the real need for
funding. Good communication is critical - good stories of students and members. Stories attract people and BNC should collect and share good stories. It was suggested that regular, monthly news be shared about Brandeis so members feel connected and know what is going on at the University. Regular news can then be shared at chapter meetings, chapter bulletins, and through study groups' leaders. Talking points about the different funds members can support would be helpful for chapter leaders.

The participants also discussed what makes Brandeis unique and why our members should be inspired to support Brandeis. There are many points of pride about Brandeis and BNC. It was suggested these be put in a handout so that chapter leaders can share these with members. Highlighting alumni accomplishments and stories also helps promote a sense of pride as well as publicizing new research at Brandeis or newsworthy stories about the University.

**Update from GSAS**

**Eric Chasalow**

**Dean, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences,**  
**Professor of Music**

Dean Chasalow talked about the importance and need for strengthening graduate studies and increasing diversity, stipends and career assistance. Brandeis GSAS had many distinguished and prestigious awards and fellowships. We need to establish an alumni relations’ strategy and implement a communications strategy.

**Conversation with Provost**

**Lisa Lynch**

Brandeis hired 15 new faculty members. Retaining star faculty members is key. Dean Lynch has created a teaching innovation fund to support faculty and to make sure we have the most interesting courses and methods of teaching. Brandeis has amazing research and teaching programs. With more resources in our hand now, we are now trying to make our buildings more sustainable and Brandeis has hired a new sustainability manager in order to reduce our carbon footprint.

As of July 1, Lisa Lynch will be the Interim President of Brandeis University.

**Discussion:**

Ron Levy: What do you see as key component of your job description over the next few years?
“I want to move forward and work closely with board of trustees to complete the Catalyst Campaign. “

Norma Feinsod: We need the university to respond in a timely way to conflicts that might arise on the news front so that we, in the chapters, can give out correct information. We need the talking points in a timely fashion.

We have hired a new interim senior vice president for communications. That position has been empty over the past year.

Installation Luncheon

Students from The Waltham Group spoke about their work and how Brandeis students are making a difference in the community.

Presidential Citations given to:

Florida STM Committee, led by Lydia Axelrod
Carol Rabinovitz as National VP of Fundraising
Corpus Christie Chapter for 50 successful book sales
Rosalind Schacknow for her role as chair of Leadership Council
Joel Kamer for his role as chair of Budget and Finance
Iris Wigal for her role as National VP of Membership
Phoenix Chapter for 25 incredible Book and Author Luncheons

Newly installed members of the NEC:

Harriet Machlis
Ron Levy
Nancy Sacks Goldberg
Vic Ney
Ronnie Gerstein
Ruth Bender

Board Development Sessions

Dr. Jon A. Chilingerian
Associate Professor, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Dr. Chilingerian led a group activity involving a plane crash in the sub-Arctic and how the group connected to survive. This activity showed how to engage people into leadership roles.
Lydian Performance

NEC members enjoyed a special Lydian String Quartet performance at the Slosberg Music Centre on campus. The performers each received an LRJ from Barbara Sander.

The Road Ahead: Reimagining Membership

Ron Levy led a discussion, "The Road Ahead: Reimagining Membership"
Ron began by asking participants what they believed was the average annual gift members makes to BNC. Participants believed the average annual donation is $150 when in fact it is approximately $69 (not including membership dues). The participants briefly discussed how we could encourage our members to financially support our fundraising mission to support Brandeis.

When asked how we create a sense of pride in being a BNC member the participants responded with the following suggestions:
• Promote the unique characteristics of Brandeis
• Have a fundraising goal and exceed it
• Create a connection with the research being done at Brandeis
• Use "Brandeis Moments" as talking points to share with others
• Connect chapters with Brandeis through Alum speakers, UOWs, and use of technology (e.g., Webinars, Skype) to bring Brandeis to chapters

When asked how we measure a successful chapter (regardless of size, categories, or region), the participants shared the following comments:
• Participation by members (with new people)
• Consistently refreshing leadership
• Chapters make their goals
• Membership is growing and retaining current members
• Involving life members
• Retention is a key focus and goal
• Chapters get our mission and raise money
• Good marketing of events
• Chapters educate members on our mission and have fun too

Ron asked the participants to list 2-3 achievements they would commit to work toward in FY16 and the participants suggested the following:
• Segment members - focus on recruitment of new members, life members, and retaining members
• Work to increase the involvement of members in the chapters
• Focus on life members and find ways to engage them (study groups)
Reception and Dinner at Mandel Center for the Humanities

SVP of Institutional Advancement Nancy Winship greets the group of both NEC members and Chapter Leaders and “hoods” Ron Levy as a Fellow of the University.

Wednesday, June 3

President’s Report

Barbara Sander

Primary goals for our organization is to strengthen philanthropic culture, strengthen chapters and regions, and build connections at all levels of BNC. Though the stimulation or study groups, friends and events are enjoyable, our mission is to support Brandeis University. Why Brandeis specifically? Brandeis is special in that it is a small liberal arts university with a strong scientific research focus. At Brandeis, we have strong emphasis on both science and the humanities. We need to share information like this with BNC members and prospective members. There are many local and national groups out there to join. It is challenging to get people to want to become BNC members and focus on our mission. We must make ourselves knowledgeable about the uniqueness of Brandeis, and be able to sell out cause. This is the work we NEC members must do, and that we must assist region and chapter members to do as well. **We have to understand and believe in our cause, care about and get to know our potential members, and know about, and be able to express, the benefits of joining BNC, and of becoming leaders and donors.**

We have lost some chapters. Atlanta closed and while they had 392 life members, they only had 22 annual members. We have lost those members, as there is no nearby chapter for them to join. This was a wakeup call to us what happened in that chapter is that 10 members rotated leadership positions for years, so it looked to us that they had new leaders, and we did not worry about them. But when all 10 burned out at the same time, they had not built a cadre of new leaders to take over. We know from our leadership development work that you have to build capacity by encouraging members to get on committees, where some will rise to chairs, and some to officers. Former National President, Leslie Pearlstein, and I went there together to try to keep Atlanta, but it was too late.

And we know that Corpus Christie will close in the coming year, after their 50th book sale. And we will lose their 12 annual members. They have 56 life members. Other chapters, all in FL, have merged so that we have had no loss of members there. West End closed, and their members went to Wellworth. Delray Beach merged with Trails, now known at Trails of Delray Beach. It looks now like Lakes will close, with their members joining Trails of Delray Beach or Wellworth. We are working to make Aventura/Hollywood a satellite group of South Miami Dade. The members of Aventura/Hollywood are still involved with faculty-authored study groups. Nassau
North changed its name to Long Island chapter, reflecting a broader membership in that chapter. We now have 41 chapters.

All regions now have in place Region Presidents, and Region Vice Presidents of Membership, Fundraising, Learning Opportunities and Leadership Development. They act as conduits between their counterparts on our national teams and those in chapters, better connecting the parts of BNC, sharing best practices, and mentoring chapter leaders; the Region Presidents work together as a team to bolster this structure.

Our National Membership Team, in addition to focusing on attracting and retaining members, is working on a handbook and annual calendar. Their work, and that of Slightly Mad, the national marketing firm assisting us, has reversed our declining membership, so that we are running even for a second year.

The Fundraising Team has completed its work this year on the Sustaining the Mind Campaign, having built a strong nationwide structure for this. And now, with your approval, will focus on a new campaign. The university is investing in new study guides and increasing faculty visits to chapters, which will be a selling point to members from our Learning Opportunities team.

And I firmly believe that strong leaders are the key to strong chapters. So we have mailed our Leadership Development Handbook out to all chapters, with a letter explaining how to use it, and with some exercises to use in chapters. Members of the Leadership Development Team, along with Region Leadership Development Vice Presidents, will mentor those chapters needing some help.

Because all volunteer groups evolve, I have asked Myles Weisenberg to co-chair a Think Tank Team with me, comprised of both university staff and BNC volunteers, to insure that a strong BNC remains a contributing partner to the university. We are working on two ideas to use technology to bring university information and connection to BNC members, and hopefully inspire donations. We would first use Blue Jeans, our conference call company, and later make our own videos, to accomplish this by recording lectures by professors, and explaining specifically our desire to link members to our mission. We have already developed two new videos that went to chapters, Season’s Greetings and Sustaining the Mind. Our BNC scholarship student, Arielle Keller, is a delight and is working on Alzheimer’s Awareness. The scholarship student sponsored by Las Vegas, Jonathan Shakerchi, is the first in his family to attend college, and is being followed to Brandeis by his younger brother. Our student ambassadors continue to connect with chapters, and bring the university closer to them. Our University on Wheels professors certainly does the same thing. And last night you met the 21 delightful and hard-working chapter leaders who are also with us this morning, and who will continue with training this afternoon and all day tomorrow. They will return home to strengthen their own chapters.
So.... my plans for this next year: Increase my focus on leadership development, make sure all chapters are using the Leadership Development Handbook and have a VP or Chair of LD, make sure each chapter knows the basics of developing leaders, and how to move them up the ladder of leadership; continue trying to strengthen region leaders, and the work of regions; promote the filming of videos to send to chapters to better connect them with the university; visit additional chapters; and continue to try to better connect all levels of BNC to one another, and connect all members to our mission.

Executive Director Report

Beth Bernstein M.A ‘90

Highlights of ED report:
BNC is now part of Institutional Advancement

Our goal this year is to work smarter.

Completed the transfer of all checking accounts in all chapters to Bank of America and to TD Bank on the east coast and Chase out west. Checks can be made out to Brandeis University, BNC, or Brandeis National Committee.

There are now 13 chapter websites.

Financial and Membership reports are sent out monthly and we now will be sending out reports on all new members on a monthly basis.

The Year In Review:

Twenty chapters were visited this year as part of the UOW program.

New study guides are expected this summer. Billy Flesch is finishing up a Philip Roth guide; Jill Greenlee is working on a study guide on political opinion; and Andreas Teuber has a few new legal puzzlers. Jonathan Sarna has a terrific new book just published on Lincoln and the Jews and we plan to have Jonathan oversee a guide to the book.


Over 20 members from New Jersey’s Concordia and Clearbrook Chapters visited campus this year. I cannot tell you how exciting it is for BNC to tour the campus and meet the archivists at the library and see BNC’s history all over campus. This group listened to Melissa Kosinski-Collins as they sat in her biology lab. Everyone was ready to go back and take the course. And up in OUR BNC lab, they looked into microscopes and saw microscopic worms that Piali Sengupta’s researchers are
working on. And of course a visit to Brandeis is not complete without a student docent tour of the Rose. They had lunch at the Faculty Club with students. Tell your chapters. We want you to come -and visit.

Our membership numbers are 2% higher than last year. Thanks to all efforts, we’ve come out of a decline.

**VP of Region President’s Report**

Marilyn Blankman

Our goal for the coming year is to continue to reinforce what we have been stressing in terms of successfully creating region boards. Our president’s communications with their counterparts is vital and it is our hope to instill commitment and dedication to these leaders. Through their mentoring, the chapter chairs should be able to develop skills that will not only strengthen the region but the chapters as well.

I am confident that the motivation, after our meeting, will be the spark that allows our new leaders to succeed. We have discussed and studied the job descriptions for Region Presidents and Vice Presidents. These descriptions will be further defined this coming year and their implementation is one of our goals. A key point for discussion this year will be to further define the purpose is of a region. We would like the Region Presidents to be sure to be contacting the Chapter Presidents reinforcing the necessity of contacting chapter counterparts with regard to chapter Vice Presidents and Chairs.

When we resume our monthly conference calls we will review what we have identified as responsibilities for the president and vice presidents of the regions. We will begin discussing the role of a mentor and how to mentor. Advising and counseling our region leaders is crucial for success. In addition, while mentoring, best practices will be discussed. Successes as well as disappointments in achieving goals will be analyzed. The conclusion of the Campaign will be a topic of importance to this body. This process will aid everyone in achievements and help with future fundraising endeavors.

We have come a long way with our restructuring. I encourage the Presidents to keep in touch and communicate with me as well as their chapter presidents. Communication is one of the keys to success.
VP of Fundraising Report

BNC has raised $1,621,783 during the fiscal year. Our numbers are up 50% from last year at this time and it looks like we are on track for reaching our goal. The STM campaign has, in four years, raised $2,480,000.

We need to get our chapters to remember that our mission of supporting Brandeis is first and foremost. This is why we exist as an organization. It would be helpful if each chapter had a VP of Fundraising. This would remind chapter boards and members of our primary mission. I encourage all our national and chapter leaders to support Brandeis with a leadership gift that supports our mission. Leaders lead by example. While we enjoy all the perks like study groups and trips, our cause is noble. With our fund raising, we are helping to make the world a better place.

Sometimes just by sharing a story, you can motivate someone to give. It is not a fundraiser when a chapter adds ten dollars to a minor event. A fundraiser needs to be planned, hopefully twice per fiscal year, and to make sure that is advertised as a fundraiser. An example would be a Book and Author that charges at least $50 more than the cost. There are three funds, Library, Sustaining the Mind and our new BNC Scholarship Campaign. The chapter gets to decide what will appeal to its members and make the designation so that it can be included in the publicity.

The BNC Scholarship Campaign is BNC’s effort to participate in a meaningful way with the university’s major effort. We need to be able to offer scholarships to students who otherwise would not be able to afford to attend, thereby attracting the best students. Madalyn Friedberg, our incoming VP of Fundraising, will be leading these efforts. We hope to launch the campaign during the summer with campaign kits and details. I know chapters are already planning this. We are working on a recognition pin for donors to this two year $1 million campaign.

Discussion

Have these scholarship students been accepted to the university already? The University will be choosing the student based on need.

Is the money going into a general scholarship fund or to a BNC scholarship to be awarded? University will recognize a special BNC fund.

There was a unanimous vote of acceptance for the BNC Scholarship Campaign Ron Levy, Leslie Pearlstein and Carol Rabinovitz pledged to give gift for the BNC Scholarship Campaign.

Brandeis Trustee Michael Frieze video was shown.
The Membership Team was given the following goals for Fiscal Year 2015: to institute satellite groups and possible new chapters; to work with the Region Membership Vice Presidents to monitor Chapters’ progress towards their membership goals; and to design and implement this year’s membership contest. In addition the Team decided to write a National Membership Handbook to guide Chapter Membership Vice Presidents and their committees in their efforts.

Two membership contests were designed and implemented. Chapters were divided into 3 groups; - mall, medium and large- to compete against each other in their category. The goal of the first contest was to motivate Chapters to work on their retention numbers. While the second contest goal is to encourage Chapters to work not only to reach their membership numbers for the year, but also to push beyond them. The winners of the first contest were South Miami Dade, Lakes and Somerset. The winners of the second contest will be determined at the conclusion of this fiscal year.

Members of the Team were each assigned a Region Membership Vice President with whom to liaise in order to monitor the Chapters in that region. Hopefully, as the Regions become stronger the connections between the Team and their counterparts will become more firmly entwined.

The National Membership Handbook is a work in progress that will continue under the incoming National Membership Vice President Judy Levine. Once it is completed it should be very helpful resource to Chapter Membership Vice Presidents and be an essential tool in helping them be effective in their positions.

As of May 1st of this year we had 8,962 annual members plus another 120 annual paid members from unorganized chapters. This is in comparison with only 8778 members a year earlier so that our numbers are up by 2.1% compared to last year.

This increase is despite having a few chapters close or merges with another chapter this year. We also have 15,165 life members that give us a total of 24,247 between life and annual members.

As we move forward, expansion of satellite groups and new Chapters should continue to be a major goal of both the National Membership Team and the National Executive Committee. Adding various types of satellite groups to meet the needs of new and prospective members should be one of the easiest ways to augment our membership in the coming years. Maybe as a way to generate new chapters, the NEC could explore new structural models to help those interested in starting a group in their city. Currently, our marketing efforts in the “friend bring a friend” campaign appear to be helping us bring in new members. Now maybe it is time to
expand our marketing efforts to the larger community and place National ads in publications that appeal to those who are on the verge of retiring or who have already retired.

Finally, I propose that the NEC consider suggesting that Chapters eliminate the associate fee that some Chapters charge. For the most part this usually impacts winter visitors to a Chapter. The purpose of the fee was to cover the costs of printing of chapter bulletins and study guides they received. Today, most Chapter bulletins and study guides are found online and not physically printed. Let’s market ourselves as your home away from home when you travel.

Discussion

How to get Life members back into action? What can you do to “find” the life members and get them involved again?
If you have interesting activities, the members will come. We need to think out of the box and start getting more people involved.

What can we do to reach out to the “younger” members or to the newly retired? Iris will answer in the membership workshop tomorrow.

VP of Leadership Development          Merle Carrus

The Campus staff copied and collated the numerous copies Leadership Handbook and mailed them out to each chapter, either to a LD Vice President or chair and if there was no one in those positions the handbook was mailed to the chapter President.

Our National team developed three exercises that we thought would be good, short, easy to lead discussions that would help to promote and inspire the board members in the chapters to take a further step up the ladder of leadership and help encourage other new leaders in their chapters. We then looked to the new Region VPs of Leadership to be our intermediaries between the National team and the chapters to follow up and make sure the exercises were being done and to find out how they were being received.

Our final consensus at the end of the year is that this was successful in some chapters, not needed in others and would require more input in the remaining ones.

In conclusion all the BNC chapters are different enough that we feel going forward we need to focus this team’s work in a new and different approach. Not everyone is a leader and we should work with people who are interested in leading and build their skills not necessarily offer the skills on a broad scale.
Most recently the LD Handbook has very recently been added to the BNC website and is available to everyone now. We are highly recommending that every chapter have an LD VP or chair. Following this meeting there will be a LD training at which each attendee will be asked to commit to a goal to take back and implement during the year we the LD team will be following their progress in their chapters throughout the year.

So our team for the upcoming year will be tasked with exploring new ways to reach out and work with the Region VPs and chapter VPs to continue to inspire leaders to watch for and recruit others to step up to leadership within the organization at all levels.

**VP of Learning Opportunities**  
Madalyn Friedberg

The team met via monthly conference calls. All members of the team participated with enthusiasm, wonderful insight and suggestions.

The team focused on getting to know their perspective Learning Opportunities Region VP, to establish rapport and feeling of support and to encourage them to have their chapters use BNC materials. Each team member found their own best way to communication with their Region VP.

We believe that we could have accomplished more effective if we had the contact information for the Region VP’s earlier, possibly in June, as that is when chapters have almost completed their fall events schedules. Most regions were working well. NY/CT was problematic.

The team received feedback from their Region VP’s on how well the BNC materials are being used and the acceptance by the chapter member. The importance of having the membership familiar with the BNC website as made clear to us and hopefully to Region VP’s.

One of the goals of the team was to have the Region VP’s work with their chapters to reinforce the BNC mission. We are a fundraising as well as membership organization. Our mission is philanthropy.

We discussed the pricing policy of the chapters encouraging the Region VP to explore with their chapter counterparts the fundraising aspect of our organization. Many chapters seem to be “giving away” their study groups/learning opportunities. There is no universal pricing policy and each chapter sets its own prices.
The team agreed to continue sending monthly “blurb” to each Region VP to be shared with the chapter Study Group/learning opportunities chair. It is difficult to know if in fact these blurbs are being distributed and used in chapters except in our own chapters. In an effort to bring Brandeis news to members, we believe that sharing Student and Faculty information is important. We want to strengthen the connection of the membership to the university. The chapter CIO can be helpful in this endeavor.

Future teams should be encouraged to visit their respective chapters to help reinforce our message and the connection of the individual chapters to the greater integrity.

The Membership Team had asked the Learning Opportunities team to brainstorm about the possibility of “satellite” groups. The term “satellite” was perceived negatively by the membership team contacts. The Learning Opportunities Team explored other names for this concept. There was no consensus. Each chapter appears to be making their own decision on how to each outside the main membership.

**Director of Planned Giving**

James Gibert

As the new director of planned giving, James Gibert came to the meeting to introduce himself and talked a little about planned giving opportunities.

**Goals and Awards Report**

Sue Karp

The team will be working on awards over the summer and plan to review the current goals for next year.

**Budget and Finance Report**

Michael Gilbreath

In Joel Kamer’s absence Michael Gilbreath, Associate VP for Planning and Operations gave the budget and finance report

FY15 Results through April (7/1/14 – 4/30/15)

We have two months to go to complete FY15, yet we have already surpassed our Net Income target by over $500,000! However, the bulk of that excess (some $465,000) has come from Bequests exceeding budget.
We are on the verge of a very good year, surpassing our Net Income goal as a consequence of extraordinary bequests, controlled National General Administration expense, and a good differential between Chapter Revenues and Chapter Expenses. If we continue on this path in the final days of FY15, while paying attention to Chapter Expenses and inspiring more donations, we stand to make Fiscal Year a year to remember!

FY16 Budget
National & Chapter Activity:
Total National and Chapter revenue and expenses are projected to be the same in FY16 as they have been in FY15 resulting in a projected net income of $226,813.

Direct Gifts to the University:
As noted earlier, it is much harder to know with certainty what to anticipate through direct gifts. Based on past history and your results this year through April we are reducing the projected FY16 Donation target to $900,000 and the projected FY16 Planned Giving target to $50,000. We believe that this provides targets that are both ambitious reasonable.

Q&A with Chapter Leaders/NEC Concluding Discussion

Wall Dedication

Tribute Wall dedication was held in the library to honor major donors. Carol Rabinovitz gave speech and announced the names of the donors listed on the Tribute Wall this year.