

BNC National Board of Directors Meeting Summary

Sunday, October 26, 2025
51 Sawyer Road, Waltham, MA

Attendees: Merle Carrus, Mindy Frankel, Madalyn Friedberg, Ron Levy, Bruce Litwer, Nancy Sacks, Ingrid Schorr, Iris Wigal

Guests: Jordan Tannenbaum, Ben Rogers

Absent: Andrew Tieovsky

Notes adapted from Zoom AI Companion. Please email Ingrid Schorr with corrections or questions.

Quick recap

The meeting covered updates on Brandeis University's fundraising campaign progress and challenges with BNC membership, including discussions about connecting members emotionally to the university and addressing declining membership through various initiatives. The group reviewed the new engineering science program at Brandeis, focusing on its unique approach and recruitment goals, while also discussing fundraising efforts for the program. The board touched upon the organization's financial status and discussed operational changes to event registration and study group refunds. They established regional liaison assignments and other board responsibilities.

Next steps

- Ingrid to send a poll for board members' availability for a mid-December meeting (DONE)
- Ingrid to have a conversation with Madalyn about past board roles and structure (DONE)
- Ingrid to write to chapter presidents to introduce regional board representatives
- Ingrid to clarify expectations for board travel to chapters (proposes two meetings a year, virtual or in person)
- Ingrid to make sure all board members have access to the talking points about the engineering program

- Ingrid to continue working on restarting the Student Ambassador Program
- Mindy to develop programming for the virtual chapter, targeting January 2026 for initial program launch
- Board members to serve as regional liaisons to their assigned chapters
- Board members to review the Google Doc about proposed changes to refund policies before the next meeting
- Abby and Sabrina to continue working on reducing bank fees and streamlining financial operations
- Ben Rogers and other engineering faculty to support BNC with speaking engagements at chapter events about the engineering program

Summary

Brandeis Fundraising Campaign Update

SVP of Institutional Advancement Jordan Tannenbaum presented an update on Brandeis University's current fundraising campaign, which aims to raise \$750 million, with \$361 million already raised and a goal of \$135 million for the current fiscal year. He highlighted a recent \$25 million gift from an alumna, which will fund student activities, and noted that the university has raised \$3.4 million towards an unrestricted goal of \$9.2 million. The campaign strategy focuses on securing large donations from approximately 200 key individuals.

Fundraising by BNC is valuable because it frees up unrestricted money to fund university priorities including the new dorm, Center for Jewish Life, scholarships, fellowships, professorships. 68% of students receive merit or need-based scholarships. The endowment is currently \$1.3 billion.

Also valuable: BNC members who make bequests or other planned gifts.

Enhancing BNC Donor Engagement Strategies

The group discussed challenges with BNC fundraising, noting that most members are not major donors despite significant planned gifts and bequests. They emphasized the need to create stronger emotional connections between members and the university. Ingrid noted that based on newsletter engagement, members are interested in Arthur Levine's presidency and news about academic restructuring. Ingrid is working on effective case-making through communications and on-campus visits, which the board can also contribute to.

Several members brought up the student ambassador program, which was discontinued during the pandemic, as an effective way to connect with members.

Brandeis Engineering Science Program

Associate Professor Ben Rogers presented an overview of the engineering science program, highlighting its unique approach of attracting students without strong mathematical backgrounds and its focus on practical, hands-on projects. Not an engineering school, it is an interdepartmental program with faculty appointments across science departments (Ben is an engineer based in the physics department). The group discussed the need to communicate the program's distinctiveness to potential donors and members, with Iris suggesting that the program's focus on accessibility and social impact could be compelling selling points.

- 200 undergraduate students have taken engineering science courses, even without the option to major in engineering.
- Recruitment goal: 50 students for the first cohort in fall 2026, with the aim of graduating 25 engineers after four years, while working through the ABET accreditation process.
- There are 3.5 faculty members with two searches this year, one teaching focused and one tenure track
- Ben and Ian Roy created the intro course, Design to Repair the World, to generate enthusiasm for the new program.

Ben can recruit engineering students to speak to BNC chapters or participate in the student ambassador program.

To date, BNC has raised \$200,000 for the BNC Endowed Chair in Engineering Science, with contributions coming from bequests, small gifts, and chapter events.

Financial Update

National's financial status was discussed, revealing an operating budget deficit that is currently covered by Development. Staff salaries are the largest operating expense. BNC and Institutional Advancement staff are exploring ways to close the gap between revenues and expenses, including increasing membership, raising dues, and reducing financial fees. The board is asked to comment on but not to vote on changes.

Bank Fee and Refund Policies

The meeting focused on bank fee management and online registration policies. Ingrid explained that bank fees are being reviewed, with efforts to consolidate accounts and reduce costs, particularly by transitioning from TD Bank to Chase Bank where possible. An error in allocation of bank fees has been corrected.

The group discussed online registration challenges, including processing fees and refund policies, with Madalyn emphasizing that event organizers should encourage refund requests to be converted

to donations rather than seeking full refunds. The board endorses a gradual approach to implementing refund policies. The team endorsed a policy allowing the chapters to have the option to credit their members who cancel enrollment in a study group. Under this policy, National would not refund study group fees.

Iris suggested looking at summer camp events as a new revenue stream, going to National's operating budget instead of to the library fund.

Regional Responsibilities

The board established new regional liaison assignments for board members and Ingrid will clarify expectations for travel. Mindy reported progress on developing virtual chapter programming, with plans to launch initial programs in January 2026. The board discussed strategies for increasing membership, including potential recruitment incentives and collaboration with Alumni Relations and Brandeis' Lifelong Learning Institute (BOLLI). They agreed to meet again in December.

NEXT MEETING: 1-2:30 pm Eastern, November 24, 2025. [Link to Zoom meeting.](#)