



**Brandeis**  
UNIVERSITY

**Brandeis University  
Staff Advisory Committee**

**Annual Report  
2020-2021**



## Table of Contents

Note from the Chair	2
BUSAC Mission and Purpose	3
2020-2021 Members	4
2020-2021 Accomplishments	5
BUSAC Subcommittee Membership	8
BUSAC Representation on Campus Committees	8
2021-2022 Goals	9
2021-2022 Incoming Members	10



## Note from the Chair

Subject: Brandeis University Staff Advisory Committee (BUSAC) 2020-2021 Annual Report

Date: July 1, 2021

From: Rise Singer, Chair, BUSAC  
Bethany Romano, Vice Chair, BUSAC

To: Ronald Liebowitz, President  
Carol Fierke, Provost  
Stewart Uretsky, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration  
The Brandeis University Community

Truth be told, this was a difficult year to be a university employee. The global pandemic consumed us, literally and figuratively, against the backdrop of excruciating political divisiveness and outrage over systemic racial injustice. Staff heroically juggled caregiving responsibilities (for Brandeis students and their own families!) while trying to fulfill fast-changing and increasing workloads. Given all of these challenges, that we made it through the year at all, is truly remarkable. That we accomplished as much as we did as a committee, stands as a testament to the dedication, creativity and perseverance of all Brandeis staff members and their BUSAC representatives.

Much of our work this year was focused on ensuring that staff concerns related to pandemic safety on campus, work-life balance, compensation and the pivot to remote work were heard and addressed. We were also challenged to take a sober look at the make-up of BUSAC itself to ensure that we truly represented the rich diversity of the Brandeis staff experience. Finally, we continued to push our pre-pandemic agenda for improvements in the areas of Salary Range Transparency, Paid Leave, Benefits Equity, and Retention/Turnover.

In all of this work, we were fortunate to have willing and thoughtful partners in such offices as Human Resources, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the Faculty Senate, Division of Student Affairs, and the President's, Vice President's and Provost's Offices. We thank you all and look forward to continuing our work on behalf of the nearly 1300 Brandeis staff members we represent.



## BUSAC Mission and Purpose

Brandeis University recognizes that all staff are essential to the vibrancy and achievements of the community. Brandeis staff members demonstrate their commitment to the life, work, and operations of the university in countless vital ways.

The purpose of the Brandeis University Staff Advisory Committee (BUSAC) is to improve the work environment through discussions and actions that influence policy, develop and enrich staff, and promote ongoing, meaningful and deliberate improvements to the staff experience, including in the areas of professional development, training opportunities, staff recognition, events, career advancement, and employee wellness.

In particular, BUSAC works to:

- Provide a system for staff to share ideas, concerns, and suggestions regarding the betterment of the staff experience at Brandeis;
- Provide an environment where individuals' opinions and contributions are respected and acknowledged;
- Use data, surveys, and other sources of information when formulating recommendations on achievable change;
- Meet with senior administration on a regular basis to review reports and recommendations regarding proposed changes and solutions;
- Regularly report to staff and senior administration.



## 2020-2021 Members by District

### Officers:

**Chair:** Rise Singer, District E

**Vice-Chair:** Bethany Romano, District C

### All Members:

**District A**      *Arts & Sciences including the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences and Admissions*

**Representatives:** **Maryanna Aldrich & Lauren Jordahl**

**District B**      *The International Business School*

**Representative:** **Mark Kahn**

**District C**      *The Heller School for Social Policy and Management*

**Representatives:** **Bethany Romano & Victoria Felson**

**District D**      *The Rabb School of Continuing Studies*

**Representative:** **Christie Barone**

**District E**      *Centers, Institutes, and the Rose Art Museum*

**Representative:** **Rise Singer**

**District F**      *Administration: Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Investments, Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Office of Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity, Communications, Office of Planning & Institutional Research, and Office of Special Events*

**Representatives:** **Dora Ocanto Gomez & Mark Jay**

**District G**      *Institutional Advancement*

**Representative:** **Ania Morris**

**District H**      *Student Affairs: Athletics, Counseling Center, Community Living, Health Center, Student Activities, and Student Life*

**Representative:** **Lucas Malo**

**District I**      *Academic Affairs: Academic Services, Study Abroad, International Students and Scholars Office, English Language Program, Registrar, Graduate Student Affairs*

**Representative:** **Haydee Vazquez**

**District J**      *Campus Operations: Public Safety, Facilities, and the Office of Conference & Event Service*

**Representatives:** **Eric Dunn & Judy Thorton**

**District K**      *Information Technology Services and Library Services*

**Representatives:** **Christopher Lowre & Walt McGough**

**Member-at-Large**

**Representative:** **Mangok Bol**



## 2020-2021 Activities & Accomplishments

### Sharing Staff Voices with Leadership

- Met with President Liebowitz, Stew Uretsky, and Robin Switzer in August to voice staff concerns regarding COVID safety response and remote work flexibility, resulting in five extra discretionary days, additional community check-ins, and enhanced manager training.
- Continued to advocate for BUSAC non-voting representation on the Board of Trustees. The BUSAC Chair and Vice Chair were invited as guests to the April 2021 board meeting, and our request for long-term representation will be reviewed this year as part of Nominating and Governance Committee planning.
- Advocated for resumption of retirement benefits match and merit increases.
- Held informational sessions with Provost Carol Fierke; VP of DEI Mark Brimhall-Vargas; Aretina Hamilton, Director of DEI Programming, Education, Training & Development; Don Greenstein, Director & University Ombuds; Jamele Adams, Dean of Students; Anne Marando, Associate Vice President, Information Technology Services.
- Reimagining Public Safety at Brandeis: Discussion with Search Consultants, Brenda Bond-Fortier and Christi Hurt and BUSAC representative on search committee.

### Feedback on University Policies

- Gave feedback on pending Title IX policy changes per invitation of Sonia Jurado in the Office of Equal Opportunity.
- Worked with the HR benefits team to fine-tune the rollout of updated paid family and medical leave policies.
- Offered feedback on pandemic-related changes to paid time off accruals and carryover extensions.
- Participating in HR-led efforts to re-envision the performance review process at Brandeis.



## 2020-2021 Activities & Accomplishments

### Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

- BUSAC proposal to change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day adopted by the university.
- University adopted Juneteenth as a new, paid staff holiday, with backing of formal BUSAC proposal. BUSAC representatives contributed to efforts to develop and distribute educational programming leading up to Juneteenth.
- Supported DEI efforts through communications campaigns, encouraging employees to update their personal demographic information in Workday.
- Clarified BUSAC election procedures to improve equity and transparency. Amended charter as necessary.
- Collaborated with representatives from Human Resources, the Gender and Sexuality Center and the Brandeis Faculty and Staff Pride Alliance to address concerns and advance initiatives related to the campus LGBTQIA community.
- Established a standing DEI subcommittee with guiding principles and goals, as follows:

*Guiding Principles:*

**Represent:** BUSAC's membership should reflect the current makeup of Brandeis University staff

**Engage:** BUSAC should create spaces and opportunities that highlight the voices of marginalized staff members

**Advocate:** BUSAC should serve as a catalyst to inform, effect and influence inclusive policy changes across campus

**Adapt:** BUSAC should continuously review and adapt its internal systems to promote transparency and uplift diversity, equity and inclusion

*Goals:*

- 1) Encourage all Brandeis staff to provide current demographic information to Brandeis via Workday, with regular, annual solicitations and engagement with staff.



## 2020-2021 Activities & Accomplishments

2) Recommend improvements to the recruiting and on-boarding process for BUSAC representatives, and ensure that BUSAC's demographic makeup is consistent with the full university staff for FY21.

3) Assist ODEI in the gathering and dissemination of information on the many single-department DEI efforts and resources across campus, to promote knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

### Staff Appreciation and Wellness

- Held first-ever BUSAC open meetings for all staff to observe and offer feedback and ideas.
- Co-hosted two open "Water Cooler Chats" to advance employee health and wellness in conjunction with Leah Berkenwald '07, Director of Health Promotion and Wellness Initiatives.
- Engaged in district-wide morale-boosting activities with particular attention to on-campus staff.
- Held a staff appreciation raffle to thank and celebrate staff through a virtual event and prizes.





## BUSAC Subcommittee Memberships

**Communications Subcommittee:** Christie Barone, Bethany Romano

**Constituent Management Subcommittee:** Chris Lowre

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee:** Victoria Felson, Mark Khan, Lucas Malo, Ania Morris, Walt McGough, and Dora Ocanto Gomez

**Elections Subcommittee:** Maryanna Aldrich, Mary Jay, Mark Khan

## BUSAC Representation on Campus Committees:

**COVID Task Force Working Groups**

**Campus Living and Operations Working Group:** Rise Singer

**Public Health & Campus Scaling Up Working Group:** Lauren Jordahl

**Finance and Human Resources Working Group:** Mark Khan

**Performance Evaluation Review Committee (PERC):** Chris Lowre and Ania Morris

**Campus Police Chief Search Committee:** Rise Singer

**Campus Safety Committee:** Lauren Jordahl

**Faculty Senate DEISJ Committee:** Walt McGough

**Joint Faculty Senate/BUSAC working group to support caregivers and Brandeis families:**

Maryanna Aldrich, Lucas Malo, Walt McGough

**Brandeis Faculty-Staff Pride Alliance:** Mark Khan



## 2021-2022 Goals

In the winter of AY 2019-20, BUSAC developed an internal survey and priority-setting exercise to determine which issues the representatives considered most pressing among the many that staff had brought forward. Unsurprisingly, the issues that rose to the top are among the most complicated and difficult to address as they are deeply rooted in our culture, structure and operations. These include:

1) **Establish salary transparency by instituting grades and ranges.** There is significant support across the committee to institute public, campus-wide salary grades at Brandeis, as public universities are required to do (and many private universities opt to do).

2) **Benefits equity:** Employee benefits differ drastically between staff and faculty, and even between exempt and nonexempt staff. This has generated a variety of concerns, including:

The need for a comprehensive accounting of these benefits inequities;

A rationale to explain their legitimacy; and

Confusion and concern over how jobs or individuals are coded, especially among some exempt and nonexempt staff positions.

BUSAC has initiated conversations with Human Resources to begin working through these concerns in the summer of 2021.

3) **Staff Retention/Turnover:** Thoughtful initiatives and policy adjustments could help retain staff at Brandeis. We look forward to working with HR to measure staff turnover and to establish goals and implement solutions. Sub-goals that fall within this category include:

Developing and disseminating a reliable dashboard of basic human resources data, including staff demographics, turnover rates, time to hire, etc.

Establishing campus-wide improvements to the performance review process and standardizing best practices such as exit interviews for departing staff.

Partnering with human resources to distribute a survey for staff that explores employee satisfaction and areas of concern.

**In addition to the above,** BUSAC continues to advocate for staff in key stakeholder forums, for example, with the Board of Trustees and through active participation in the search for a new Chief Diversity Officer.



## 2021-2022 Members by District

BUSAC held nominations and elections in April and May of 2021 for nine seats (eight district representatives and one at-large seat). Over 90 staff members were nominated for BUSAC positions, and 28 accepted nominations and were listed on the ballot. Over 800 staff members voted in the election, with the closest race being decided by just two votes. All nine staff who prevailed in their race accepted the position.

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**Representative:** **Christie Barone**

**District E**      *Centers, Institutes, and the Rose Art Museum*  
**Representative:** **Rise Singer**

**District F**      *Administration: Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Investments, Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Office of Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity, Communications, Office of Planning & Institutional Research, and Office of Special Events*  
**Representatives:** **Tessa Venell & Jacob Sajinyan**

**District G**      *Institutional Advancement*  
**Representative:** **Dania Khandaker**

**District H**      *Student Affairs: Athletics, Counseling Center, Community Living, Health Center, Student Activities, and Student Life*  
**Representative:** **Jay Mendoza**

**District I**      *Academic Affairs: Academic Services, Study Abroad, International Students and Scholars Office, English Language Program, Registrar, Graduate Student Affairs*  
**Representative:** **Haydee Vazquez**

**District J**      *Campus Operations: Public Safety, Facilities, and the Office of Conference & Event Service*  
**Representatives:** **Eric Dunn & Judy Thorton**

**District K**      *Information Technology Services and Library Services*  
**Representatives:** **Kathryn McNally & Walt McGough**

**Member-at-Large**  
**Representative:** **Eli Jacobson**