

# BUSAC ACADEMIC YEAR-END REPORT

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*Brandeis University  
Staff Advisory Committee*

2024-  
2025



# A NOTE

Summertime is upon us and the Brandeis University Staff Advisory Committee (BUSAC) is pleased to share this action-packed report to wrap up the 2024-2025 Academic Year!

Read all about our activities as they happen in the [Materials](#) section of the [BUSAC webpage](#). This report is our summary of a very busy and engaging year.

We are so honored to serve as your district representatives and to advocate for all staff.

**With gratitude,**  
*BUSAC*



# WHO WE ARE

*at a glance*

BUSAC is an elected, representative group of staff formed to: improve the work process and environment for Brandeis University staff through discussions and actions that influence policy; develop and enrich staff; and promote ongoing, meaningful and deliberate improvements to the staff experience.

14

## Elected Representatives\*

*\*Out of a total of 17 seats. Three seats are vacant.*

11

## Districts Across the University

1

## Official Note Taker\*\*

*\*\*Stipend role*



# WHO WE ARE

2024-2025 BUSAC Representatives



**Jane Theriault**  
District A



**Courtney Maurer**  
Interim Vice Chair  
District A



**Brittani Harris Niquette**  
Interim Chair  
District B



**Lanni Isenberg**  
District C



**Calla Mattox**  
District C



**Alina Hicks**  
Interim District D\*



**Kristina Cherniahivsky**  
District E



**Gail Jordan**  
District F



**Stacey Winkler**  
District G



**Lisa DeNicola**  
District H



**Mary Hurd**  
District I



**Stefanie Borntreger**  
District K



**John Pizzi**  
District K



**Kurt Ferguson**  
At-Large



**Melissa MacKay**  
Notetaker

\* Not pictured: **Mara Tzizik-Swanson**, Interim BUSAC Vice Chair, District D (on parental leave)



# BUSAC REPRESENTATIVES ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Last year's BUSAC elections brought 9 new BUSAC representatives to the roster to join incumbent representatives in service to Brandeis University staff. We named District B Representative Brittani Harris Niquette as Interim Chair.

As one of our District F representatives, [John Thayer](#), and District J representative, [Sue Scannell](#), moved into new job titles at Brandeis during the year, and At-Large representative [Alexandra Brandon](#) took on new responsibilities at Brandeis, [Kurt Ferguson](#) was appointed At-Large representative mid-year. Kurt has been communicating with District J constituents, which includes Campus Operations: Public Safety, Facilities, and Office of Conference and Event Services. Thank you to John, Sue, Alexandra and Kurt for your leadership during these changing times.

Among elected & appointed BUSAC Representatives, our roles in our districts include: Academic Administrator, Assistant Director, Associate Director (x2), Department Coordinator, Department Operations Administrator, Financial & Operational Administrative Assistant, Head Athletic Trainer/Coordinator of Student-Athlete Health and Wellness, Senior LMS Applications Administrator, Program Manager, Senior Assistant Director, Senior Associate Director, Senior Executive Administrator, Senior Program Administrator.

We meet once each month and pursue timely responses to inquiries, projects and activities that arise throughout the academic year. We are also in regular direct contact with VP of Human Resources, Robin Switzer, as well as EVP of Finance and Administration, Stewart Uretsky.

# BUSAC REPRESENTATIVE COLLABORATION

In Fall 2024, representatives informally reported at the BUSAC Monthly Meetings about the summertime series of department meetings with visits by various combinations of Brandeis Senior Leadership, including former President Ron Liebowitz, Provost Carol Fierke, EVP of Finance Stew Uretsky and VP of Human Resources Robin Switzer. Senior Leadership offered these meetings to departments to share perspectives and information.

In Spring 2025 BUSAC meetings, BUSAC representatives informally reported out and shared notes from the Provost's Offices' convenings of the four new school units.

See the BUSAC monthly [meeting minutes](#) posted on the [BUSAC Materials webpage](#) for discussion highlights.



# BUSAC SERVICE ROLES – COMMITTEES

## BUSAC Subcommittees

- Communications ([Lanni Isenberg & Stacey Winkler](#))
- Elections ([Lanni Isenberg & Jane Theriault](#))
- Total Rewards with HR ([Mary Hurd](#))

## Additional Representative Commitments This Year

- DEIS-J Committee
  - organized through the Office of the Provost ([Calla Mattox](#))
- DEIB Council
  - organized through Lee Bitsóí's office ([Brittani Harris Niquette](#))
- Brandeis Food Pantry Advisory Board
  - BUSAC representative ([Jane Theriault](#))
- Presidential Search Committee
  - Staff and BUSAC representative ([Brittani Harris Niquette](#))





# BUSAC CONTACT FORM - STATS

BUSAC Representatives received direct inquiries in-person and via email, and we brought our own questions and concerns to the group. We shared inquiries with Senior Leadership and appropriate departments to learn more – in some cases, dispelling rumors – and we shared our findings in meeting minutes, monthly BUSAC District newsletters, or were able to provide information and responses to constituents directly.

Questions, concerns and ideas from self-identified staff also came into our [Contact Form](#) from nearly every district. The BUSAC Contact Form fueled our conversations and task list and influenced our monthly meeting schedule and meeting guest roster the whole year.

## Highlights

**85**      **Contact Form Entries**

**47**      **Submitted Anonymously**

**18**      **No District Identified**

# BUSAC CONTACT FORM - THEMES

## Some of the themes addressed over the fiscal year:

- Promotions, salary range access, salary equity and workload
- Staff turnover concerns and requests for job training for new job duties as the University shifts certain roles
- Staff morale concerns and staff appreciation feedback
- Campus parking access and information
- Brandeis classroom and building accessibility issues
- Loss of the Campus Sustainability Office
- Remote work policies
- Change and process with the annual performance review
- Questions about changes to University Procurement (COUPA/Marketplace) and grant process policies and processes and requests for improved communication about changes
- Staff holidays, Paid Time Off (PTO) and Discretionary Days
- Bereavement policy
- Changes in Facilities trash/recycling and office cleaning schedule
- Campus food allergen labeling and food service summer hours
- Extending Gosman gym hours for staff
- Access for staff to apps and resources students and faculty receive (such as Headspace)
- Suggestions for staff inter-departmental collaborations
- University leadership responses to Presidential Executive Orders in terms of federal funding and student supports and protections and other social justice actions
- Request for a new CSA Farm Share partnership
- Requests for Staff Town Halls and other improvements for communication to staff
- Advocating for staff voice in the University reorganization process

# CAMPUS LEADERSHIP CONNECTIONS

## Meetings with Interim President Arthur Levine

**November 12, 2024** - In his early Brandeis University “Listening Tour”, Interim President Arthur Levine met with BUSAC leadership [Brittani Harris Niquette](#) and [Mara Tzizik-Swanson](#) on November 12th to learn about BUSAC and describe his plan to meet with the Brandeis community throughout his 18-month interim term.

**January 9, 2025** - BUSAC met in-person with Interim President Arthur Levine along with VP of Human Resources Robin Switzer. Interim President Levine asked BUSAC members why they stay at Brandeis. Responses included: the people, benefits, and mission of Brandeis.

**May 7, 2025** - BUSAC held a hybrid in-person, virtual meeting with President Arthur Levine along with VP of Human Resources Robin Switzer where he asked BUSAC about their thoughts on qualities for the future incoming University President. Our survey sent to all staff was a direct result of this.

*[In the prior academic year, BUSAC met with President Liebowitz in-person in November 2023 and April 2024.]*

For more details about meeting guests and discussions, visit the [Monthly Meeting Notes](#) posted on the BUSAC website.

## BUSAC Monthly Meeting Guests

This academic year BUSAC met with 10 Brandeis leaders in our monthly meetings to learn more about current Brandeis departments, policies and procedures and, perhaps most importantly, to explore responses to some of the BUSAC contact form inquiries and to provide feedback on behalf of Brandeis staff.



# CAMPUS LEADERSHIP CONNECTIONS

## University Guests at BUSAC Monthly Meetings 2024-2025

BUSAC Meeting Guest(s)	Discussion/Topics
<b>SEPTEMBER 12, 2024</b> Stew Uretsky, Executive VP of Finance and Robin Switzer, VP of Human Resources	Reviewed BUSAC Contact Form questions and ideas
<b>DECEMBER 10, 2024</b> BUSAC Open Meeting Cathy Carlson, Brandeis Food Pantry Manager	The food pantry is located in the Shapiro Campus Center, third floor, Room 316. Cathy shared general information and discussed future drives. <a href="#">Brandeis Food Pantry Amazon Wish List</a>
<b>JANUARY 9, 2025</b> Peter Rojas, Brandeis Intercultural Center (ICC)	Shared information about a Staff of Color Meet and Greet to develop a sense of belonging, professional development and networking for staff of color at Brandeis
<b>FEBRUARY 13, 2025</b> Erika Chin, Natalie Ippolito, and Elizabeth Tierney, Brandeis Human Resources Compensation Group  Robin Switzer, VP of Human Resources	<p>Discussion topics included accessing salary ranges, the new federal pay transparency law that was set to take effect in the Summer of 2025, but will not begin until October 2025</p> <p>Robin responded to inquiries about the Total Rewards Advisory Committee (TRAC). BUSAC has a role in that committee, but it has not met this academic year, though Robin said that there are plans for the committee to continue</p>

# CAMPUS LEADERSHIP CONNECTIONS, CONT'D

## University Guests at BUSAC Monthly Meetings 2024-2025

BUSAC Meeting Guest(s)	Discussion/Topics
<b>MARCH 13, 2025</b> Suzanne Raj, Nurse Practitioner and Occupational Health Services Manager and Robin Switzer, VP for Human Resources	Suzanne's Occupational Health Office is housed within Human Resources and offered health, safety and wellness highlights from the year and University services for employees
<b>APRIL 10, 2025</b> Meredith Ainbinder, the new Brandeis University General Counsel (formerly the Chief of Staff in the Office of the President)	Meredith told us about the role of the Office of the General Counsel at the University, and answered questions about recent Presidential Orders regarding student or staff immigration status as well as Diversity, Equity & Inclusion language*  <i>*Meredith Ainbinder shared similar information about the Presidential Orders and federal non-discrimination policies at Interim President Levine's All Staff Forum in Sherman Hall on May 8th.</i>
<b>MAY 7, 2025</b> Interim President Arthur Levine and Robin Switzer, VP for Human Resources	Interim President Levine asked BUSAC to gather Brandeis staff input on presidential qualities to consider in the search for the new Brandeis President
<b>JUNE 10, 2025</b>	Our 2 new BUSAC reps invited to shadow

# BUSAC EVENTS

BUSAC often hosts or co-sponsors events across the University designed to bring staff together.

## July 30, 2024

BUSAC and the Faculty Senate co-hosted a Summer Social with colleagues, led a moment of silence in recognition of and respect for the 70 staff who were laid off in spring 2024, and encouraged colleagues to be active and participate in the Brandeis community. Human Resources offered lawn games, raffles and giveaways, and the library's Archivist Kate Neptune gave a brief presentation about Brandeis history. Faculty & Staff chatted with colleagues and enjoyed mini donuts, iced coffee, lemonade, cold water and cookies provided by Suzanne Raj's Wellness Team in HR. Gluten-free treats were also provided.





# BUSAC EVENTS

## December 10, 2024

On December 10th, BUSAC hosted an Open Monthly Meeting, attended by more than 20 staff members in addition to BUSAC representatives.

## December 12, 2024

On December 12th, BUSAC co-hosted the heavily attended Brandeis "Warm Winter Welcome" holiday celebration in the Levin Ballroom at Usdan with gratis catering by Harvest Table. Brandeis Leadership invited BUSAC Chair [Brittani Harris Niquette](#) and Faculty Senate Chair Jeffrey Lenowitz to be the emcees for the afternoon.





# BUSAC EVENTS

March 2025

In collaboration with Cathy Carlson, BUSAC hosted our second Brandeis Pantry Drive and collected over **500 hygiene items** across campus for student use.

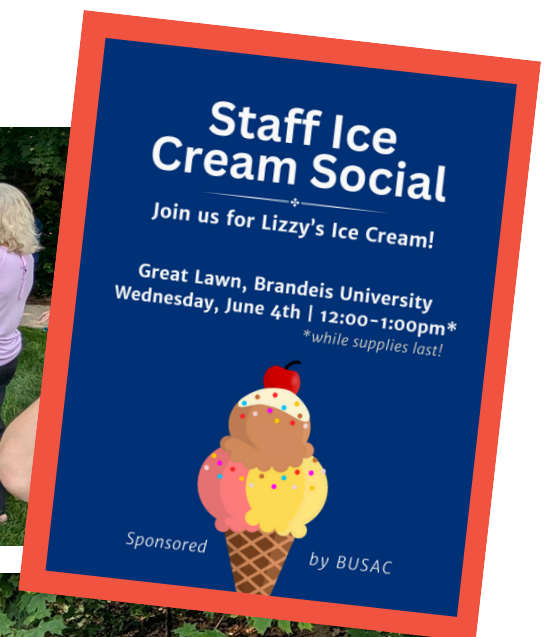




# BUSAC EVENTS

June 4, 2025

On a sunny, warm day, we hosted our annual BUSAC All-Staff Ice Cream Social on the Great Lawn at the Shapiro Campus Center for nearly **375 staff** colleagues. Guests enjoyed Lizzy's Ice Cream – Cookie Dough, Strawberry, Chocolate and Raspberry Sorbet, with sprinkles if they wished!





# BUSAC ACTIVITIES: STAFF APPRECIATION

**September 2024**

## **Staff Appreciation Survey**

In response to the continued efforts to address staff morale concerns following the spring layoffs and the Brandeis Summer Staff Appreciation Series, BUSAC distributed a Staff Appreciation Survey. The intention of the survey was to provide insight for senior Brandeis leadership about how to address low staff morale and to learn what opportunities there may be for community building with and among staff.

## **Highlights**

- 154 staff members responded

## **Top priorities identified**

**Compensation**

**Additional Paid  
Time Off**

**Establishing a Better  
Remote Work policy**

See more details of the Summer/Fall 2024 [Staff Survey Summary & Recommendations](#) prepared by BUSAC's [Courtney Maurer](#).

# BUSAC ACTIVITIES: PRESIDENTIAL QUALITIES

May 2025

## Presidential Qualities Survey

BUSAC launched a brief, anonymous survey to find out what qualities Brandeis staff would like to see in a new Brandeis President. In an initial review of survey responses, staff would like the incoming Brandeis President to be [active in the community](#) and also have the [desire to build relationships with faculty, staff, and students alike](#). Staff overwhelmingly want the incoming President to have the [humility](#) needed to listen to staff and value staff, along with being [innovative and forward-looking](#) to make necessary changes that will assist in creating both a positive academic and working environment. Our report will ultimately be shared with Interim President Levine.

## Highlights

- 129 staff members responded

## A Sampling of Other Qualities Mentioned

Values transparency,  
communicates openly, and  
avoids hidden agendas

Knows how to motivate the  
whole Brandeis community  
behind shared goals

Is an experienced fundraiser

Is open minded and excited  
to try new things

Thanks to everyone who filled out the survey and to BUSAC representative [Courtney Maurer](#) for putting together this brief.

# BUSAC SUCCESSES

While many of our priorities in BUSAC are ongoing in nature, we feel positive about our successes around additional staff paid off days, our increase in staff involvement in the new restructuring process, and more.

Goal/Topic	Results (so far)
Additional Presidential Discretionary Days	2024: Added Wednesday before Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve  2025: Added July 3rd
Create more equity around knowledge sharing	Advocated for more staff town halls to increase equity around information shared.  February 12, 2025 April 2, 2025 May 8, 2025
Staff voice inclusion	BUSAC reps now on DEISJ and DEIB committees, in addition to the Presidential Search Committee



# 2025 BUSAC ELECTION

## 2025-2026 BUSAC Representatives Election & BIG THANKS

We are pleased to welcome new BUSAC District B Representative [Kapik Yeung](#), returning BUSAC District K Representative [Aimee Slater](#), and outstanding BUSAC Interim Chair and the new At-Large Representative [Brittani Harris Niquette](#)!

We are grateful to our re-elected members who agreed to serve another term: [Jane Theriault](#) District A, [Calla Mattox](#) District C, [Gail Jordan](#) District F, [Stacey Winkler](#) District G, and [Lisa DeNicola](#) District H. Congratulations on your re-election!

We also thank our continuing elected members as they serve an ongoing term: [Courtney Maurer](#) (Interim Vice Chair) District A, [Lanni Isenberg](#) District C, [Kristina Cherniahivsky](#) District E, [Mary Hurd](#) District I, [John Pizzi](#) District K and our note taker [Melissa MacKay](#).

And, we wish to express our gratitude to BUSAC representatives who are concluding their terms: [Stefanie Borntreger](#) District K and [Kurt Ferguson](#) At-Large, for their service.

In total, **304 votes** were submitted, about 30% of eligible voters. As BUSAC has shared in recent monthly meeting reports, in light of ongoing Brandeis structural changes, we plan to review the BUSAC Charter and Districts in the coming year to align with the University's new school structure to maximize staff representation.

# LOOKING AHEAD

We continue our work in the transition from year-end to the July 1st start of a new BUSAC year.

BUSAC is an active and engaged staff entity with collective knowledge and experience. In this exceptionally challenging year of political, economic, social, environmental and technological change on campus, in the country and the world, we recognize that change brings opportunity. BUSAC representatives have worked with equal parts passion and dedication.

We humbly thank collaborators, community supporters and the BUSAC Representatives past, present and future.

This work is accomplished by staff for staff to continue to build a strong, resilient and welcoming Brandeis.

## WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOUR ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT!



[BUSAC@brandeis.edu](mailto:BUSAC@brandeis.edu)



[BUSAC Webpage](#)