Faculty Senate

Meeting of the 2011-12 Faculty Senate

The meeting was held on September 20th, 2011 from 12:30pm-2:30pm in Heller G6.

Present: Golden, Hall, Hickey, Levenson, Lichtman, Meyer, Nandakumar, Osler, Parmentier, Pochapsky, Ratner, Singh, Sisli

Absent: Dibble, Molinsky, Nelson, Rosenberg, Thomas

Faculty Survey

The Senate discussed this year’s Faculty Survey that will be created, distributed and analyzed by the members of the Senate. The Senate will begin drafting this survey for distribution to the Faculty at-large. The survey will contain questions related to recurring issues, anticipated issues as well as an open section for responders to add their own concerns not addressed in the survey questions.

Strategic Planning

The Senate discussed the strategic planning process that is being initiated by the Provost. The bulk of this discussion centered on ways to involve the entire faculty in this process. One suggestion was made that, to begin faculty involvement in this strategic planning, a few questions should be placed on the survey that would directly relate to thoughts on strategic planning.

There was discussion of the process that recently occurred in the Heller school, and that the results there had shown that the more deliberative the process, the more ideas and concerns seemed to converge across disparate groups. The Senate will consider examining this process undertaken by the Heller school to see if there are examples from that experience that can be utilized in this process.

There was the question raised of the relationship between this process and the process of CARS and Brandeis 2020. It was explained that those former initiatives were not meant as a strategic planning process; rather the focus was on immediate actions that could be taken during the financial crisis. A suggestion was made that the Senate make resources available to faculty, possibly online, with information on the strategic planning process and ideas of best practices.

The question was also raised as to the role of the Senate in this process. It is clear from discussions that the administration wants the faculty to play a large role, and that the UAC will serve a major function in this process. The suggestion was made that the administration be encouraged to have small group meetings with faculty members, instead of large “town hall” meetings. Some expressed concern that certain sections of
the faculty might not feel inclined to speak at large meetings, but if given the opportunity in smaller group settings these faculty members might be able to provide valuable ideas and insights. It was of particular interest to the Senate in looking at ways to engage junior faculty.

**Structure of UAC**

The current handbook language concerning the UAC states that the UAC contains six faculty members, and that the Provost may appoint additional members as needed. Currently, the Provost has placed the additional members of the faculty on the UAC that were not elected by the faculty body. The question that was raised in this meeting was regarding this structure and whether the faculty handbook language needed to be changed to reflect this structure.

The members of the Senate decided to revisit this issue at the start of the spring semester. This would allow time for the current UAC to get underway, thus providing a more detailed evaluation of the current structure, before making changes to the handbook. At that time, the Senate will solicit feedback from the members of the UAC.

**Symposia**

At the end of the last academic year, the idea emerged to hold a university symposium on grade inflation. This topic was addressed again and discussed at length, including ideas for who should be included and the timeline for scheduling this event.

Through the course of this discussion, the idea of a symposium on strategic planning emerged. The consensus in the senate seemed to be that this was a more pressing concern at this date, and that this might possibly be the topic to pursue this year, keeping the grade inflation topic on for the following year.

**Human Resources**

Last year, the HR committee formed by the Senate presented a proposal for harmonizing the harassment policies contained within the faculty handbook, HR handbook and student handbook, as well as a suggested process for dealing with harassment complaints, to President Lawrence. In the council’s meeting with President Lawrence, they were assured that the policy would be returned to them before the next Faculty Senate meeting with comments and suggestions.
Issues Remaining from Last Year

Last year, the issue of faculty members obtaining appointments and/or reducing their workload to a part-time tenure track position was brought before the Senate. Faculty handbook states that the provost can appoint faculty to part-time tenure track positions. A proposal was sent to CFRR last year, but the members felt it was too complex an issue and should be addressed by the Senate. Tim Hickey will distribute the memo to the members of the Senate for discussion at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

Discussions of Concerns sent to the Senate from Faculty

1) There was a concern addressed to the Senate by several faculty members regarding the need for faculty action on sexual harassment. It was suggested that Bernadette Brooten should be invited to speak with the Senate on this issue. The Senate may also invite representatives from student life.
2) Another concern addressed the growth of administration at Brandeis and whether this growth might be endangering the mission of the university. It was mentioned that the Budget Committee looked at this exact topic and found that Brandeis did not follow this trend. More data will be presented to the Senate soon.
3) There was a discussion of looking at potential further options for retirement planning.
4) There was interest expressed in having more transparency regarding faculty salaries, publishing rates, etc. and having this information published publicly. The Senate discussed this issue at length and decided the better approach to this issue might be to restart the discussion that began a few years ago regarding comparisons of salaries to universities and working toward an equity of pay.
5) Another topic centered on the roles of “Head of Division” that have been created in many of the schools and its status as a non-handbook role. The Senate will evaluate this issue and determine if there needs to be handbook changes based on this development.
6) There was an issue raised within the meeting concerning the faculty policy on maternity/paternity leave. The Senate will form a committee to examine the current policies and how they have been implemented in different departments.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.