BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

FACULTY SENATE

Meeting of the 2013-14 Faculty Senate

This meeting was held on October 3, 2013 from 12:00-2:00 in the Shapiro Student Center Room 313.

Present: Ulka Anjaria, Eric Chasalow, Elif Sisli Ciamarra, Joseph Cunningham, William Flesch, Charles Golden, Matthew Headrick, Thomas Pocahpsky, Ellen Schattschneider, Liuba Shrira, Cindy Thomas, Jeffrey Pottas, Susan Parish, Harleen Singh, Joseph Wardwell,

Absent: Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, Daniel Bergstresser, Carol Osler

Communications

The meeting started with a discussion of ways to improve communication from the Faculty Senate to the Brandeis Faculty and vice versa. Several options were discussed.

1) The Faculty Senate will post the agenda for the next Senate meeting at least a week in advance of the meeting. This will be posted on the Senate Google site as well as emailed to the faculty.

2) The idea of holding one open meeting per year was discussed. The Senate will determine if this is a feasible option, and if so, a meeting date will be chosen and publicized to the faculty.

3) The idea of creating “job descriptions” for Senate members was discussed. The hope here was that this could formalize the relationship that Senators have with the schools in which they have been elected to represent.

4) The idea of having a Faculty Senate blog was discussed, similar to the Provost’s blog. The Council will meet with Ellen de Graffenreid for suggestions in this area.

5) The Senate will create a new email address. Senate_agenda@lists.brandeis.edu This email will allow for any member of the faculty to email the entire Senate with issues or topics for discussion at upcoming Faculty Senate and/or Senate Council meetings.

6) The question was raised regarding reinstating the Senate survey to the Faculty. The consensus was that the same issues rose to the top with every survey, issues such as faculty salaries and the strategic plan, and that it might be necessary to find more direct routes of communication to allow specific concerns to be voiced.

7) Another idea was to create a page on the Faculty Senate website that will list some of the major issues being discussed by the Senate in the
current year. This could link to more detailed discussions of these particular issues.

**Block System**
The issue of the Block System was once again raised. Chasalow recounted the discussion from last year. The Faculty Senate spoke with the registrar’s office last year about the difficulty of not having a set meeting time, especially for faculty meetings. They were provided with data regarding the increased availability for teaching blocks. A decision was made at that point to attempt to move the Faculty meetings to Fridays, but the push back from the faculty resulted in a poll. The results of that poll were overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the Thursday afternoon meeting time. It seems clear that at this time, there will be no major revision of the block schedule. However, the need to secure a meeting time free of class conflicts is an important issue that will need to be addressed.

**Strategic Planning Implementation**
The Provost is forming implementation groups to assist in the implementation of the strategic plan. Once these groups are formed, the Senate will invite the chairs of these groups to a Senate meeting to discuss their role in the implementation process. There were questions raised about the communication of certain initiatives. For example, the allocation of funds for renovation of labs has been described as being distributed university wide, but details on where this money is being utilized are unclear. The Senators agreed this is more an issue of understanding the process whereby these decisions are made rather than needing to know specific numbers.

The Senate would like to invite the Provost to a meeting to discuss the implementation of the plan.

**Sodexo**
The Senate Council and university administrators met with representative from Sodexo to discuss faculty concerns. Sodexo made a promise in negotiations with the union to do at least as well as Aramark for employees, and the contract presented was marginally better than Aramark in terms of pay, etc. Some senior employees at Sodexo have offered to come to campus to meet with faculty and to take questions. Bernadette Brootten, Faith Smith, and Senator Jeffrey Prottas will meet with them and report to the Senate.

**Ombudsman and/or Ethics Committee**
The Senate discussed the current suggestion of creating an Ombudsmen position at Brandeis. One thought on this is that it would allow students who were bureaucratically at an impasse by having a mediator familiar with the system to assist in navigating the structure in place. This discussion is very preliminary and the Senate will continue discussions as this proposal progresses.
In addition, both the TIAAF/Cref announcement and Sodexo announcement has brought forward the potential need for an ethics committee that could review these proposals before they are implemented. The sentiment was expressed that this is one of the roles of the Faculty Senate and this role should be spelled out formally, perhaps in the Faculty Handbook.

**Test Optional Policy and Online Learning**

Chasaslow reminded the Senate of last year’s discussion with Andrew Flagel regarding the test optional policy. The major points that were stressed were that this is a pilot program, that there are a limited amount of students being accepted under this program and that much research has gone into outcomes of this particular type of program at other universities. The Senators agreed that more information on the implementation and evaluation of this pilot program would be beneficial. It was decided that the Senate would create a subcommittee that would serve to gather this information from Admissions and Andrew Flagel and report back to the Senate. Elif Sisli Ciamarra and Ulka Anjaria will serve on this subcommittee.

Thomas Pochapsky reported to the Senate on the issue of Online Learning, as a member of OLAC. The Rabb School has already been at the forefront of this initiative, and as such they have a great amount of knowledge in the areas of best techniques and best practices. OLAC will review courses to be offered as online courses. If these courses already exist, they will not need to be reapproved to be made available in an online format. It is unclear how much technology support will be in place for these courses. It was made clear that the consortium, in which Brandeis is offering two courses this year, is separate from this internal effort.

There have already been many inquiries from faculty about creating online courses, and this will be a faculty-driven initiative. There are questions that will still need to be answered, such as is the desire to teach an online course enough or does this need outside approval, will undergraduates be able to take these courses for credit (and if so how many credits can they take in online courses.)

There will be discussions on campus about this by experts from on and off campus that will provide a venue to ask questions and raise concerns. There was a link to a document that was circulated last year, produced by OLAC, that discussed the role of the committee and research undertaken. The document can be found at [http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/adhoc/olac.pdf](http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/adhoc/olac.pdf)

**Status of the Head of the Rabb School**

There is an immediate need to hire a replacement for Michaele Whelan in the Rabb School. While Whelan held the title of Dean of the Rabb School, this was not an academic appointment. It needs to be determined before a search is undertaken whether this position should be replaced as an Academic Dean with a faculty appointment. The Rabb School has grown into a much larger program than it was in
its inception, and with the discussions of increasing the online course offerings, it looks as if Rabb may have a more integral role within the university.

The Senate will gather more information on the nature of the leadership of the Rabb School and the effect of different titles upon recruitment for the position before providing an opinion.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.