Faculty Senate Meeting Minutes

12: 30 – Call to Order; Approval of Minutes; Senate Council Updates: Operations and HR meetings Governance Update Bylaws Questions

- Motion to approve the minutes.
  - Approved
- Updates from the Chair
  - Special Election for Faculty Senate
    - We had many nominations but very few accepted the nominations. Susan Dibble and Gordon Fellman will join us next semester.
  - We completed the survey on contract equity and the faculty priority survey
  - Some push back on the DEISJ Proposal, it should not be rushed and it should be deliberate
- Working Group for Senate Reform
  - Chair wrote a draft for bylaws, to be shared with the Senate. Discuss on who leads the committee and how it functions. It's a special committee, selected by the president, meant to suggest legislation - they can’t make legislation.
    - Discussion on the bylaws and process around drafting and imposing them. Role of the institution - create value and mitigate harm. Faculty Senate does both in various ways.
    - We don’t have that much of a governance problem, its a PR problem. Gotten permission to work with Communications to increase outreach and messaging but we don’t have funding.
- Statement on providing lunch. Senate should be provided lunch.
- Discussion on the results of the Faculty Priority Survey
- Discussion on the funding for talks.
  - Limited to $750. Under the sign of equity we’ve been told we can apply for $750. Not enough to bring in key speakers beyond the local region. We also have to have the speakers confirmed before we can apply. Previously dedicated funds for talks seems to have been appropriated into other funds or for other uses? Some departments (Neuroscience) receive funding for talks, no equity for the Humanities aside from the Mandel Center talks.
  - Why don’t find out if there was a specific fund for talks for the Humanities and find the language of the fund to see what our rights are.
  - There are a lot of concerns that we want to look into - maybe a mini-task force to see what the options/realities are for the funding situation around talks in the Humanities versus the sciences. We should find out.
  - Whatever we do, we want to include concerts and other events. Formerly had a dedicated fund that the administration has forgotten about.
  - Get the facts. Get a list of the various gifts and funds that have been established. Ask to see the language for those funds.
Some of the funds may be endowments other may have been short term gifts. It has happened in the past that some funds have not been used based on the Dean’s budget. Some money is borrowed from other funds.

Two ways forward. Adhoc Committee or Memo-inquiry. Discussion around which way is preferable and who the inquiry should be directed.

- Last year we received questions around final exams - language about if you were holding a final exam or a presentation during the final exam period. Question around the language. Interpreted as meaning professor can hold a class and present during the exam period but now that seems to be not the case.
  - Chair: Formulate the question and send it to me and I will look into it.

12:40 – Preliminary Results of Retirement Equity Survey

- Presentation of the responses. The written responses show a lot of concern and paranoia.
  - Concern around contracts becoming shorter as contract faculty age. People are left wondering how they can go through the process since they can’t negotiate contracts.
  - Discussion on contract faculty paths and length of service as well as other issues facing contract faculty.
  - There are walls between the contracting department and HR. Suggest a process to clear through these walls. Also stand up against age based discrimination.
  - Different in Heller for example, a lot depends on where you are but there is a process for contract faculty to have the discussion.
  - There is a certain point after a certain amount of service that the institution can step in to help with the step down process.
  - Suggest annual performance reviews. Evaluation systems that include the behavior of the bosses is essential (i.e. Deans and Provosts)

Remind CHAIR about reviewing Deans and Provosts etc.

- Senate council Meeting(s)
  - 25% of faculty are represented by union. Lack of manager knowledge of CBA. Working conditions of unionized faculty falls under the purview of the senate. DISCUSS HAVING A UNION REP ON THE FACULTY - how this would work needs discussion.

- Discussion on Campus Safety
  - In light of the recent stabbing, set up a meeting regarding campus safety and active shooter training. Encouraging more training materials. Presentation at Faculty Meeting.
  - Email circulated about classrooms having locks on them - but this is untrue. Many buildings don’t have locked rooms.
    - Poorly communicated and no training for how to use the locks that were put in.

12:50 – Dignity at Work Update
1:00 – Strategy and Planning Committee, Update and Discussion, Grace Zimmerman

- Who is on the committee? The deans, faculty representation, some elected, and quite a few staff members. Everyone but the Faculty Senate Representative is on a three-year rotation.
- I missed the whole first year due to when I was elected, but the first year seems to have been about budgets. Interesting blend of budgets and strategy.
- About a month ago we finally got down to strategy (before was focused on the what the specific schools do/how they function). Discussions on fixed assets. Grossly underfunded maintenance, refinancing of our debt, I don’t know the overhead for administration.
- The numbers basically show is that other than Rabb (through their contract faculty and not needing/using space) and IBS, which breaks even (post tax), everyone else is losing money.
- Comparing financial contributions versus mission impacts - asked the deans to evaluate their programs. This led to a very spirited conversation, provost and deans were concerned. The net upshot of it all - the president asked that the next meeting be only with the deans and Lisa Lynch. They are supposed to start talking about higher level strategy.
  - Question about Big picture of how Brandeis fits into larger scope of Higher Ed. and how we compare to other universities.
    - We are a small liberal arts institution with strong research.
  - Who decides whether a program is high or low mission impact?
    - That should be answered in the private meeting with the dean, provost, and president.
  - One of the biggest wastes of money in universities is in the administration.
    - Brandeis has been aggressive in controlling the administrative costs.
  - A little confusing, the springboard funding makes it seem like we are fully funded and in good financial shape
    - Board of trustees critical of president’s budgeting which pulled on the endowment. Springboard funding is a separate initiative.
    - Study shows that Humanities pay their own way and help support other areas in universities.
    - Transparency around finances is being encouraged.
  - The numbers, small loss for A&S undergrad. Bigger loss for A&S grad program. Heller also at a loss. It does seem there is a real desire to make sure Brandeis is in a good place moving forward the question is how we get there. President’s office is taking advice from the deans.
    - Conversation around the Tax on these revenues.
    - Cuts to be expected. Institutional Advancement coming to faculty meeting. Getting faculty more involved in fundraising.

1:30 – Counseling and Student Mental Health Update, Martin Pierre and Joy Von Steiger

- Increase in between 8-20% of students coming in every year.
- Last year we had almost 1,000 students asked for therapy. This is a big jump for previous year and this year we already have more.
- The students we are seeing are also more substantially high risk. These students use a significant portion of our resources and we do not want to send them off campus if they need help.
- A discussion of the survey results and comment on the number of students who do not report or coming in for help.
• There are students in your classes that are suffering mental health issues. We would like help in advocating for some changes – we want to create a sense of wellbeing for students, faculty and staff.

• What would it look like if you were a mental health ambassador? Engaging faculty and building a curriculum for faculty to help build out that sense of wellbeing. Hoping to get some faculty to volunteer and consult on how to do this.

• Advocacy to implement mandatory training across campus for faculty and staff. We need to support faculty in order to have sense of wellbeing on campus. There is a lot that faculty are being exposed too and there is a limit to the training the faculty receive - we want the faculty to have clear sense of the boundaries are for students.
  o Discussion on the faculty's role in handling the conversations around the stabbing.
  o Support for the training.
  o First redflag we see are absences, any recommendations for that?
    ▪ After one absence I reach out and check. Remind about expectations and see if there is anything I can do to help. This can lead to some degree of openness and success in starting the conversation.
  o Mandatory mental health notice on syllabi.
  o What about the students that the counselling center can’t serve?
    ▪ On Friday, I will talk more about what our services are. Of our 15 FTEs seeing students each one would responsible for 400 students if everyone comes in. We don’t tell people they can’t be seen but we do offer people group therapy over individual therapy. We are just starting to expand our group therapy and many students are hesitant around group therapy. We want to create a self-care community which requires authenticity, empathy, and vulnerability. Easier for students to do this with faculty than with peers. We usually have a 2-week turnaround time to get students in but we have emergency hours every day.
  o Discussion on what steps can be taken in situations and when it is appropriate to submit Care Reports. In what ways do you want the faculty help and what are the causes of the stress?
    ▪ We are in an oppressive system (white supremacy) that engenders a variety of stressors. The intercompetion is counter intuitive to our goal of a caring, open community.
  o Role of classroom environment (welcoming and caring) is important in preventing additional stressors for students.

TWO ACTIONABLE ITEMS - Have annual training and Raymond Oh is creating a working group. We need to keep these conversations going.

Attendance:

Joel Christensen, Jennifer Cleary, Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Jane Ebert, William Flesch, Danielle Igro, Dmitry Kleinbock, Sue Lansen, Sarah Mead, A.K. Nandakumar, Carol Osler, Rajesh Sampath (via Zoom), Sabine Von Mering, Pu Wang, Grace Zimmerman

Absent: Liuba Shrrira, Laurence Simon, Susan Dibble, Gordon Fellman