Minutes for the Faculty Senate Meeting

12:30 – Call to Order; Approval of Minutes; Discussion of Dignity at Work Proposal Rollout

- We do not have a quorum currently but we can have discussions. We just cannot vote. Some senators are up for re-election and we will advertise for elections soon.
- We will be holding an extra senate meeting on Friday, March 6th.
- The DEISJ proposal committee passed with 77% of the vote. We will take this to the Board of trustees and it should go through.
- A note on the by-laws, we can’t vote because we don’t have quorum but I am putting the by-laws up on the website for public comment. We don’t need a faculty vote, just a vote within the senate.

  Question - Do we have to be present or can we vote online?

  Answer - We currently have no rules, hence the by-laws. We could specifically lay out how we want to vote on specific issues.

- I’m going to post the by-laws and I want comments and thoughts.

  Question: Is the change in governance going to affect the at-large?

  Answer - It won’t

Dignity at Work Update:

- I was under the impression that the DaW had been vetted by legal and HR but it was not. Additionally, the parliamentarian was going to be unavailable. My goal is still to get this to a Faculty Meeting, ideally this year, but I’d rather take it into next year to make sure the proposal is good. What is unique about the DaW proposal is that it engages with legal and HR issues and we have to do the right thing and go through the motions. We have new professionals in key offices who were not there when the committee started and they have to be brought into the DaW proposal.

12:45 – Discussion of Curricular Proposals: WGS Department; AAPI Minor
• Any comments on the AAPI proposal? The issue is that we have to vote on this as it is the creation of a new program. I had discussions with both Lisa and Steve Lock about the handbook and what requires a vote. WE have two things going on that both need consideration - the WGS and the AAPI minor. What was brought up was the downgrading of American Studies from a department to a program which complicates the situation. The senate and the faculty vote on the creation or dissolution of a program. Downgrading or upgrading a program/department does not require a vote as it is an administrative reorganization. The AAPI goes to a vote because it is the creation of a new program, the WGS does not because it is an administrative re-org.

Comment - We are finally at the point that there is conversation around how the university will achieve its goals as the world of higher-ed evolves. This feels a little bit like putting the cart before the horse. I’m not saying either one of these programs are right or wrong but it just seems strange that we are in a period where the university is making hard decisions around resources and at the same time we are allocating resources to these programs.

Comment - AAPI proposal goes back to Ford Hall and the issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Comments - WGS already has the budget of a department and raises quite a bit for itself so that’s not as much of an issue.

Comment - I think there is a handbook issue here around WGS. Administration wouldn’t want to give up its authority but it’s a big concern that the administration can demote or promote without a vote.

Comment - Both of these programs make sense and handbook issues aside we should support these.

Comment - I can anticipate some folks that may not want to see these come into existence. It may not be a given to get AAPI vote to pass.

Question - Has the AAPI minor passed the UCC?

Answer - Yes

• Provost is proposing two changes to the handbook. We will be voting on the language in proposal. The changes are to extend the deadline for faculty who come in mid-year so that they have a bit more time.
• Working Groups Proposals - Any questions, comments, or things to focus on before the Working Group comes in? I had some issues with #2.

Two more senators joined in at 1:11 PM - giving us a quorum.

• Motion to approve minute?
  ○ Approved

  Comment - The fear on our part is that the smaller units might be underrepresented. The change would add or reduce At-Large positions?

  Answer - They want to reduce at-large seats and drop the senate down from 19 to 16.

  Comment - Any historical data on the at-large representing the smaller units better?

  Answer - the data reflects that the representation tends to skew to the unit of whomever the chair is. We looked at several different models and I’m not wholly convinced by the proposal to shrink the senate but it hasn’t always been easy to get people to stand for the senate or have senators fully participate. My preference is not to send this to a vote this year but if they are convincing and we can present this in a clear and concise way then I will support.

• Discussion on Union, adjuncts, and Rabb. Reduction of at-large to a non-voting faculty member is a compromise to try to engage with union members.

1:15 – Discussion of Governance proposals with Marya Levenson and Michael Randall

• Michael – Basically, I was coming to this after being on the faculty governance task force. At the end of that process we still had the issue with representation in the senate. I spent last summer looking up information on the senate and it’s processes and then compared us to the other schools in the colonial group. I wanted to come up with a comparative analysis to see what works, what doesn’t, etc. Then there was the question of representation, which we also compared to other schools. The idea was did we want to go to a purely proportional representative system? Most of the schools we looked at have this proportional system. But it’s hard to determine exactly who belongs exclusively to each school so the committee determined it would be easier to keep our current senate system. We also reviewed the by-laws and determined that the Senate should generate their own by-alws. The other question was how to broaden the base of people represented. The
The proposal is the consensus compromise of the committee, there was no one way and there was a lot of back and forth. This may not be the best way but it works for Brandeis. AS Joel mentioned it’s already hard to get people to run for the senate, even more so with all the new committees. If people in the senate want to make amendments then we can discuss at the faculty meeting.

Comment - It wasn’t consensus, it was majority voted in. I voted against a few of the items. Do you and Marya think that you will present this to the faculty or will the senate present this?

Question - How would it work if the senate were to present this?

Answer - The senate can add an item to the agenda for a faculty meeting or faculty members can petition to add an item.

- Our understanding was that the work of the committee was done and if people wanted to make amendments then the faculty could vote on them.

Question - We have a hard time getting enough faculty to the meetings. With the part-time faculty, many have day jobs and teach only at night. Do we know if these faculty members would even want to serve in the senate?

Discussion - Some would. If we moved in the direction to invite adjuncts and part time, we would have people who would run and serve as senators.

- We are already outliers in that we have more representation than a lot of schools. Many schools are very limited comparatively. Our intent was to make the senate as strong as possible.

Question - what was the rationale for reducing the senate size to 16 rather than increase it to 20?

Answer - Most senates are proportional. Looking at just numbers sciences are very underrepresented here at Brandeis and if we went proportional humanities and fine arts would lose seats. So we went to have 2 seats for each area and then have one seat for the non-represented and one for the emerita. We didn’t want to get too large and lose effectiveness.

Question - There seems to be an assumption that the senate was performing sub-ultimately. Is that the presumption that the senate is ineffective?
Answer - A lot of people do not think that the faculty senate and faculty meetings are effective. I believe the faculty senate is very important but I think it needs to be more effective.

Question - There is disinterest in the democratic structures at Brandeis that affects this.

Answer - Of course there is disinterest but when we were in times of crisis people came out and were interested. I think the fact that the senate has by-laws for the first time that I think are very important.

Question - During the Vietnam War period, all but two faculty opposed the war and the faculty really supported student efforts to oppose the war. What gripped us and brought the faculty together was how important it was - and the Vietnam war is small potatoes compared to climate change. We should be talking about these things in faculty meetings. The faculty meetings should be of substance. Racism, sexism, and so on - mental health, we should have more faculty meetings and spend time on these things. Junior faculty don’t come because they feel that they have nothing to gain so they don’t come. We need to really engage with our community. It should be us talking about these things.

Comment - We will be discussing some of these items in our next senate meeting on March 6th. If the senate doesn’t vote to approve this, then Joel won’t introduce this and will ask the President or provost to.

Discussion - Joel can introduce this and give the senate's position on this - agree/don’t agree/support/don’t fully support.

Discussion - On hard power and soft power, shifting dynamics in university politics/governance and the relationship to representation and faculty meetings.

Question - Shrinking the senate and reducing the meetings seems to be limiting democracy not promoting democracy.

Answer - But having poor attendance is also limiting democracy. Making our meetings more impactful will bring more voices and people together. Currently, we are ineffective.

Discussion around the handbook and number of faculty meetings.
Full Faculty Meeting: Friday, February 28th, 2-3:30, Skyline lounge.

Reminder: Extra meeting to discuss by-laws and governance proposals, Friday March 6th, 2-3:30