Recommendations about changes to the Faculty Handbook from the Faculty Governance Working Group

Please see the Faculty Governance Working Group Report to read rationales about proposed changes.

Membership of the Senate:

Current Language of the Faculty Handbook:

Page 25, 3. Structure a.: The members of the Faculty Senate are elected as follows:
i. Each Division of the College of Arts and Sciences elects two members, each professional school elects two, six are elected at-large, and one member is elected by the emeriti faculty from their ranks.

Recommended change:

Page 25, 3. Structure, a. The members of the Faculty Senate are elected as follows:
i. Each Division of the College of Arts and Sciences elects two members, each professional school elects two, one member is elected by the emeriti faculty from their ranks, one is elected by those faculty who cannot vote in faculty meetings, and two at large.

Chair of the Senate:

Current language of the Faculty Handbook:

Page 25, 3 Structure, iv: …The newly elected and continuing Senators shall meet before the final faculty meeting of the academic year, convened by the chair, or in the chair’s absence by the oldest member, who presides over the new Senate's election of its chair. The emerita/emeritus Senator is not eligible to serve as chair… The chair, or one-fourth of the members, may call for additional meetings. c. The Council of the Faculty Senate consists of the chair of the Faculty Senate, who also chairs the Council, and three other members of the Senate. Members of the Council are elected for one-year terms.

Recommended change:  The new Faculty Senate by-laws now specify but need to be ratified by faculty vote to make changes in the Faculty Handbook:

Page 25, 3. Structure, iv: The election of the Chair occurs at the first Senate meeting of the year. The term of the Chair is one year. The emerita/emeritus Senator is not eligible to serve as chair. A seated Chair may be re-elected but may serve for no more than three consecutive terms followed by a three-year hiatus. The term of a Chair who is vacating a Senate seat will extend through the summer, until the first Faculty Meeting. If a seated Chair is running for re-election, the longest-serving member of the Senate will conduct the discussion and election.
The Chair serves the Faculty and the Faculty Senate and ensures that the Senate carries out all of its duties as outlined *Handbook* following the procedures outlined in this Plan of Governance.

**Number of Faculty Meetings:**

**Current Language of the Faculty Handbook about Faculty Meetings:**

Page 23, 2. Structure b. Regular meetings of the faculty are held at least six times per academic year. Special meetings may be called by the President, Provost, or Faculty Senate, or by petition (written or electronic) to the Faculty Senate of half the quorum.

**Recommended change:**

Page 23, 2. Structure, b. Regular meetings of the faculty are held at least four times per academic year. Special meetings may be called by the President, Provost, or Faculty Senate, or by petition (written or electronic) to the Faculty Senate of half the quorum.

September 15, 2020

Submitted by Michael Randall and Marya Levenson on behalf of the Faculty Governance Working Group which also included Joel Christensen, Deborah Garnick, Matthew Headrick, Nina Kammerer, Susan Lichtman, and Andrew Molinsky.
Rationale of the Faculty Governance Working Group Report about Recommended Changes to the Faculty Handbook

In the spring of 2019 when the faculty voted on recommendations from the Task Force on Faculty Governance, the ninth recommendation (i.e. at-large positions in the Faculty Senate should be eliminated) was unresolved. Therefore, in the fall of 2019, after consulting with Joel Christiansen and the Faculty Senate, President Ron Liebowitz convened a Faculty Governance Working Group which had the charge to consider the following topics:

- Appropriate balance of representation of the various schools in the Senate, including any transition rules associated with any changes
- Establishment of Senate Bylaws
- Making Faculty Meetings a more productive use of faculty time

The Working Group met twice a month during the fall 2019 semester. We consulted scholarly sources on the role and function of university and faculty senates, and made a comparative analysis of Brandeis’ Senate with those in the Colonial Group, of which Brandeis is a part. We also met with the Faculty Senate in the spring semester, 2020.

Deliberations and Recommendations:

A) Senate (FS) By-laws: The working group decided that the task of devising bylaws belonged with the Senate. Several universities and colleges we looked at give the authority to devise and amend bylaws to the Senate subject to subsequent approval by a larger faculty body or the board of trustees. The Senate proceeded to develop by-laws.

B) Faculty Senate membership: 1) Brandeis’ current system allots 2 senators to Heller, to IBS, and to each division in A&S, and 6 at-large senators as well as an ex officio senator for emeriti faculty. Brandeis is unique in this regard because virtually all other colleges and universities in the Colonial Group use a much more proportional system of allotting senators to various academic bodies.

Although a more proportional system might make for a more equitable representation, it creates other problems. First it would mean that schools and divisions such as Fine Arts and Humanities would feel under-represented in relation to other divisions. Second, a purely proportional system would mean an increase in the number of seats in the Senate. Given the new and existing committees that currently need to be staffed on campus, the working group felt that it would be difficult to increase the number of senators even more.

Perhaps the most difficult issue the working group discussed concerned the representation of faculty deemed “ineligible.” Brandeis currently has one of the most inclusive policies regarding who can vote at faculty meetings or run for the Senate. Where most universities accord the right to vote in faculty meetings only to full-time faculty, Brandeis offers this right to all faculty both tenure/tenure track and contract
faculty who have at least a .5 FTE appointment. However, the consensus of the working group was that we needed to do even more to include those faculty who are not eligible to vote at faculty meetings.

Recommendation: We recommend building on the present Brandeis system which reflects the model of the US Senate, rather than the House of Representatives. Given this model, we believe that the at-large representatives should also be limited to two, while adding a new Senate position elected by those faculty who cannot vote in faculty meetings. The members of the Faculty Senate would thus be elected as follows:
- Each Division of the College of Arts and Sciences would continue to elect two members,
- each professional school would continue to elect two members,
- two faculty members would be elected at-large,
- one other representative would be elected by those faculty who cannot currently vote in faculty meetings, and
- one member would continue to be elected by the emeriti faculty from their ranks.

C) Chair of the Faculty Senate: As a result of recommendations from the Faculty Governance Working Group, the Faculty Senate by-laws now contain language about the election and term of the Chair of the Senate. This language needs to be voted upon at two faculty meetings before being included in the Faculty Handbook.

The proposed Faculty Senate by-laws specify:

Chair 1. Election and Term
1. The election of the Chair occurs at the first Senate meeting of the year
2. The term of the Chair is one year. A seated Chair may be re-elected but may serve for no more than three consecutive terms followed by a three-year hiatus.
3. The term of a Chair who is vacating a Senate seat will extend through the summer, until the first Faculty Meeting.
4. If a seated Chair is running for re-election, the longest-serving member of the Senate will conduct the discussion and election.

2. Responsibilities
1. The Chair serves the Faculty and the Faculty Senate and ensures that the Senate carries out all of its duties as outlined in the Handbook following the procedures outlined in this Plan of Governance

D) Faculty Meetings: After noting that many colleges and universities (but not all) have fewer faculty meetings than Brandeis does, the Working Group discussed whether it would make sense to have fewer official faculty meetings. (The Faculty Handbook currently states that there will be six yearly faculty meetings, but we actually have monthly meetings.)
Working Group members noted that although the monthly faculty meetings are often not well attended and sometimes do not have a quorum, these meetings serve an important purpose of bringing faculty together on campus. Frustration was expressed about the fact that junior faculty may be discouraged from attending these meetings. At the same time, concern was expressed about how the new university committees are going to affect faculty governance and the university. We discussed whether it would be good for the Faculty Senate to offer a counter-balance to the separate committees, by being a forum where the university committee reports and recommendations could be deliberated. (During the pandemic, the Faculty Senate has in fact convened several informational meetings.)

Therefore, the Working Group recommends that there be four faculty meetings/year, the schedule to be decided by the Chair of the Faculty Senate and the Provost of the university. We also recommend that the Faculty Senate hold meetings during the months when there is no faculty meeting. The agenda of these faculty and Faculty Senate meetings would be decided by the Chair of the Faculty Senate and Provost.

Submitted by Michael Randall and Marya Levenson on behalf of the Faculty Governance Working Group which consisted of the following faculty members:

Joel Christiansen (Chair of Faculty Senate, ex-officio committee member, Classical Studies), Deb Garnick (Heller), Matthew Headrick (Physics), Nina Kammerer (Heller and SEIU Local 509), Marya Levenson (Education), Susan Lichtman (Fine Arts), Andrew Molinsky (IBS), and Michael Randall (French and Francophone Studies), Marya and Michael co-chaired the Working Group which was staffed by Annie Grover.

September 15, 2020