



Year End Letter to the Faculty from Senate President

May 2019



"You can't claim heaven as your own if you are just going to sit under it."

Khmer proverb, quoted by Loung Ung
Cambodian-born American Human Rights Activist and Author



Dear Colleagues,

I write to you in the midst of a robust election season for the Faculty Senate and the Representatives to the Board of Trustees. More than 50 colleagues have participated in the nomination period resulting in a strong slate from all Divisions and Schools. My hope is that **every** Brandeis Faculty member **votes in this election**, joins us at the May 16 Faculty meeting to **vote on degrees**, and marches at **Commencement** on May 19 to celebrate our students' achievements.

Increased Faculty engagement in shared governance of the University has been a primary goal of the Senate over the past few years and we are well on our way. This year, participation in Faculty decision-making with the Administration and voting on legislation increased significantly. The combination of governance topics, faculty leadership, and the introduction of electronic voting, Zoom meeting capabilities for distance and archiving of faculty meeting video helped increase participation from 10%-20% on average to between 35% and 50+% of the voting eligible faculty (N=444).

While this has been a healthy and strong year for faculty engagement, policy development, administration leadership transitions, system building, community building, and University operations, our work is hardly done.

As **Loung Ung** reminds us, there is no sitting around under the great legacy of Brandeis if we are going to meet the challenges facing higher education today, diligently pursue our value-based mission, sustain, grow and reinvigorate excellence in education, research and governance.

Indeed, shared governance of the University is necessary scaffolding for advancing the President's vision for growth and the framework recommendations stemming from the three task forces underway. <https://www.brandeis.edu/framework/>

The Faculty Governance Task Force, <https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-governance/index.html>, which I co-chaired, sparked much interest among the Faculty. Building on the Senate's Governance Retreat in January 2017, the Task Force, including, **Wendy Cadge**, co-chair, **Sava Berhané**, **Adrienne Krstansky**, **Michael Randall**, **Robert Reitano**, **Gina Turrigiano**, **Pu Wang**, **Bernie Yack** and **Consultant Susan Resneck Pierce**, took two years to systematically engage Faculty across the University in conversations about how to improve the governance structures and processes in order to maximize shared information and shared influence in decision-making.



In the higher education governance literature this question is often raised: What's more important to effective governance: relationships, trust and leadership? **Or** structures and formal processes? My answer is both. The process employed by the Task Force and the Senate was as important as the product. The new structure is promising and the growing trust and collaborative relationship between and among Faculty and Senior Administrative leadership is even more so given the theme of "broken trust" when we started this work.

Of course there is more to do. The hanging chad of the governance work is related to the Senate itself. The President has agreed to establish a work group to study not only our Senate, but those of "peer" institutions as well. My hope is that the work group will study the form, function, composition and best practices of Senates at peer institutions and bring comprehensive recommendations to the Faculty in January 2020. Furthermore, the work group will be charged to examine the Faculty Meeting time, place, form and function.

The Faculty Senate here, and across universities, is the most common vehicle for systematic faculty involvement in governance. At Brandeis, the Senate is **the only fully elected, central faculty governance body**. Not tethered to any one committee charter, the Senate addresses a broad array of policy and operational issues of concern to the Faculty. Attached to this letter, you will find an extensive record of matters addressed by your Senate. Thematically, our Senate has been pro-active in the following seven areas: Academic Affairs; Academic Infrastructure; Campus Culture; Campus Human Resources; Faculty Legislation/Handbook; Faculty Personnel; and Senate Business.

While these broad themes are familiar to many Senates in higher education, there is vast variation in Senate operations. For example: some have a constitution and bylaws, others loosely defined language in a handbook; there are those whose representation formula is built on House, Senate or hybrid models; some hold closed meetings, others are open to all; the President or Provost co-chairs and appoints members or the President/Provost is not involved at all beyond consultation; terms can be 1, 2 or 3 years for membership and for the Chair; topics are strictly limited to the academy or broadly encompassing anything that affects the quality of life for faculty, students, and the quality of education and research of the university.

Looking at our Handbook, one finds more than 40 references to the Senate scattered throughout the document and brief paragraphs on the structure offering broad guidance for Faculty leadership. Part of the work group's recommendations will be to better define, consolidate and streamline the Handbook language regarding the Senate roles and responsibilities. The Senate webpage has historical documents and a brief literature review related to Faculty governance that may be helpful as the work group launches. <https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/pdfs/FacultyGovernanceRetreatKeyPointsAnnotatedBibliographyCoreArticles.pdf>

There is much for the new Senate and work group to consider and it is an exciting time to evolve the practice of the Brandeis Senate to match the new structure, processes and challenges to the University. I urge everyone to be generous with their time and attention to this important undertaking next fall.

* * *

Thank you to the Dignity at Work Task Force, <https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/DignityAtWorkTaskForce.html>, including co-chairs, **Carol Osler and Larry Simon**, and members **Susan Holcombe, Sarah Mead, Liuba Shrira, Marion Smiley, Chad Williams**. After two years of research, study, and extensive consultation with the faculty and administrative leadership, this Task Force will be presenting Handbook legislation to the Faculty in Fall 2019.

The Senate subcommittee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is also preparing legislation for consideration in the fall. Special thanks to **Bernadette Brooten, Raj Sampath and Joel Christensen**.

Senate Council Members **Larry Simon, Kate Moran and Joel Christensen**, went above and beyond regular duty, participating in bi-weekly meetings with the Provost, chairing Faculty meetings and more. Thank you to **Raj Sampath** for serving as first Senate liaison to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and to **Joel Christensen** for serving as first Senate liaison to the Brandeis Alumni Association.

CLOSING WORDS

As I sign off as Senator and Senate President, I offer my deepest thanks and appreciation to the interdepartmental staff that has supported me/us in meetings – formal and informal – large and small.

We are fortunate to work with so many capable and highly skilled staff colleagues: **Kristen Wasielewski** and **Rawda Aljawhary**, in the Office of the Provost; **Shannon Kearns**, in Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies with the Task Force on Faculty Governance; **Judith Jaffe, Mitchell Albury, & Chris Holsten**, from the Office of Planning and Institutional Research; **Eli Jacobson, Dan Jennings, & Matthew Burton**, from Media & Technology Services; **Carrie Simmons and Louis Hung**, in Digital Communications and Information Technology Services, **Aimee Slater**, Chair, & **Amy AbuShanab**, Vice Chair, Brandeis University Staff Advisory Committee (BUSAC); and student services, student life and health leadership: **Joy von Steiger, Jamele Adams, Erika Smith, Tim Touchette, Jennifer Walker**; and **Orla O'Brien**, support to the Board of Trustees, and thanks to the initiative of library archivists, key Senate documents will be preserved in the University Library for future reference.

Thank you to **President Liebowitz, Provost Lynch, Stew Uretsky, Sam Solomon, Mark Brimhall-Vargas, Allyson Livingstonstone, Elena Lewis, Donald Greenstein, Anthony Sciaraffa, Sonia Jurado, Kim Godsoe, Steven Locke, Zamira Korff, Jim LaCreta, Larry Lewellen, Matthew Sheey, Bill Walker, Mark Hewitt, Jeff Ward, Bill O'Reilly and Nick Warren**, for open doors and open minds; to Chair of the Board, **Meyer Koplrow** and fellow Trustees for welcoming the Senate and elected Representatives to the table; to **Deans David Weil, Dorothy Hodgson, Katy Graddy, Karen Muncaster, Eric Chasalow**; to parliamentarians **Marya Levenson, Ted Johnson, Mari Fitzduff & Tren Dolbear**; to my partners and colleagues at the Heller School who sustained and grew new initiatives while supporting my Senate adventure: **Dean David Weil, Associate Deans Cindy Thomas, Darren Zinner, Maria Madison, Ron Etlinger** and MPP and MBA Program Directors, **Mike Doonan, and Carole Carlson**; the Senior Fellows and Scientists at our Center for Youth and Communities: **Alan Melchior, Della Hughes, Cathy Burack, Susan Lanspery**, and my

incredible Executive Assistant who served as Senate Administrator for the last four years, **Lanni Isenberg**.

Most of all, I extend my gratitude and appreciation to the **35 elected, pro-active, Senators** that worked together to advance shared governance at Brandeis, 2015-2019. The portrait of this incredible group of colleagues is attached.

Finally, as the Indigo Girls lyric goes, “the hardest to learn is the least complicated”; my advice to the new faculty leadership is not complicated, but it can be challenging at times:

- Stick to the mission
- Stick together
- Be patient
- And expect what President Liebowitz called for in his inaugural address, “a new era of transparency, decisiveness, and accountability in governance.”

Best wishes,

Susan P. Curnan, Senate President, 2015-2019
The Heller School for Social Policy & Management

(And Lanni Isenberg
Senate Administrator, 2015-2019)

Brandeis University Faculty Senate Members 2015-2019

Creative Arts



Adrienne Krstansky,
2015-Present*²



Sarah Mead,
2016-Present*²



Joseph Wardwell,
2012-16

Humanities



Joel Christensen,
2017-Present*



Faith Smith,
2016-Present



Eli Hirsch,
2013-17



Ulka Anjaria,
2013-16

Science



Dmitry Kleinbock,
2018-Present



Liuba Shrira,
2018-Present



Paul Miller,
2015-18



John Wardle,
2015-18*

Social Science



Danielle Igra,
2018-Present



Raphael Schoenle,
2018-Present



Joseph Cunningham,
2014-18



Anita Hannig,
2017-18



Kathryn Graddy,
2015-Fall 2017

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management



Joseph Assan,
2017-Present



Laurence Simon,
2014-Present*²



Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson,
2016-17



Jeffrey Prottas,
2013-16*

International Business School



Daniel Bergstresser,
2013-Present²



Jane Ebert,
2015-Present²



Jens Hilscher,
2013-Fall 2015

Emerita



Susan Holcombe,
2017-Present²

At-Large



Bernadette Brooten,
2018-Present



Jennifer Cleary,
2017-Present



Elizabeth Ferry,
2015-18



Susan Parish,
2013-17²



Susan P. Curnan (Chair),
2015-Present*²



Kate Moran,
2016-Present*



Thomas Pochapsky (former Chair),
2011-17²*



William Flesch,
2013-16



Carol Osler,
2017-Present



Rajesh Sampath,
2016-Present



Sarita Bhalotra,
2014-15

All terms begin in fall and conclude in spring unless otherwise indicated.

Key: **Green** *: Senate Council, Present

Purple *: Senate Council, Past

Purple² = Second Term

ATTACHMENT to Year End Letter from Senate President, May 2019

Policy and Operational Issues Addressed by Senate

The Faculty Senate here, and across universities, is the most common vehicle for systematic faculty involvement in governance. At Brandeis, the Senate is **the only fully elected, central faculty governance body**. Not tethered to any one committee charter, the Senate addresses a broad array of policy and operational issues of concern to the Faculty. Borrowing a framework from the higher education governance literature¹, our Senate has been proactive in the following seven areas:

Organizing Theme	Brandeis Senate Agenda Items & Consultations
Academic Affairs	GenEd revisions; Reaccreditation; University calendar; Grading Policy; Majors, Minors; Programs and Centers;
Academic Infrastructure	Institutional Research RE: Faculty data and elections; Faculty meeting agendas & facilitation; CTL advisory; Student counseling and support services; Senate Chair on Board of Trustees, ex officio;
Campus Culture	DEI policy & trainings; Campus climate; Non-discrimination & Title IX policies; Ford Hall follow up; Policy on consensual relationships; Dignity at Work (anti-bullying) Task Force; Free Expression Task Force; Campus sustainability; Climate change & divestment strategy;
Campus Human Resources	Evaluation and compensation review of President; Searches and appointments of Senior Administration (President’s cabinet; Provost; Deans; DEI, Institutional Advancement, Communications, HR, Athletics, Finance and Administration); Retirement pathways for tenured, and soon multi-year contract Faculty; Conflict resolution cases involving Faculty; Faculty benefits: Increase tuition remission; subsidies for housing and child care;
Faculty Legislation/Handbook	Substantial revisions to structure and processes in Faculty Handbook via Faculty Governance Task Force; New Tenure Promotion Committee for Arts & Sciences; Dean’s review and appointment process; emeritus seat on Senate; and more modification 2015-19;
Faculty Personnel	Dispute resolution cases; Promotion guidelines & committee structure; Contract & workload equity; Unionization; Rewarding service in performance reviews and promotions to honor and incentivize faculty service;
Senate Business	Elections; Committee appointments; Advocated for work group to study Senates, best practices across peer institutions and as indicated in governance literature; Established Senator liaisons for Alumni Association; DEI Office; Library; Committee on Strategy & Planning; Annual survey of Faculty priorities; Senate President letters to the community; “On-boarding” job description package for Senate Chair, Council and Administrator; Teach-Ins; Governance Research; Website & meeting management.

¹ Miller, M. T., Smith, E. A., and D. P. Nadler. “Debate and Discourse: The Role of the Faculty Senate on the Modern American Campus.” *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*. 16(3): 22-29. Google. Web. 3 May 2019.