

October 26, 2017

Faculty Governance Task Force Report

Dear Colleagues,

We write to update you on the work of the Faculty Governance Task Force as promised in the Welcome Letter of August 24, 2017. We have been meeting at least twice a month since late August.

The first phase of our work has consisted of collecting information about and reviewing three areas: 1) how faculty make decisions in those areas in which they have primary responsibility and 2) how decisions are made in those areas in which they collaborate with senior administrators and sometimes the Board of Trustees, and 3) how-decision-making processes vary based on the type of decision at Brandeis. We are assisted by Susan Resneck Pierce, President Emerita of the University of Puget Sound and author of *Governance Reconsidered: How Boards, Presidents, Administrators and Faculty Can Help Their Colleges Thrive*.

We had four data sources for phase one of our work. We have reviewed the Faculty Handbook, a study of faculty governance at eight peer institutions prepared by Susan Pierce, and a survey of Brandeis faculty completed at the end of last semester. All of these materials are available on the website of the Task Force.¹ Additionally, in September, we organized individual meetings and focus groups on faculty governance with more than 80 faculty and staff members in attendance. Susan Pierce visited campus, attended and interviewed interested faculty and staff members, and provided us with her detailed observations. Her observations have served as a fourth piece of data for the Task Force.

We are still very much in the midst of this work and are not yet ready to draw conclusions or offer specific recommendations. However, we did collect our thoughts on areas over which we believe faculty have or should have primary responsibility. In this regard, we agreed these areas include:

- 1) faculty hiring
- 2) the evaluation of faculty
- 3) the curriculum
- 4) academic standards and policy
- 5) the quality of teaching and learning
- 6) graduate admissions
- 7) scholarships and awards
- 8) research priorities

The next phase of our work is to systematically assess how faculty are involved with these issues now. We are asking whether these are the most effective and efficient ways going forward. We are also thinking about the areas in which faculty want or, in our view, should have input but which are

¹ Link to: <https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/FacultyGovernanceTaskForce.html>

in the domain of other groups, primarily senior administrators. These areas include undergraduate admissions, student advising, community living, and support, conflict resolution, budget, searches for administrative positions, and other topics.

To accomplish phase two of our work, we will participate in a zero-based committee exercise. This will allow us to: 1) ask which university committees are essential and, if essential, what their charges are, 2) ask which committees might be retired because they are no longer pertinent and/or effective, and 3) we are also considering whether new or combined committees would enable more productive involvement. Our guiding principle is that we understand that faculty time is precious and believe it is important to avoid asking faculty to be involved in service that is not consequential, thereby giving faculty time to be engaged in service that does matter. We anticipate drafting charges for what we determine to be essential committees and clarifying how these committees relate to the senior administration and the Board of Trustees to serve the institution as a whole.

We will be in touch again in December to get feedback on our preliminary recommendations and to engage in a vigorous and spirited conversation with our faculty and administrative colleagues about them. We expect these recommendations to include revisions to standing committees, possible changes to the structure and function of the Faculty Senate, and some other changes that will bring the Faculty Handbook up to date with current affairs at Brandeis and in higher education more generally.

Please do be in touch with any of us now if you have any questions, suggestions or concerns.

With thanks,

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