

Staff Advisory Committee Meeting
October 2, 2007
11:30am - 1:30pm – Leung Gallery, Faunce House

Present: Ivone Aubin, Gillian Bell, Chad Cavanaugh, Ruth Crane (Chair), Christine DeCesare, Pam DeSimone, Heather Dominey, Tracy Frisone, Melanie Gaudet, Roberta Gordon, Walter Hunter, Angel Hilliard, Lori Jargo, Bettye Johnson, Karen Leonard (Co-Chair), Maritza Marti, Chris O'Neil, Kate Richardson, Lisa Sheehan, Lea Snyder, Steve Tompkins, Courtney Wuethrich, Cynthia Yearwood

Absent: Jeff Fitton, Stephanie Terrizzi

Guests: Marisa Quinn and President Ruth Simmons

Ruth Crane introduced herself and each SAC member introduced themselves to President Simmons and Marisa Quinn.

Ruth Crane and Karen Leonard presented the highlights, accomplishments and challenges over this past year for the Staff Advisory Committee. They reviewed SAC's redesigned website, new programs, and community service efforts and also gave a brief overview of the new University Staff Ambassador Program that SAC was instrumental in launching for Brown faculty and staff.

President Ruth Simmons asked how ambassadors will be chosen. Bert replied that ambassadors will be chosen by divisional committees

The President also asked Ruth Crane and SAC members to look ahead and give her an idea of some upcoming events that SAC is working on. Ruth Crane mentioned ideas that were generated at the recent SAC-sponsored Ice Cream Social including a Blizzard of '78 party, a forum with the president, a family skating party, bring your child to work day, an organ recital in Sayles Hall and performances by Brown's various a capella groups.

Marisa Quinn asked if SAC could get a broader sense of what people are looking for in terms of events; Ruth Crane mentioned doing a possible campus-wide staff survey from the SAC homepage.

Marisa also asked if SAC was planning on co-sponsoring Student/Worker Appreciation again? Ruth Crane indicated that SAC will repeat all events as long as funding is available.

Ruth showed the group the new SAC video; President Simmons suggested that it be shown online. She also indicated that she was amazed at amount of work that SAC members accomplished throughout the year. She congratulated the group on being a visible representative of what staff contribute to the University.

Marisa asked SAC members if there are ways for the administration to engage/involve staff University wide. Ruth Crane endorsed the open meetings (like the Brown Community Council) that include everyone – especially when there is a guest speaker involved.

Marisa asked SAC members whether people throughout the university have a working knowledge of everything that's going on on campus regarding such issues as the campaign, various construction projects, etc. Bert mentioned that people like receiving emails from the President such as the emails sent following Corporation Meetings. The

President's office could consider videotaping key meetings (similar to the Boldy Brown website). It was suggested that SAC be used more frequently to help get the word out.

President Simmons suggested that SAC talk to members of the cabinet/executive committee about facilitating information flow. Marisa listed an alphabet soup of governance committees to that get things done, but sponsoring events like football games are also still worthwhile.

President Simmons addressed the group. She began by saying that the academic year is off to a good start. Her challenge is to have conversations about the nature of community and the need for mutual respect addressed soon. She spoke with Chancellor Tom Tisch about the contentious environment that currently exists in higher education. She is watching a Dartmouth group of alums who are trying to take over the board at Dartmouth; there are free speech issues at Columbia. The President stressed the importance of shaping the community, particularly by strengthening various modes of communication and inclusion. She asked group how Brown can improve its governance structure.

She recapped her most important points:

- Brown should engage in a skillful, robust discussion about what is taking place; she urged SAC members to share information about what each is doing and how; it's reassuring and has a positive impact on community. People are raising the right questions.
- Transparency in governance: Brown has created a number of groups that reveal what is taking place regarding key decisions. The Brown Community Council (BCC) is an excellent example. The BCC is a forum for difficult subjects because of the mix of participation. The President's rule of thumb is: As soon as it happens it must be reported. Transparency in governance and the timely reporting of issues are 2 important measures that preserve trust within community.
- The President's job is to think about all areas at Brown and what is in best interest of the University; everyone else has a mandate to think about this in their own areas.

Questions and Comments

Q1: Melanie commented that the Staff Participation Subcommittee was happy to receive an email from the chair of Responsible Investing Committee looking to select a staff member to serve. Staff members are now thought of as part of the whole community when committees are considering and selecting members. The President commented that Brown is naturally saying staff members should be a part of its committees. She mentioned that, with respect to Darfur, it took a lot of time and involved the entire community to think about the best approach – and approach it in a way that responds to our mission. The President holds people off when they want her to make a unilateral decision without consulting the community.

Q2: Gillian commented that having faculty, staff, and students attend events together helps to unite community. President Simmons finds that Brown is an easier place in terms of getting faculty, in particular, to accept that notion. Faculty are very willing to do this but Brown doesn't have large meeting spaces on campus and this is a great liability. She

mentioned that Smith had a huge hall so it was easy to accommodate all constituencies. Brown is now moving from things that it must do to moving towards things that it would like to do. President Simmons mentioned that a person with mobility impairments can move around Wriston Quad and get into the Ratty now. Its an exciting time because now we can see what would be nice to add to Brown University.

Q3: Bert mentioned that she took a lot away from both the Rebuilding Together and Bears Program (Brown Early Arrival Response System). She had the opportunity to interact with students and their parents and even got invited to breakfast. President Simmons responded by asking what it is about working at Brown that makes it more than a job. She described a chance encounter with a student who went to Iraq :she later invited him to the Salmon Rushdee dinner. He visited President Simmons recently and shared his summer research experience at Berkeley. This is what our work means at Brown and remarked that SAC can help organize those kinds of interactions. The President loved the Thanksgiving idea of inviting students to dinner.

Q4: Kate asked if the President's Office had thought about putting a blog together to reach out to the entire community. The President said that no one has suggested this, but she has so many writing assignments, it may not be possible. She feels this would have value only if she could write it. Marisa suggested sending a blogger along with someone on an international trip. The President mentioned that she feels uncomfortable with the notion that she needs to do everything - there are an array of individual leaders who are best positioned to handle things in their own areas, and she doesn't believe in the model of one leader to address the University.

Q5:Ruth Crane suggested a forum that might feature a panel discussion that President Simmons could sit on. The President reinforced her model of the wide swath of leadership at Brown; she has faith in her senior staff and does not like to undermine their authority. She would like to see Walter, Beppie and Bert out front conducting forums. If an event is issue oriented, it should reflect the persons responsible for those issues. She also mentioned that she will happily attend any event as long as there is enough lead time and encouraged SAC members to find fun more informal things for her to do.

Q6: Melanie endorsed the idea of the panel of senior leaders at Brown addressing staff; she suggested that, because President Simmons has achieved mythic rock star status, the staff would love to have her in attendance as well. The President said she is trying not to feed into that notion by suggesting that what she does is more important than others. The President would consider a series of small groups to discuss a normal range of issues that are relevant and important. She would even do a party and mentioned that Smith did a big dance. She prefers normal interaction rather than grandstanding and her governance structure acknowledges and reflects that. She wants the Brown community to understand the intent of her direction/leadership and that she will do both good and challenging things for the University.

Q7: Ruth Crane asked if her open office hours were extended to staff as well as students. The President responded by saying that her mission is to be an educator, not an employer. That is why she does more things with and for students. Staff communicate with her all the time; she would never deny a staff member the opportunity to meet with her, as long as its an issue she deems important. The President will work with SAC on events, as long as there is enough notice - i.e., her office is booking spring events at this point.

The President also mentioned that she wants a copy of the SAC video - she would like to send it to corporation members

Group Feedback

SAC members discussed and brainstormed a variety of events that the President might attend including an all-staff special ball, a 10th Anniversary of SAC party, an end of the year SAC dance for staff, or a smaller venue like a Blizzard of '78 party. SAC will give the President of menu of ideas/events from which she can choose.

Bert passed out and reviewed the book, *The Iceberg is Melting* – she would like to spend an hour at the next SAC meeting discussing this book about change. She mentioned that it is a quick read that should take approximately 45 mins.

Subcommittee Reports

There were no subcommittee reports.

Advisor's Report

There was no advisor's report.

The meeting adjourned at 1:35pm.