December 7, 2011

Ruth J. Simmons
President
Brown University
Campus Box 1860

Dear President Simmons:

I am writing to inform you of all the good work the Staff Advisory Council (SAC) has accomplished during the last two years. In 2010, SAC identified four goals and related Sub-Committees in the areas of Outreach and Communication, Staff Participation, Events and Morale, and the Staff Advisory Consortium. We created a motto for SAC, with “We’re Here to Be There for Staff at Brown,” and made great strides in being more present by offering opportunities to learn about the gems of the University, and expanding our charge of reaching out to the community. In 2011, we continued this work and are pleased to report highlights of our progress in all of these areas.

Outreach and Communication:

SAC has expanded its reach to the Brown community and has made many efforts to “brand” the Council in order to be more recognizable and accessible for staff. We also have been a conduit to staff by gauging the attitudes of the community during these difficult years of change. With the use of technology, our efforts have produced some really great results, including:

- Creating a new logo and new look. SAC has been instrumental in getting the logo printed on post-it notes, padfolios, umbrellas, Pedestrian Safety snap-bands, stationery, and note cards;
- Creating a new, sleek website using BrownSites, to provide more up-to-date information, including our member profiles, calendar of events, highlights of events and service, and resources for staff members;
- Morning Mails and List Servs to advertise events, posting flyers and announcements about governance opportunities at Brown;
- Facebook page to provide timely updates on our activities;
- Addressing staff concerns through our SAC@Brown.edu email and our mail Box 1955; we followed up on issues (e.g., compensation, benefits, parking, resources, communication, construction, pedestrian safety) through direct replies to staff, as well as inviting speakers to SAC meetings for information;
- Progress reports on February 5, 2010, and August 10, 2010, to you and Hanna;
- The SAC “Rhode Show” presentations at our “Bring a Friend” meeting, which was attended by over 60 staff members and featured Beppie Huidekoper as our special guest;
- Presentations to Administrative Leadership and Departmental Managers meetings;
- Gauging the pulse of staff with our Winter Break Polls (in 2009 over 225 staff members participated, and in 2010 we collected anecdotes to share with you; overall, staff have expressed appreciation for the break), and Conversation Project (in 2010 we received 39 replies, and in 2011 we received 141 replies thus far; overall, staff are satisfied with issues of communication, morale, and change management);
- Expanding upon SAC as “Staff and Community” in the next year.
Staff Participation:

This subcommittee continues to appoint staff members to university committees and boards. In the past year we have appointed 9 staff members to the University Resources Council, Public Safety Oversight Committee, Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Policies, Campus Planning Advisory Board, Information Technology Advisory Board, and the Diversity Advisory Board.

We have been active with our Service Initiatives, offering staff the opportunity to serve Rhode Islanders-in-need throughout the year. We realized that 30 Days of Service and Quarterly Initiatives of years past were successful, but did not allow for continued involvement when opportunities presented themselves. Staff have generously donated their time to organizations within the greater Providence areas, such as:

- Habitat for Humanity - Volunteers built three houses in 2010.
- Amos House - Volunteers prepared and served lunch to the community four times in 2011.
- Magaziner Farm - Volunteers performed weeding and garden cleanup duties once in 2010 and once in 2011. Farm produce benefits the food banks in Rhode Island.
- Soujourner House - Volunteers assisted with a yard clean-up and painting in 2010.
- Providence Animal Rescue League - Volunteers set-up event, greeted, and handed out water to PetWalk participants and their four-legged friends in 2011.
- Girls on the Run - An innovative after-school program that combines training for a 5K event with interactive lessons that encourage positive emotional, social, mental, and physical development in pre-teen girls. Volunteers cheered runners during two separate running events in June and October 2011.
- Hasbro Children’s Hospital Walk-a-thon - Volunteers have assisted with registration for this event for 3 years (2009-2011).
- Hasbro Elmo’s Red Tie Ball - Volunteers assisted with donor gift deliveries in March 2011.
- The United Way, The Fund for Community Progress - Our community organizations through Brown Gives Green initiative. In May 2011, we invited the two organizations to present to the Council and learn what they and their member organizations do. SAC continues to develop relationships with these organizations.
- Ronald McDonald House - We have participated in an ongoing Can Tab Drive; the recycled tab funds are utilized to support the programs at the House.
- Riverzedge - In May 2011, the organization presented to the Council and facilitated a tour of the agency to continue our collaboration.

We sponsored several drives:

- Books for Dorcas Place and Books are Wings (350 books for two drives in 2010),
- Segue Charter School, Building Rhode Island One Book at a Time (200 books and counting for this drive in 2011),
- Food for the Rhode Island Community Food Bank (1,975 pounds for two drives in 2010, and 1,373 pounds for one drive in 2011), and,
- Cell phones for the Women’s Center of Rhode Island (41 phones in 2010 and 143 in 2011).

We have also developed ongoing relationships with other agencies, addressing a variety of needs that are on their “wish lists” including:

- The Charlesgate Senior Living Center, providing IT training, resource guides, and nutritional counseling, and,
- The John Hope Settlement House, volunteering to paint their hallways.
Events and Morale:

This subcommittee continues to investigate and create opportunities for staff to learn, engage, and collaborate. We have hosted several successful *Best of Brown* events, many of which have been wait-listed! Locales around campus have included:

- Ladd Observatory, Plant Environmental Center, Brown/NASA Planetary Data Center
- Tours of John Hay Library, Haffenreffer Museum, Sharpe Refectory, Ann Marie Brown Memorial to view Garabaldi’s Panorama, Brown’s Athletic Complex, and a SAC sponsored tour and informational session at Brown University Bookstore.
- A Summer Stroll around campus featuring Brown’s Bear statues. The tour ended at the Faculty Club, where refreshments were served and each participant received a plant donated by the Brown’s greenhouse.
- A Fall Stroll around campus featuring the architectural gems on campus and led by undergraduates tour guides in-training from Department of American Studies. The tour ended at the new Granoff Center for the Arts, where refreshments were served and each participant received a mini pumpkin.

We’ve also responded to emergent events, including organizing a benefit concert for Haiti which showcased the musical talent of the Brown community, participating in the campus wide effort for RI flood relief, and assisting with a fundraiser and appointing a SAC member to the Committee on Japan Earthquake Relief.

We’ve continued to enhance staff morale during such events as Staff Development Day, “Have A Treat On Us/Pedestrian Safety” ice cream socials, UCS Staff Appreciation Day, and Brown Bag lunches. We are collaborating with athletics, theater, and music to “cross-promote” their events and encourage staff participation. We also have ongoing relationships with graphics, facilities, dining services, computer and information services, the libraries, the plant environmental center, and the department of public safety to utilize their services and provide resource information to staff.

Consortium:

We’ve reached out to peer institutions to see who has councils similar to SAC, share best practices, and begin to form a consortium. We have successfully contacted several schools, including Rhode Island School of Design, Rhode Island College, Providence College, Bryant University, University of Rhode Island, Dartmouth, Columbia, and Berkeley. We’ve organized video conferencing for the consortium, and will invite the groups to attend meetings with us on campus, including an annual conference; “SACapalooza!”

Over the next year, we’ll re-evaluate our mission and “brand” of SAC to increase our focus on staff, continuing to expand on our goals. We’ll have further discussions in our “Conversation Project,” continue to offer opportunities for staff to participate in volunteer activities, collaborate with departmental events, and connect further with our peer institutions. If you have time in your schedule, we would love for you to join us in these experiences or events.

President Simmons, we appreciated the opportunity to share this information with you. We welcome continued collaboration with you and senior administration to increase morale and lay the groundwork for happy and productive staff. We wish you an enjoyable rest of the winter and look forward to meeting with you in April to celebrate ten years of service and memories of SAC with you.

On behalf of the Staff Advisory Council,

Heather Hower, Chair
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cc: Hannalore Rodriguez-Farrar
Karen Davis
Wendy McRae-Owoeye