Attendance: Liisa Laine, co-chair; Grace Young, co-chair; Sarah Aneyci; Sarah Brown; Barbara Chernow; Dawn Cummings; Laura Dobler; Daisy Ferreira; Tara Greenwood; Catherine Hanni; Marguerite Joutz; Annemarie Kennedy; Michael Leitao; Derek Lisi; Kristine Newson; Jessica Pontarelli; Felicia Raton; Barbara Simoneau; Beth Travers; Yi Vizard

Absent: Geeta Chougule; Joel Hernandez; Abigail Peterson; Laura Pleasants; Jennifer Quiroz; Maria Sokolova; Ray Windsor

I. Acceptance of Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2019

Liisa asked to accept the minutes of March 12 with a correction in the last line, which should change from “The next SAC meeting is scheduled for March 26 at noon at South Street Landing, Room 498” to “The next SAC meeting is scheduled for March 26 at noon in the Stephen Robert ‘62 Campus Center, Petteruti Lounge.”

All voted in favor of accepting the minutes as revised.

II. Vote

This agenda item has been tabled until the April 9 SAC meeting.

III. Staff Concerns

Reporting manager discrimination: Felicia heard from a staff member who is leaving Brown after 11 years of employment because she went through the proper channels (a manager and a director and Human Resources) about reporting a discriminatory incident and it was not resolved. Her exit interview restated the issues as well. Barbara Chernow volunteered to follow up. Vice President for Human Resources Amanda Bailey will speak
with SAC at the end of April and likely won’t be able to address individual circumstances but can respond to general inquiries about this kind of situation.

**Best practices request regarding the recent admissions scandal:** Some staff are wondering how to handle requests from Advancement; is there guidance or protocol on requests from Advancement and parents of students for meetings and tours, or is granting these requests up to the discretion of departments or chairs? If a student contacts an office directly they are welcome to come in and meet about that area of research; the issue is with parents of students or when the requests come from Advancement. Marguerite will follow up on the issue and report back to SAC.

**Veterans Day:** A Brown employee of 25 years who is a veteran complained that Brown doesn’t celebrate Veteran’s Day (Brown moved the Veterans Day holiday to the day after Thanksgiving), and ceremonies to honor veterans aren’t necessarily at convenient times for employees who have to work that day, such as the 11:30 a.m. laying of the wreath. How can Brown better support veterans and better reach out to veterans to notify them and their supervisors of veteran activities? Barbara Chernow and Grace can coordinate to look into this.

Liisa added that the head of OMAS (the Office of Military Affiliated Students) has been invited to speak to SAC in the next few months, and SAC will bring up these topics again at that meeting. There is support for students who are veterans but not for staff. Marguerite suggested that invitations to veterans could be more intentional to ensure they are included and available to attend recognition events.

**IV. Event/Volunteer Opportunity Updates**

The following updates were provided:

- The faculty/staff bingo event is tomorrow, and several SAC members volunteered to come early to help with setup. SAC members were encouraged to try and attend.
- We’re all set for the April 12 First-Generation Staff Networking event.
- The Faculty in Focus event on April 3 still has 34 seats available, so please spread the word to colleagues. A Today@Brown announcement is running tomorrow.
- The United Way children’s book collection runs through May 21 and Grace has boxes to distribute to those who volunteered to host a collection site.

**V. Presentation by University Ombudsperson Ruthy Kohorn Rosenberg, J.D.**

As noted in the postcards she distributed to SAC members, Ruthy has over 25 years experience in conflict resolution and helps people gain the skills and strategies to be able to engage in conflict constructively.
The Ombuds Office is openly advertised to everyone except undergraduates, although some still find their way to Ruthy. She helps people navigate any issue related to life at Brown and keeps all information confidential. People aren’t officially putting Brown on notice by coming to see her; meetings are “off the record.” She’s not a mandated reporter, so people can come to learn their options and resources for taking next steps; only those at risk of serious harm are reported. She doesn’t have legal privilege and doesn’t keep records, shredding all notes. She advocates for Brown to follow its policies and procedures fairly, but does so behind the scenes rather than a part of formal processes. She facilitates conversations and gathers information to help people make decisions or relays information to the appropriate people who need to be aware. She is independent from other offices on campus, reporting to the president about trend data (but not individual cases) to identify what’s working and what needs attention. The University is working to treat people with dignity and respect. The last year, students/staff/faculty top concerns have been evaluative relationships - concerns about supervisors and advisors or people who report to them or who they’re advising. Faculty tend to have concerns about colleagues and staff tend to have concerns about professional development to ensure fair evaluations; faculty and students come about authorship of papers; financial operational academic research misconduct issues are raised that she helps people address while protecting themselves from retaliation. Hypothetical situation: she helped someone with a need for medical leave communicate to the supervisor how the work would still get done, managing expectations and getting through the situation. The capacity is 250 per academic year for an ombudsperson and she has already seen over 200 people this year, with the average around 185 per year; she sees about ¼ of people more than once.

Ruthy invited SAC members to ask her anything about the ombudsperson office.

**Q:** Is the trend data only for the president? **A:** The website has annual reports for the past six years; she’s shared with SAC before; the president shares it with other people.

**Q:** Would she be a good starting person for the situation described earlier under Staff Concerns? **A:** Yes, that happens often. If an issue isn’t being easily resolved with HR, she’ll help inform staff of other options and the pros or cons of each. If there’s a pattern, she will obtain permission to raise the issue with a higher-up.

**Q:** It’s not always transparent what’s happening behind the scenes in HR; can Ruthy help navigate that? **A:** Some personnel matters can’t be shared, but in many cases there could be a way to assure a person that something is happening without sharing details. Privacy issues do complicate things, so if employees aren’t receiving updates, it may be because no one is allowed to provide updates.
Q: How do you advertise? A: Brochures, website, and lots of going out and talking to groups like SAC to make people aware. Ruthy also holds workshops, some through HR and some on her own.

Q: How was this position created? Ruthy had been a divorce mediator; her law school education focused on rights, while mediation was about interest, in moving forward rather than assigning blame. She got a certificate in nonprofit management before becoming Chief of Staff for Brown’s Division of Biology and Medicine while maintaining a relationship with the mediation center. MIT was seeking a full-time mediator for 6,000 graduates and 4,000 undergraduates, and she asked if she could also offer education to the whole institute, both faculty and staff. While still working at MIT, which has had two ombudsperson positions for 45 years., Ruthy emailed Executive Vice President for Planning and Policy Russell Carey and Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration Becky Huidekoper and suggested an ombudsperson for Brown, which the university had never had. In 2006, Brown faculty also asked for an ombudsperson. Brown had a part-time one until 2008. Then in 2012 Brown faculty again requested an ombudsperson, and President Ruth Simmons hired Ruthy to serve faculty and post-docs. Her position has expanded to serve almost the entire Brown community.

The role is a risk management tool. People don’t always feel comfortable coming forward about something. Speaking to Ruthy feels more private and keeps the issue more in the client’s control, yet raises it to make the University aware of issues.

Q: Can you tell us about the events that you do? A: Ruthy did two things for SAC last year: an hour-long lunchtime Conflict Management 101 and Facilitation. She'll do 1-hour to 3-hour workshops on conflict to teach a core introduction because it’s helpful to practice and think about skills and concepts. In August she puts on a 40-hour workshops in blocks (16-hour in one’s own conflicts, 12-hour on managing other people’s conflict, and those who complete the full 40 hours get a certificate in mediation). Ruthy also did a bystander workshop for Public Health faculty and staff (active bystander = helping people think through what they could do; interrupting behavior rather than fixing it; talk about what you can do, what might get in the way, how to be safe).

Q: Could the bystander workshop be offered to faculty/staff as a Wellness @ Brown workshop? A: Ruthy will consider this.

Q: What do the trends show? A: The trend data shows a decrease in illegal harassment. People are aware of where to go when that happens and understand the resources. There is also more awareness of bullying among colleagues and managers. She would coach the supervisors in managing the bully, and people are taking responsibility to address the issue. People are getting better at speaking up if they feel mistreated, and Brown doesn’t want
people to be or feel mistreated, so she is helping people address any gray issues that aren’t clearly written in policy.

Q: Do you work with centers such as LGBT? A: LGBT is undergraduate-based, so Ruthy talks to them but doesn’t interact much. The centers are great resources when people approach her about knowing they’re doing something wrong and needing help identifying and addressing the issue.

SAC thanked Ruthy for her time and for educating SAC about the ombudsperson position, and the meeting concluded.

The next SAC meeting is scheduled for April 9 in Pembroke Hall, Room 305.