MINUTES

Attendance: Liisa Laine, co-chair; Grace Young, co-chair; Sarah Brown; Geeta Chougule; Dawn Cummings; Laura Dobler; Kristine Dodd; Daisy Ferreira; Tara Greenwood; Catherine Hanni; Marguerite Joutz; Annemarie Kennedy; Michael Leitao; Abigail Peterson; Laura Pleasants; Jessica Pontarelli; Felicia Raton; Barbara Simoneau; Maria Sokolova; Beth Travers; Ray Windsor; Yi Vizard

Absent: Sarah Aneyci; Joel Hernandez (parental leave); Derek Lisi; Jennifer Quiroz

1. Acceptance of meeting minutes: August 13, 2019

There were no objections to the minutes and they were accepted by all present members.

2. Reminder About SAC Meeting Attendance

According to the by-laws, any SAC member can be removed from the Council for two absences from SAC meetings without notification. Please send a brief note to the co-chairs if you need to miss a meeting, rather than just refusing the Google calendar invitation. Please try and attend all sub-committee meetings as well.

3. Guest speaker: Cass Cliatt, VP for Communications

Vice President for Communications Cass Cliatt (whose last name rhymes with "quiet") reports directly to President Paxson and stewards the public face of Brown, advising the community on communications and strategies. The Office of University Communications (OUC) oversees news, web and communications, social media, and a full range of marketing and production services, print services, and the Brown Alumni Magazine. Before coming to Brown, Cass had a career in journalism and in government.

Vice President Cliatt considers her job being a steward of relationships
with our community, using communications as a vehicle to build and support those relationships, and a steward for the University’s reputation, specifically how various audiences view Brown and its values. What is the narrative we want to share with our community and demonstration of our commitment to our values? To know that Brown is living up to its promises, she needs to have knowledge on how the university is doing through everyone’s eyes.

The Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee was interested in hearing more about Cass and her personal journey. She informed SAC that she was a military brat (her mother and father both served in the Air Force) and has a background in journalism by training, inspired by a desire to tell stories that deserve to be told. Her early career as an investigative and a city reporter allowed her to learn about communities, people, and problems that differed from her own. She left journalism when the newspaper she worked for went against her own beliefs about sharing stories, first caving apologetically to a readership that rebelled against the paper’s “making war look bad” and then by the paper’s increased focus on “infotainment” (focusing on stories about celebrities’ personal lives instead of news) that Cass felt was a loss of journalistic integrity.

Cass then worked in politics for voting reform, telling stories worth telling about voting and voting rights. A colleague who knew she was interested in working at the Department of Education suggested working at an education institution and showed her a job ad at her undergraduate alma mater, Princeton. Applying to that job, Cass secured a communications job for seven years as Princeton University’s spokesperson. The greatest challenge for Cass was being considered personally responsible for incidents; people are especially interested in hearing about smart kids behaving badly at Ivy League institutions, and small incidents received large coverage and scrutiny.

Cass left Princeton to handle communications at a small liberal arts college to have a better work/life balance and start a family, and she told stories of the community there. However, President Paxson had worked with Cass at Princeton when Dr. Paxson was a dean there. No one had ever held a VP of Communications position at Brown, but the President knew there needed to be one to tell Brown’s stories - so she called Cass and invited her to work at Brown. Cass had brought a new model for communications to Princeton in light of declining print communications and rising social media, alerting people they were changing the way they told their story, and that earned her recognition as a woman who “gets things done.” In addition, she was attracted by President Paxson’s “Building on Distinction” strategic plan. She believes in the President’s vision for Brown, for the
education of people who will be leaders in their communities around the world, with a central piece of diversity and inclusion to help inform how we can do our work to help make a difference while dealing with complex societal problems. Cass believes that the success of an institution is its staff; she knows staff is the backbone and infrastructure of Brown. She concluded her personal stories with a statement on how she values the opportunity to be here.

Question: When you’re making cultural changes, how do you make promises that haven’t yet come to fruition?

Answer: Cass came up with the title “The Brown Promise” to show that the University is putting itself forward to make a commitment. Brown pledges to be diverse and inclusive, which also opens us to scrutiny. It takes vulnerability and also strength to say we’ll make an investment and show (in Brown’s case, through DIAP) how we will do it. 98.7% of her current staff are new to Brown and new to operations since she got here. She wanted OUC to become an authority and guide on communications by proving value - one relationship and one office and one group at a time to show the commitment. Yale came out with a DIAP plan after Brown did but doesn’t demand that every unit be a part of achieving goals. In contrast, Brown is proving a value and commitment by showing dedication and putting resources behind it. The president launched a campaign to make those resources a reality. Brown also needs to keep reporting on DIAP’s progress to the community and keep showing personal accountability.

Question: What would you like to see staff do to push forward the agenda you’re working on?

Answer: Staff is already advancing the agenda but isn’t necessarily recognized and celebrated enough. SAC members are part of the vision, too. We’re all doing part of the work but don’t see the bigger picture of how it’s contributing to the overall vision. Cass suggested that maybe the SAC newsletter can shift focus to show that work, how it relates to a commitment Brown has made. When celebrating staff, we could tie it into the priority and show that we’re part of a greater vision and goal. That constant connection will make a difference; we should tie ourselves into that vision and work.

Mike Leitao, who handles the newsletter, said he would love more help to achieve that, particularly regarding the content. Could OUC assist SAC? It should be part of SAC’s Outreach & Communications (O&C) subcommittee as well. Kristine Dodd noted she would like more integration of departmental organizations, events, highlights, etc. that shows how each
silo contributes to the greater staff community. It would be great to thank the community for contributing. She would love to reach out to people but doesn’t know the code of conduct or etiquette for quasi-representing the President while also representing SAC. SAC’s mission is to advise the President on staff issues, create community among staff, and bring communications and issues to upper management.

Marguerite Joutz suggested a debrief with the O&C to review what SAC has done over the past year or so and what opportunities could have been - where are we, what do we do repeatedly, and what’s the value of what we do that we can continue doing or what we’re not doing that we should? We could really maximize the reach of the SAC newsletter.

Cass had a question for SAC: **As you view the communications coming out of Brown, is there anything you’d like us to do differently? Do you feel you’re knowledgeable about Brown?**

**Answer:** No, most staff seem to express that they’re NOT knowledgeable about Brown. It’s difficult for people to know what’s happening even with Today@Brown, where it’s easy to miss some areas or items.

Cass said staff and clinical faculty read Today@Brown the least and her team doesn’t know how to increase those numbers. It’s a Catch 22; staff don’t think there will be items in Today@Brown for them, and so other staff don’t put as many announcements into the daily email geared toward them. Catherine Hanni suggested hiding a prize, such as staff having to click through Today@Brown to be entered in a contest to win something. Ray Windsor noted that people are more vocal when they have something negative to say than when they have something positive, as a cultural matter, so staff aren’t routinely celebrated. The redesign of Today@Brown was praised for being easier to read and digest than the prior version.

Mike Leitao also noted that SAC has talked about professional development and how to let managers know that it’s important for staff. Cass said she has advocated for a change in budgets, which don’t currently include professional development as a category. She and Finance and Administration have discussed this; it’s an expectation to provide professional development opportunities but there isn’t currently a way to make managers be accountable for budgeting it. Barbara Chernow has been involved in conversations about how to structure the budgets differently to create a visual cue that would demonstrate that Brown values professional development and send that message to managers.

Cass had an anecdote about a Brown employee who hadn’t kept up with her industry in the 14 years she worked at Brown and considered herself “unemployable” if she left the University for not having had any
opportunities to advance her skills while at Brown. Mike noted that conversations have shown that managers at Brown don’t want to lose people. Cass responded that her staff has had turnover, but that’s because people have had amazing opportunities elsewhere where they were eligible to work because of the professional development opportunities they received while at Brown. It’s a loss to Brown to lose good employees, but it reflects well on us for arming them for success and for bringing in fresh perspectives with new skill sets whenever there has been employee turnover.

**Question: How is your work/life balance at Brown?**

**Answer:** It’s good; the secret is being fulfilled in your work so that you enjoy your work. It’s about finding connection points to help Brown feel like home.

In terms of diversity and inclusion, Cass added that Brown has a distinctive, 2-part DIAP with our workplace climate issues and action steps. Part 1 looks at hiring climates and how employees interact with each other. But there is also Part 2, a responsibility to tell Brown’s story about our commitment. Brown looked at demographics and can look at the number of women, the number of historically underrepresented groups, etc. and see how the news coverage tracks to each population. Brown learned it was really good at telling stories with representations of diversity within the story - but it wasn’t great at telling stories ABOUT women or people of color. They need to tell more stories that celebrate diversity and inclusion. Brown didn’t have an opportunity to tell stories visually with a limited website technology, so the redesign features more visual storytelling.

Brown is investing in the resources needed to tell the full Brown story, including stories about staff.

**4. Upcoming Events Updates: SAC Recruitment Lunch, Holiday Party, Veterans Networking**

Daisy Ferreira reported several upcoming SAC events:

1. Fall clothing drive in October (Daisy will receive more info in mid-September) for Brown’s first-generation, low-income and
undocumented students; there will be 4-5 location bins around campus in coordination with the Office of Sustainability. Liisa will obtain the flyer regarding this drive so that we have the language for consistency when promoting it. Daisy asked, should we have a bin at SAC events or at people’s offices? It was noted that there are already some coat bins around campus. SAC can advertise and promote the existing locations but could also have one at SAC events (parent networking, veterans, recruitment lunch, and staff trivia).

2. November - SAC will finally have an opportunity to collect for a “cat and dog pantry,” where people in need can go the pantry and collect what they need for their pets. Daisy provided some examples of needed items.

Liisa Laine wondered if there was something else that SAC could be facilitating to meet student needs, and Laura Dobler offered to ask. Others noted that it would also help to consider how to provide something for staff members in need - but SAC needs to be mindful of how that is presented to the community (avoiding the message that Brown isn’t paying its staff enough to afford winter coats). Laura said interest is being gauged on creating a first-generation staff group similar to the first-generation student group; maybe discussions in those groups can help SAC understand what needs could be met (probably more professional development, as discussed at today’s meeting, than food or clothes). Ray Windsor added that he has a passion for promoting a “staff university,” where people taking classes in particular areas could earn the equivalent of a college degree.

5. Staff Concerns & Updates

As the meeting ran 20 minutes late from other discussions, this was tabled to the next SAC meeting.

6. Update on Bear Market

Yi Vizard and Sarah met with the Chaplain’s Office. The market is designed for students and they have a relationship with the Financial Aid Office. The market is on the 4th floor of Page-Robinson and can stock 250 pounds of food at a time. It’s temporary for this year and next year and the Chaplain’s Office hopes SAC can contribute as they stock the shelf every week or two. Yi will send a spreadsheet for SAC members to sign up to plan for amounts of food. It costs $55 for a food delivery so one department or office could support one month at a time. Non-perishable food (canned food, peanut butter, etc.) is wanted and the office has a recommendation list. Tara Greenwood suggested
asking different departments to help. We will put the Bear Market in the SAC newsletter, specify what months are remaining, and ask people to step up. Yi cautioned that they would need to check with the building managers to make sure that it’s OK to hold food drives around campus. Liisa Laine noted that there will be a coat/winter clothing drive in the fall, which Daisy Ferreira will talk about at the next meeting. Mike Leitao asked if departments can collect money for the food instead of the food; Yi Vizard was asked to ask the chaplain’s office if that would be helpful. It sounds as if it is more difficult for them to purchase the food and transport it back to campus. They don’t monitor who goes in the pantry, so anyone can drop off food and anyone can take food.

Liisa isn’t sure how sensitive this issue is with the University about labeling it as a “food pantry.” It was called a “food exchange” in Today@Brown. Sarah Brown added there was a recent campaign about food insecurity and agreed we should be careful how to word any reference. Yi will ask the chaplains at an upcoming meeting and SAC will need to be sure how to refer to the pantry to the public face. Once the wording is checked, this should be in the September SAC newsletter.

**Upcoming Events and Reminders:**

- Taco Tuesday/staff welcome back event w/ SAO | Sept. 17 | The Underground
- Veteran's Networking event w/OMAS | Sept. 25 | 12-1 p.m. | Watson Institute Room 353
- SAC Recruitment Lunch | October 15 | 12-1:30 p.m. | Chancellor's Dining Room - bring 1 colleague with you
- Staff trivia w/ SAO | Oct. 30 (TBD) | 12-2 p.m. | Kasper Multipurpose Room
- Faculty in Focus event | TBD
- Holiday party | December 5 | 4-6 p.m. | Sayles Auditorium

*SAC will meet next on Tuesday, September 10 at 12 p.m. at South Street Landing, Room 498.*