Ira Jackson, New Brandeis Senior Vice President

by Jack Curley and Phil Radoff

Ira Jackson, well known in the Boston area as a highly successful executive, has joined Brandeis as a senior vice president on President Ron Liebowitz’s executive team, heading the Office of Communications with an expanded mandate that includes external relations. He takes over from Judy Glasser, who served as interim head of communications for two-and-a-half years following the 2014 departure of Ellen de Graffenreid (profiled in the April 2013 issue.)

Ira’s impressive breadth of top-level experience — in state government (as Governor Michael Dukakis’s commissioner of revenue), local government (as Mayor Kevin White’s chief of staff), academia (in high-level positions at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, the Drucker School of Management, the Arizona State University Foundation, and UMass Boston), and business (at BankBoston) — makes him unusually qualified to engage with the world beyond the Brandeis campus.

Of his many accomplishments, Ira says he is particularly proud of his work at the Kennedy School, where he served as a founder, senior associate dean, and director of its Center for Business and Government during the Ford and Reagan administrations when there was little enthusiasm for government in academia. Over the course of his tenure, the school rose to prominence in its education of global leaders in matters of public policy and governance, its endowment grew to $250 million, and its faculty expanded to 75 members. Ira says he was “spoiled by working with very smart people” at the Kennedy School, including future Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling.

Ira also speaks highly of UMass Boston (UMB), where he had a lengthy tenure (most recently as vice provost), calling it an institution that’s key to Boston’s future. He points out that today’s UMB, whose faculty has more Harvard Ph.D.s than any university in the region other than Harvard itself, carries the financial burden of repairing or replacing an aging, poorly built infrastructure as it faces pressing needs related to educating its majority-minority student body. Ira believes that, given the right leadership, UMB will succeed in the long term, despite its widely publicized funding issues. He says he “left part of his heart at UMB” and it would be “a cardinal offense” if the school doesn’t receive the support it needs to thrive.

Among Ira’s acquaintances is Bernard Osher, whose foundation provides (Continued on page 6)
Lily in Bloom

by Sue Wurster

Smiling, Lily Gardner answers her office telephone and engages a potential new BOLLI member in conversation about the program. She responds to each of the caller’s questions with warmth and good humor as well as detail. It is clear that we are in good hands with Lily as our new program coordinator.

Lily, a recent graduate of Saint Michael’s College in Vermont, comes to BOLLI with work experience that she describes as “sort of all over the place until now.” She’s gone from babysitting her cousins to a retail stint at Marshall’s. She’s also served as a credit union teller and a teacher’s assistant at an early childhood learning center. She says, though, that the job she most loved was her position at Saint Michael’s IT Helpdesk, which she held all through college. “It’s probably the job I learned the most from up until now,” she grins. “I learned on the job, but the most important thing I gained was confidence in my technology skills.”

A family friend sent her BOLLI’s job description, and she was immediately interested. “I was attracted to the community aspect of BOLLI and the intellectual and creative environment.” She is intrigued by the opportunity the BOLLI position provides to enroll in the Brandeis graduate digital marketing program, which she may do in the spring, but she’s also considering the graduate program in the English Department. Either way, she will study part-time so she can continue her work with us.

An English major in college, Lily minored in gender studies and art history. She grew up in Lynn, an only child whose mother was formerly a high school English teacher and who is now an administrator in the Lynn Public School System. “She’s the main reason I love reading and writing so much, and she’s encouraged creativity my whole life.” Lily likes to write in her free time, mostly poetry and short stories. She has had poems published in Saint Michael’s literary and art journal, The Onion River Review, for which she was also an editor during all of her four years at the school. Some of her favorite writers include Nabokov, Tolstoy, Neruda, and Zadie Smith.

“I’ve always been in love with visual art,” Lily says, so she’s spent a lot of time visiting museums since her return to the Boston area. In addition, she’s been taking clay classes at a studio in Lynn for the past few years and has recently joined the Brandeis Pottery Club as an instructor. “I’m still working on mastering my ideal mug,” she smiles.

We are all looking forward to getting to know Lily and wish our new program coordinator all the best in this new endeavor!
Creative Retirement Conference

by Marjorie Roemer

It was an adventure! On September 9, almost 200 people made the trek up to Hassenfeld Conference Center on the Brandeis campus to participate in Adventures in Creative Retirement: Health, Housing and Community, a conference convened by BOLLI. Sponsors who exhibited included a range of different organizations: retirement communities, hospitals, an investment firm, and some well-known enterprises of interest to seniors like Uber, Road Scholar, Back Bay Chorale, and more -- a mélange of activities relevant to senior citizens. Especially noteworthy was the presence of the Encore Boston Network, an advocate for changing the narrative of what is possible in older age and a vigorous advocate for volunteerism. And of course BOLLI itself, whose leaders sought throughout the conference to share the joys of lifelong learning after fulltime work. The program, too, was wide-ranging. Ruth Finkelstein of the Robert N. Butler Aging Center at Columbia started us off with an energetic and dynamic talk, Growing Older in the American City: What We Have Now, And What We Ought To Fight Like Hell To Get By 2030. That was the framing thought for the day--what is and what might be. The morning’s breakout sessions covered Aging in the Right Place, Working in Retirement, Volunteer Careers, and Healthy Aging in Practice.

Then it was time for lunch and various Expos and Demos, including one by Avi Bernstein, Casting Anchor: BOLLI On Your Journey Through Life.

The afternoon was launched by Susannah Fox, former Chief Technology Officer for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Her title was The Innovative Retirement Residence of the Future: The Wired World, Robotics, and Home Health Care Delivery. Following that keynote were four other breakouts: Options in Healthy Aging Home Design, Making Intergeneration Community Primary in Your Next Chapter, The Internet Advantage in the “Boomer” Home of the Future, and Back to School Again: The Case for Deep Humanistic Learning In Your Later Years, the last a BOLLI offering, featuring Margie Arons-Barron, Avi Bernstein, Robert Lebowitz, Emily Ostrower, and Maria Smith.

One of the breakout sessions that generated a great deal of interest concerned housing options. Amy Schectman of the Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly (JCHE) offered an impassioned commitment to “aging in community” instead of “aging in place.”

The JCHE is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization (Continued on page 7)

Above, speakers Ruth Finkelstein and Susannah Fox (photos online). Right, BOLLI participants Margie Arons-Barron, Emily Ostrower and Bob Lebowitz (photo by Sue Wurster)
Welcome Back Brunch, Fall 2017

From left to right: Steve Goldfinger and Ken Davidson deep in discussion while Betty Brudnick and Cindy Wentz enjoy a BOLLI moment. (Photos by Martha Berardino and Sue Wurster)

Members enjoying making new connections and renewing longstanding ones. Left, Bruce Parks and Vicki Gold. Right, Liz Lieberman, Judy Diamond, and Maria Smith. (Photos by Sue Wurster)

Sherry Glass and Fran Tidor connect with Marcia Ullium Jackson and the whole group engages in good food and conversation. (Photos by Sue Wurster and Martha Berardino)
Long-time friends Ruth Antonoff and Sandy Traiger reconnect as Eileen Mitchell gets to know Jerry and Dana Wald. (Photos by Harris Traiger and Sue Wurster)

Eddie Goldberg and Alan Nemeth and Chris McMorrow and Joan Garness look forward to the beginning of fall term classes. (Photos by Martha Berardino and Sue Wurster)

Natalie Taub (middle) meets BOLLI newcomers Leeueen Laing and Leslie Gildersleeve. Lily Gardner and Megan Curtis make sure that all goes smoothly! (Photos by Sue Wurster)
Ira Jackson, Continued

partial funding for BOLLI and similar adult-learning programs across the United States. During his time at UMB, which hosts its own OLLI, Ira became a strong supporter of lifelong learning.

A Baby Boomer himself, Ira believes Boomers are largely a “generation of the curious,” who in many cases could not engage fully in learning during their college years because of the political turmoil on campuses. He expects BOLLI and similar institutions to flourish over the coming years. Ira will speak at a Lunch and Learn session at BOLLI on March 6, discussing developments in the city of Boston, a subject he knows very well.

Ira reports he is a “big fan” of the Rabb School of Continuing Studies (of which BOLLI is part) and its vice president, Karen Muncaster. He says Rabb’s diverse offerings, including its engagement of seniors, have much to offer the world and should be celebrated as a valuable part of Brandeis’s unique “ecosystem of innovation and excellence.”

Ira hopes to bring a fresh pair of eyes to his work at Brandeis, noting, as Yogi Berra used to say, “You can see a lot of things by just looking.” He is eager to tell the Brandeis story with more energy than it’s been told in the past through initiatives such as additional outreach to the media. The university has “a complex message to communicate to the world,” he says, “with many disparate elements that need to be synthesized and integrated as part of future communications.” He believes everyone at the university needs to “shine our light more,” creating more awareness of the many contributions Brandeisians make to society. As the university’s head of external relations, he says, he intends to build bridges to prominent centers of influence around the world.

In this emphasis on external relations, Ira is clearly following the lead of President Liebowitz, who told the Banner (as reported in the March 2017 issue) that he wants to see expanded ties between Brandeis and important local, state, national, and international institutions, as well as greater recognition of the university’s successes and excellence. With his broad range of experience and interests, Ira seems like the right person to accomplish these objectives.

(Ira welcomes comments and inquiries from the Brandeis community at irajackson@brandeis.edu.)

Cartoon Fun from Sam Ansell

“Flutterby will get you nowhere!”
that has traditionally offered affordable housing for low-income seniors. However, part of their present strategic plan is to broaden their mission by reaching out to middle-class seniors as well. Instead of having separate communities for the elderly, the JCHE focuses on facilities with ground floors dedicated to community-centered uses, thus drawing non-residents into their buildings. Inspired by the Humanitas Communities of Rotterdam, these apartment complexes become village centers integrated into the larger community.

For many of us the conference was just the right stimulus at just the right time. What is the next step for us? Should we relocate? Where? What are our housing and lifestyle options? What new architectural designs and new communal possibilities are in the works? How do we learn of the range of offerings, especially given the pace of change in this area?

Several of us are interested in more conversations to follow up on the conference. As we ponder the “graying” of the population, these concerns become more urgent. What communities have you looked at? What considerations do you use to evaluate them?

BOLLI Director Bernstein recently remarked that “the Adventures Conference was a wake-up call for me that we need more conversation between lifelong learning institutes and the positive aging movement. In the months ahead, we will be looking at additional ways to connect with folks from Encore Boston Network, the educational travel sector, and the world of senior housing to share information and explore ways to collaborate.” Already there are plans in the works to employ a Lunch and Learn opportunity to share and process these ideas, perhaps an on-going special interest group as well. In other words, we have only just begun.

“Lunch Together” - October 10

Tuesday's Second Period classes stayed for lunch for further discussion and socializing. Left, members of Suzanne Art's class share memories of their early encounters with works of art and the impressions those pieces left. Above, Carl Lazarus's class on energy refuels as they continue to discuss topics brought up in class. (Photos by Sue Wurster)
Upcoming Campus Events
Compiled by Ellen Moskowitz

SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER

HOME WITHIN. Saturday, November 4, 8:00 p.m. (preconcert talk, 7 p.m.)
The acclaimed Syrian audio-visual performance on the transformative power of art returns with clarinet virtuoso Kinan Azmeh and visual artist Kevork Mourad. Tickets $15 for Brandeis community and seniors. Purchase through Brandeis Tickets at the Shapiro Campus Center, 781-736-3400.

BRANDEIS CHAMBER SINGERS. Robert Duff, Conductor. Sunday, November 5, 3:00 p.m. Repertoire of the choir includes both a cappella and accompanied music from Western and Non-Western vocal traditions. Free and open to the public.

BRANDEIS WIND ENSEMBLE. Tom Souza, Director. Sunday, November 12, 3:00 p.m. This outstanding student ensemble performs music ranging from classical to Renaissance to contemporary jazz. Free and open to the public.

CASTLE OF OUR SKINS: Black in Europe and Beyond. Saturday, November 18, 8:00 p.m. (preconcert talk, 7 p.m.) Music and stories of black composers and musicians who have had a professional connection with the European world of classical music. Tickets $15 for Brandeis community and seniors. Purchase through Brandeis Tickets at the Shapiro Campus Center, 781-736-3400.

THE ROSE ART MUSEUM


BODY TALK. September 8, 2017 - January 28, 2018. The Gerald S. and Sandra Fineberg Gallery. This exhibition addresses issues of beauty, attraction, and the dark side of eroticism while tracing connections between early and recently acquired objects in the Rose collection. These objects, which span nearly a century, include Surrealist-inspired collages and paintings as well as contemporary sculpture, video, and multimedia works.

JOE BRADLEY. October 15, 2017 - January 28, 2018. The Lois Foster Gallery. This exhibition is the first large-scale museum exhibition in North America devoted to the work of celebrated New York-based artist Joe Bradley, who is widely known for his powerful abstract paintings and spontaneous drawings.