

Standard Two: Planning and Evaluation

Overview

Brandeis University's goals are to sustain academic excellence, attract and retain outstanding students and faculty, and maintain fiscal discipline, thereby fulfilling its mission as a liberal arts college within a research university. As an organization committed to reflection, analysis, and evaluation, Brandeis has engaged over the past decade and a half (1989-2005) in a series of planning activities, designed principally to strengthen the institution by reducing its tangible asset structural deficit.³ Early plans met with only limited success because essential information and management tools were not available, and planning was not integrated across all areas.

Since 1996, the University has established new financial, physical, human resource and faculty policies, procedures and information systems, new analytic capacities, and an effective, coordinated leadership team. With these new tools available, Brandeis has made significant progress in a number of areas. Specifically, it has reduced the endowment draw to a sustainable level of 5 percent, addressed the most pressing deferred maintenance needs, increased faculty salaries, paid debt service when due, enhanced financial reserves, increased undergraduate applications, enriched the undergraduate experience, created innovative graduate programs, expanded its research capacity and completed the \$470 million capital campaign ahead of schedule.

An *Integrated Plan* was completed in FY2005.⁴ The plan, which is integrated in that it addresses the University as a whole, outlines institutional goals for the 2006-2012 planning period. Of equal importance is the plan's focus on three elements: future program needs; a realistic projection of resources that will potentially be available to support these needs; and, in recognition of needs that exceed projected future resources, choices that must be made to establish realistic goals. This planning approach has contributed to a renewed sense of confidence that the University can and will shape its future effectively, strategically, and proactively. The *Integrated Plan* also identifies benchmarks to enable assessment of institutional progress during the FY2006-2012 planning period.

³ The structural deficit includes reducing deferred maintenance, increasing the pace of facility renewal, achieving a sustainable endowment draw of 5 percent or less, timely repayment of debt principal, and implementation of the Arts and Sciences faculty salary plan.

⁴ See Appendix 2A.

Description

Called a “university in a hurry,” Brandeis, in its desire to attain excellence, has always had aspirations that exceed its resources.⁵ Three primary planning initiatives over the past 16 years sought to address both long-term and short-term planning needs and institutional priorities: President Handler’s 1990 *Blueprint for Renewal*, President Thier’s 1992 *Reestablishing Academic and Economic Equilibrium*, and President Reinharz’s 1996 *Brandeis 2000*. All focused on Brandeis’s under-capitalization and the need to reduce the significant resource structural deficit. All sought to address the University’s greatest strength: a rigorous undergraduate liberal arts experience within the context of a research university, as well as the University’s greatest challenge: adequate resources for this richly rewarding, but admittedly expensive approach to education.

In an effort to achieve a balance between revenues and expenditures, these planning exercises examined elements such as the size of the student body; the nature of the undergraduate experience; the tuition discount and student retention rates; the number, quality, and size of graduate programs; faculty size and salaries; the research enterprise; and tuition-generating master’s and certificate programs. All were similar in that they focused on reducing expenses by decreasing the number of faculty and some doctoral programs, and on increasing revenues by emphasizing current-use, budget-relieving gifts, increasing the size of the undergraduate student body and the number of tuition-generating master’s programs. Strengthening the undergraduate core, reducing the undergraduate discount rate, and improving undergraduate retention were also common goals. In all cases, the planning efforts were mission-driven, but did not include full participation by senior administrators; all involved faculty, trustees, administrators, and students; all had limited success.

In 1996 in response to the University’s self-study, the NEASC re-accreditation specified five overarching areas that the University needed to address: 1) faculty and staff salaries; 2) deferred maintenance, especially student housing; 3) an information technology infrastructure to meet research and curricular needs; 4) a financial aid policy appropriate to institutional resources; and 5) enhanced financial resources for the University. Indeed, these factors had driven the earlier planning initiatives. While it was apparent to the visiting team and to the administration that progress had been made, it was also clear that much more needed to be done to ensure the health of the University.

At that time, the University also recognized that, despite the academic talents of Brandeis students and their active engagement with faculty, retention rates and student satisfaction indicators were troubling for an institution of Brandeis’s caliber. In 1999, Maguire and Associates was engaged to propose a model that would maximize enrollment and student satisfaction with Brandeis. Maguire’s research indicated that all aspects of student life needed comprehensive and focused attention and that what occurred in the classroom needed to be integrated with activities in the residence halls and support services. They recommended that Brandeis reorganize its offices under an enrollment

⁵ Reference to the 1996 NEASC Self-Study p.1

management umbrella, and in 2000, the Division of Students and Enrollment was created.⁶

Beginning with a reorganized and strengthened finance and operations staff and new resource analysis and planning created after the appointment of the new Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer in 1997, Brandeis took steps to strengthen and support its infrastructure. A facilities audit, a campus master plan, an integrated resource planning model, and new transparent budgeting processes—aided by a PeopleSoft financial system—all combined to provide a strong base for better understanding the University’s economic structure. Joined by a new Senior Vice President of Students and Enrollment in 2000, a new Provost, and a new Dean of Arts and Sciences in 2003, the senior management team adopted new policies and procedures, expanded PeopleSoft systems to include human resources, students and faculty administration, and began to analyze three major areas of concern: components of the structural deficit, realignment of the academic program and supporting resources, and improvements in undergraduate enrollment and the overall student experience. Realignment of the academic program with available resources includes realignment of faculty staffing with defined curricular commitments, competitive graduate student support, and competitive faculty salaries. Strengthening undergraduate enrollment and the overall student experience includes undergraduate quality targets of a 35 percent acceptance rate, average SATs of 1380, a five-year graduation rate of 90 percent, competitive student facilities and residences, and the minimum discount rate needed to maintain enrollment stability and achieve undergraduate quality targets, while improving diversity measures.

In 2004, President Reinharz gave the senior management team this charge: create a multi-year plan for the University that supports programmatic goals, protects physical, financial, and human assets, but does so in a way that develops priorities and allocates resources across all areas. He emphasized that this plan must address the academic, research, student, and economic foundations of the University. In addition, the plan was to be comprehensive in scope, conservative in its resource assumptions, and flexible enough to permit annual adjustments. The planning process was mission-driven, i.e., designed to maintain and enhance the University’s reputation for excellence and ensure its position as one of America’s premier, small liberal arts research universities. Academically, the principal focus was on Arts and Sciences, and to a much lesser extent on Brandeis’s three professional schools—the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, the International Business School, and the Rabb School of Continuing Studies. Each of these four major units conducted extensive analyses of programs, student services, faculty and finances.⁷ The resulting plan has come to be known as the *Integrated Plan 2012* and has established academic, student and financial goals and benchmarks for the planning period FY2006-2012.

⁶ See Appendix 2B for the Maguire executive summary.

⁷ All school strategic plans in the team room.

In brief, the *Integrated Plan* has three overarching academic themes: invest in Brandeis faculty; “globalize” and diversify academic programs; and strengthen the University’s research enterprise. Investing in faculty has multiple dimensions: increase faculty salaries to the AAU median by rank and discipline; invest in programmatic support and laboratory space; and provide new funds for junior faculty leaves, faculty conferences, and research and scholarship. Globalizing and diversifying academic programs occurs at the undergraduate level through investment in experiential learning, the growth in interdisciplinary programs and courses that explore diversity of culture, race, and abilities, and through capitalizing on the strengths of the International Business School and the Heller School by creating programs such as International and Global Studies, and Health: Science, Society and Policy. Growth and diversification of graduate programs, primarily through new international and professional master’s programs, are discussed in the graduate education section of this document. Renewing the research capacity of the University involves investment in science and art facilities, and augmentation of the research infrastructure through enhanced offices of technology transfer and sponsored programs, and the creation in 2005 of the position of Vice President for Research.

Within the student life area, the University has decided to maintain the current size of the undergraduate student body in order to ensure a high-quality academic and residential experience and other important educational experiences and services. Additional investment in new and refurbished residence facilities will be required to continue to improve student and enrollment profiles. A new residence hall, on or adjacent to the site now occupied by the Ridgewood Residence Quad, and more apartment-style housing with kitchens, which is an important part of the Residence Hall Master Plan, are included in the *Integrated Plan*. Also included in the *Integrated Plan* and funded through a projected increase in budgeted renewal funds are the substantial renewal needs in existing residence halls and athletic facilities, together with the Usdan Student Center renovation, which is designed to provide “one-stop shopping” for student services. Just as Brandeis must be able to offer the same residential quality and amenities as its competitors, so too must it be cognizant of the undergraduate discount rate of its competitive set. The *Integrated Plan* indicates that the discount rate, a reflection of the resources committed to both need-and-merit-based financial aid, may need to increase from its current 33 percent in order to address undergraduate quality targets and other enrollment management goals.⁸

The University’s resource goals also include full and sustainable funding for all new initiatives (operating and capital), putting facilities in good condition,⁹ and the growth of reserves to 100 percent of debt. Fiscal will and discipline will be needed to achieve these goals, as well as balanced annual (operating and capital) budgets. Balancing the needs of the academic and student programs, while

⁸ See Standard 6

⁹ The Facilities Condition Index (FCI), a standard measure of the condition of physical facilities should improve from 15 percent to 13 percent (Good) by FY2012.

simultaneously protecting the asset base, is an underlying tension explored in the *Integrated Plan*.

Appraisal

The three long-term planning efforts, *Blueprint for Renewal*, *Reestablishing Academic and Economic Equilibrium*, and *Brandeis 2000*, achieved only limited success. These plans were reactive rather than anticipatory, addressing immediate challenges, but neglecting to address the underlying resource challenges. While fundraising was often invoked as an answer, institutional advancement was never fully involved in the planning, and there was only limited financial analysis or understanding of the economic structure of Brandeis.

Since the late 1990s, Brandeis has consistently engaged in long-term, large-scale, University-wide planning to provide a context for annual planning. The University Policy Review Committee, composed of senior administrators and the University's General Counsel, reviews and revises the policies governing business and the academy. The University has a regular budget planning cycle and a construction planning cycle, ongoing assessment of criteria and measures for success in student services, and new guidelines for the creation and review of academic centers and institutes.¹⁰ The Dean of Arts and Sciences meets annually with department chairs to discuss a three-year curricular plan and budget process in which faculty and departmental needs are assessed. The Provost reviews these plans. The three professional schools have strategic plans, which the Deans review and update yearly with the Provost. These planning efforts are successful in identifying unit and divisional needs, potential revenue shortfalls and surpluses, and thereby allow for annual, as well as mid-year adjustments.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, as part of the overall integrated planning process, the Dean of Arts and Sciences issued *Strategic Planning Analysis and Proposals for Arts and Sciences*. These proposals suggested various ways to realign faculty and staff resources to improve the ability to achieve academic goals and meet curricular commitments. They included increased Ph.D. stipends, increased staff and faculty support for interdepartmental programs, and additional new faculty in select areas to diversify the curriculum and deepen the offerings in areas of growing student interest. The plan, which prompted considerable debate, also proposed closing or scaling back certain programs over time in order to free resources for the identified needs. A faculty review committee rejected many of the proposed reductions, but the ensuing discussions led to the refocusing and refinement of a number of programs. These changes, in combination with modestly increased resources for Arts and Sciences programs under the *Integrated Plan*, permitted progress toward the needed resource levels in some key programs during the FY2006-2012 planning period.

In addition to these internal planning and evaluation efforts, the University uses various external resources such as surveys, academic reviews, financial audits, visiting committees and consultants to measure and assess its performance.

¹⁰ See Appendices 2C and 2D.

Financial audits occur annually, as do peer assessments and analyses, prepared by Cambridge Associates, NACUBO, and Moody's, comparing Brandeis's performance to peer institutions measured against standard benchmarks. The first comprehensive alumni survey was undertaken in 2004, providing valuable information to the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, and the Office of Communications.¹¹ Brandeis' current participation in the National Research Council's national assessment of research-doctorate programs will provide the University with an important analytic and assessment tool in the future, particularly since there will be a substantial database that will be updated periodically.

An academic assessment inventory of selected departments in 2005 identified some pilot assessment efforts based on departmental interests.¹² External peer review of academic departments has been occurring regularly since 2001.¹³ These reviews have been requested either by the department or by an external advisory council such as the Brandeis University Sciences Advisory Council. The 2005 external review of the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, for example, resulted in the appointment of a new director and a re-design of academic programs and degrees. The School of Science was reviewed by an external committee of prominent scientists under the chairmanship of Dr. George Whitesides, Woodford L. and Ann A. Flowers University Professor of Chemistry at Harvard. The report highlighted areas of excellence unique to Brandeis, as well as serious deficiencies in space and facilities.¹⁴ Subsequently and at the recommendation of the University administration, the Board of Trustees approved a new science facilities plan and authorized a \$300 million extension of the \$470 million Campaign for Brandeis.

Over a two-year period from 2003 to 2005, another significant planning effort resulted in the merger of the libraries and information technology. Fueled by a paradigm shift, i.e., that libraries are no longer just places for the repository of information, but rather for the access of information, what began as a collaborative model between the two units evolved into an integrated model with one combined unit. A faculty committee to the library and an information technology faculty committee provided guidance, and feedback was regularly gathered from the trustees and faculty. Decisions about staffing, collections, archiving and growth flowed from this merger.¹⁵

Brandeis 2005 is not Brandeis 1995. The University has advanced in significant ways: from revenue instability characterized by overdependence on annual gifts, endowment draw, and high discount rates, to more predictable revenue, characterized by reduced reliance on gifts, the use of the endowment within peer

¹¹ See Appendix 2E for executive summary.

¹² See Standard 4 for specifics on assessment.

¹³ Since 2001, external reviews have been conducted for Music, Theater Arts, Fine Arts, Physics, Hebrew, Arabic, and Yiddish Languages and Literature; German, Russian and Asian Languages and Literature; and Romance and Comparative Literature.

¹⁴ See Appendix 2F for *A Report on the School of Science at Brandeis University*.

¹⁵ See Standard 7.

norms, and stabilized targeted financial aid. Overall the University has moved from undisciplined operations to structured, strategic financial and program management.¹⁶ University budgets and the *Integrated Plan* are available to the community on the website, and there are yearly meetings with the community to discuss the overall financial challenges and progress of the University. There is more to do, and transparency has been integral to institutional progress.

Projection

Achieving primary academic goals such as investing in Brandeis faculty both intellectually and financially; globalizing and diversifying academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate; and renewing the University's research enterprise will be assessed by a variety of measures. Faculty salaries can be monitored against selected, external benchmarks. Investments in faculty development, such as leaves for junior faculty and funds for scholarship and conferences, should yield tangible results that can be traced in faculty achievements and tenure rates. Careful monitoring of quality and enrollment in new programs will indicate whether new investments in experiential learning, interdisciplinary courses, and an increasingly global curriculum are attracting and better preparing students. Over time, senior survey data will reveal satisfaction or concerns about new programs and majors. Already an overall plan that includes longitudinal and cross-sectional perspectives on the senior survey data is underway. Research productivity can be tracked by discipline, and so too can growth in sponsored research, training grants, and technology licensing. Extending the University's capacity to be a learning organization will require more planning and regular reviews, clearer policies, and perhaps new academic organizational structures. More systematic collection and analysis of data that is available to all, such as a University Fact Book, would also be valuable as Brandeis seeks to increase its effectiveness. Steps toward this have been taken by hiring two new positions in the Provost's Office, one focused on assessment and the other on data integrity and analysis; currently a succinct Brandeis Fact Sheet (the foundation for a larger Fact Book) is being compiled.

Admissions goals in the *Integrated Plan* include increasing the average SAT from 1367 in 2006 to 1380 by 2012 and decreasing the acceptance rate from 36 percent in 2006 to 35 percent by 2012. Generally, increases in quality indicators, such as the SAT, and selectivity indicators, such as a lower acceptance rate, are the product of larger applicant pools, spurred by the heightened desirability of an institution. Converting applications to actual enrollments often involves the strategic use of financial aid. The level of support available to students with financial need, as well as those eligible for merit awards, often determines an individual student's reason for selecting a particular institution. Balancing Brandeis's tuition discount rate against that of its nearest competitive set, while still meeting the other quality measures of the *Integrated Plan*, will present a challenge.

Equally important to improving the overall quality of the undergraduate student body is increasing student satisfaction with the Brandeis experience. Both

¹⁶ See Standards 8 and 9 for discussions of physical plant, finance and technology.

retention rates and graduation rates can be used to measure progress. The *Integrated Plan* calls for improving the five-year graduation rate from 86 percent in 2005 to 90 percent by 2012. Disparities in graduation rates now exist between men and women, minority and majority students, and among low-income, first-generation and majority students. Services and programs must be created to close these gaps. In addition, remodeling or replacing the residence halls, along with improving exercise and recreation facilities, are priorities and concrete steps to increase student satisfaction. Finally, the staffing levels and salaries for student service personnel will continue to be addressed in order to meet these goals.

Overarching resource management goals include balancing all annual and capital budgets and achieving all *Integrated Plan* goals by FY012. More specifically, all capital projects must be fully funded prior to construction, and this includes incremental annual operating costs. The Facilities Condition Index (FCI) should improve from 15 to 13 percent (Good) by FY2012. Reserves need to be built to 100 percent of long-term debt by FY 2012, and the endowment draw for all funds should be 5 percent or less by FY 2012. Finally, faculty and staff salaries should be market-competitive by FY2012.

Institutional Effectiveness

The *Integrated Plan* sets forth a clear direction with benchmarks to measure progress. FY2006 is the first year that progress will be tested against these benchmarks, and an *Integrated Plan Progress Report* does precisely this.¹⁷ By setting and monitoring annual benchmarks described above, by being adaptive and realistic, and by modifying benchmarks as needed, the University can effectively monitor and manage the effects of integrated decision making on programs, quality and resources. The 1996 self-study noted that planning and evaluation was an “art, not a science.” In 2006, Brandeis has the policies, procedures, systems and leadership and staff needed to blend art with science.

¹⁷ See Appendix 2G for Integrated Plan Progress Report.