

**REPORT AND PROPOSALS FOR REDUCING ACADEMIC COMMITMENTS  
IN ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**BRANDEIS 2020 COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 22, 2010**

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**Leslie Claire Griffith, Prof. of Biology**  
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**Liz Hedstrom, Prof. of Biology**  
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**Derek M. Isaacowitz, Assoc. Prof. of Psychology**  
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**Albion E. Lawrence, Assoc. Prof. of Physics**  
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**Sacha Nelson, Prof. of Biology**  
**Rick Parmentier, Prof. of Anthropology**  
**John Plotz, Prof. of English**  
**Ibrahim Sundiata, Samuel and Augusta Spector Professor of History**  
**Ilan Troen, Karl, Harry and Helen Stoll Professor of Israel Studies**  
**Elaine Wong, Senior Assoc. Dean of A&S**

**I. Context**

Brandeis is an excellent and exciting place to teach and learn, a highly selective liberal arts college and a proud member of the Association of American Universities (AAU). But we have always struggled to align our aspirations and commitments with our resources. As the youngest and smallest major research university in the country, our striving to be both a fine liberal arts college and an elite research university leaves us spread too thin and vulnerable to external shocks.

Last year the financial challenges facing all of higher education triggered a process through which we agreed to increase undergraduate enrollment by about 12% (400 students, 100 more in each cohort) and decrease the arts and sciences faculty by about 10% (35 FTE). The Curricular and Academic Restructuring Steering Committee ("CARS Committee") allocated these faculty reductions across the departments, and

recommended a number of changes in the curriculum and our planning processes designed to facilitate our maintaining our curricular commitments in the face of this increase in students and decrease in faculty, and also implemented or supported changes in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences designed to reduce its costs and increase its revenues. Even at the time of the CARS Committee report, we knew that it would be challenging at best to serve more students with fewer faculty while still maintaining all of the distinct graduate and undergraduate programs to which we are committed. We had some hope that greater coordination and sharing, combined with hard work from everyone, would allow our already thinly spread resources to stretch just a little further. Even if that hope were to eventually prove unrealistic, the CARS changes did represent major steps towards rebalancing our needs and resources, perhaps allowing us to postpone for a couple of years the question of what further steps might ultimately be necessary.

The university faces a challenging short-run budget situation, and the Board of Trustees is rightly concerned that short run budgetary problems not be solved at the expense of the long run financial viability of the institution. In effect, the Board has decided that the CARS approach—focused on changes over the next five years while postponing consideration of whether further changes would be needed in the long run—is inadequate. They are insisting that we act now to reduce our long-run academic commitments in arts and sciences, so that we can ensure that our resources will be adequate in the long run to back up our commitments. They are also asking us to make curricular or structural changes in Arts and Sciences that will ensure that the faculty reductions contemplated by CARS will be achieved.

This process began at a faculty retreat on January 12 at which the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Chair of the Board Budget and Finance Committee described the challenges we face. Based on the consensus recommendation of the faculty at that retreat, this Committee was constituted to include the original CARS Committee members (Jaffe, Burg, Dibble, Gray, Harries, Hickey, Lamb, Miller, Nelson, Troen),<sup>1</sup> members of the Dean's Curriculum Committee (Jaffe, Burt, Eissenberg, Freeze, Hedstrom, Parmentier, Wong),<sup>2</sup> the faculty representatives to the Board (Burg, Griffith, Lanser, Plotz), the Chair of the Faculty Budget Committee (Conrad), and additional members chosen by the other designated members to ensure representativeness of the faculty as a whole (Isaacowitz, Lawrence, Sundiata). We have agreed that none of us on the committee represents any constituency, but rather we all are committed to determining what we think is best for Brandeis as a whole.

The Committee has held seven meetings (most 3 hours or longer), and reviewed and updated information on undergraduate majors and minors; enrollments; faculty, staff and

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<sup>1</sup> Sabine von Mering was a member of the CARS Committee but recused herself from the current committee because of her current role as Faculty Senate Chair.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Kamensky is a member of the DCC but declined to participate in this committee because of other time commitments.

operating budgets by program; course evaluations; admitted student expressed interests; and graduate admission, matriculation, budget, placement and satisfaction measures. Members of the committee have also consulted extensively with other faculty about specific issues and questions before the committee.

The Board is requiring that we make some very tough choices in a very tight timeframe, because in order to place Brandeis on a firmer financial foundation they must make decisions this March that have long-term consequences. Our committee didn't like making these choices so quickly, with constraints on the nature and extent of consultation. On the other hand, though we would have preferred more time to deliberate the issues before us, these choices would be difficult no matter how much time was available.

Last year, the Special Faculty Advisory Committee undertook an exhaustive review of all graduate programs, and fed the results of that review to the CARS Committee, which also collected an enormous amount of information. We did not begin our analysis *de novo*, but rather built on that previous work. The CARS Committee was tasked with identifying savings to be realized over the next five years, and declined to undertake some recommendations because they would not have produced savings in that time frame. Now, we have a different goal—rescaling our academic commitments to our available resources in the long run. As a result, we propose a number of changes that will not save any money in the next five years, but which better position us to align our commitments and our resources in the long run.

Every faculty member, every undergraduate program, and every graduate program contributes to the mission of this university. There is no “low-hanging fruit” waiting to be plucked to produce resource savings without loss of accomplishment. Across-the-board proportional cuts to all programs would leave us with all our programs weak. We wish that the financial picture were better and that we didn't have to make these proposals to cut specific programs. We have wrestled with what these proposals will mean to our colleagues and future students. (Please note: all current undergraduate and graduate students will be able to finish the academic program they have started; next fall's entering undergraduates will also be offered all of our existing programs, since they applied on the basis of the current Bulletin.)

We also wish that we all—faculty, students, alumni, administrators, the Board—could have had more time to consider together our overall shared vision of what kind of a university we want to develop by 2020, before considering these reductions in specific academic programs. We note, however, that we will still have time to continue to discuss how we would like our university to evolve in the coming decade. Indeed, we are committed to developing an inclusive process that will enable us to share ideas, questions, and concerns about Brandeis 2020 as we move beyond the discussion of cuts.

## **II Basis for Choices**

We have had much discussion as a community as to how to make choices to phase out or reduce academic commitments. It is clear that there is no way to do this that generates

consensus, either with respect to criteria or with respect to specific actions. In wrestling with these challenges, the Committee attempted to follow a systematic approach to the evaluation of any given undergraduate or graduate program (or area of focus within a program). While not every aspect of this analysis applies to every program, overall we adopted the following approach:

1. We attempted to determine the magnitude of the long-run resource commitment associated with any program under consideration. We maintained our focus on the long run, ignoring, for example, whether the resources connected with a given program are embodied in a faculty member whose contract will expire sometime soon or a tenured faculty member who likely will be here for a long time. We took an expansive view of resource claims of programs, recognizing that all faculty commitments consume time that could be otherwise deployed, so that programs are not “free” even if the faculty that support them are needed at the institution for other reasons. We also considered, to the extent we could, resources that are not being spent on the program today, but which would need to be spent on the program in the future.
2. We examined all available indicia of the magnitude and significance of the program’s impact and success. We considered (where relevant) number of students enrolled; measures of student satisfaction (course evaluations, survey responses, attrition rates); measures of student success (time to degree, placements); and number of applications, selectivity and yield. We also considered qualitative aspects of program impact, particularly in terms of the scholarly/creative impact and reputation of the institution.
3. We considered the symbolic and substantive significance of a given scholarly and teaching area, both generically (can you be an elite research university/liberal arts college without a program in this area) and in terms specifically of Brandeis (does this program stand for or contribute something distinctively important to Brandeis’ mission, and do it in a way for which there are not substitutes).
4. Forced to identify ways to reduce the long-run resource needs, we identified those reductions that we judged produced the largest savings with the smallest negative impact upon our multiple missions.
5. Some of the programmatic reductions that we are proposing allow reductions in faculty resources (FTE) that were already anticipated by the first CARS committee report, but which without the programmatic changes here would be uncertain to occur, or, if they did occur absent these changes would result in weak or untenable curriculum. Other programmatic reductions proposed here represent new or incremental savings not anticipated by the first CARS report. Rough tabulations of these distinct impacts of our proposals are presented in Section IV below.
6. Finally, we are making a number of proposals that change our structure or organization in ways intended to make us stronger and more flexible in the long

run, allowing us to better support ongoing scholarship and creativity, and for our students to learn in new and better ways.

Based on an initial analysis along these lines, we identified a preliminary list of possible proposals, and notified the chairs of all programs that would be directly affected by any of these possible proposals. We then met with all of these affected programs, either singly or in School Councils. As a result, we modified several of our original ideas and dropped some initial proposals.

### **III Proposals**

1. New admissions to the PhD program in Anthropology should be suspended indefinitely, effective immediately, except for currently enrolled students in the Master's program (for whom the possibility of admission to the PhD program was part of the reason for enrolling in the Master's program).
2. The PhD program in Biochemistry should be merged with the PhD program in Biophysics and Structural Biology to form a single PhD program in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry.
3. The number of university-funded slots (total slots, not new admits) in the Computer Science PhD program should be reduced from 10 to 5, effective with AY 2010-11.
4. The number of university-funded slots (total slots, not new admits) in the Chemistry PhD program should be reduced from 25 to 20, effective with AY 2010-11.
5. New admissions to the MFA Program in Theater Design should be suspended indefinitely, effective immediately. The graduate design curriculum should be maintained through the successful program completion of the current first and second year design students, and then phased out. The tremendous interest and enthusiasm for theater among undergraduates should be served through an undergraduate theater curriculum that addresses and integrates all aspects of history, performance and design, and draws undergraduates into more of the department's activities.
6. The budget of the Brandeis Theater Company and related theater production activities should be reduced significantly over the next 2 years. The existing model of producing theatre in the Spingold Theater Center should be re-evaluated to make it more cost-effective, and to work in concert with the Theater Arts curriculum to better engage undergraduates in theater productions.
7. New Admissions to the Master's Program in Cultural Production should be suspended indefinitely, effective immediately. The cultural production curriculum should be maintained as necessary for currently enrolled students, and then phased out.

8. All GSAS stand-alone Master's programs should prepare a three-year plan (2010-11 through 2012-13) showing how they will achieve benchmarks set by the Dean of GSAS for enrollment, expenses, revenue, and metrics of student success and satisfaction. Programs that do not achieve their benchmarks by 2012-13 will be phased out at that time.
9. The chemistry, biochemistry, biology, physics, math and computer science departments should be placed under a new "umbrella" of a Division of Science. A new Director of the Division of Science, together with a curriculum committee with representatives from each department, should take on the responsibility for planning the curricula of the majors, minors and graduate programs in the sciences. In addition, the administrative and technical staff support in these departments should be reorganized and restructured to support the curriculum and the research needs of the faculty, at the level of the division. The departments would retain their Handbook-mandated roles in the processes of appointment, review and promotion of faculty.
10. The new Division of Science should carry out the CARS-mandated net reduction in faculty of 10 FTE by the elimination of specific subject areas from the research portfolios of each department, with corresponding reduction of the associated curricular activities. The areas of chemical dynamics, immunology, radio astronomy and combinatorics should be phased out entirely; targeted non-replacement of faculty in cross-departmental research areas will focus the remaining research enterprise and preserve current areas of strength.
11. The American Studies Department should be reorganized as an Interdepartmental Program, maintaining and potentially growing the existing major in American Studies under the aegis of the Program. Over time, this will allow this innovative and popular major to thrive through increased contributions from Americanists outside the current department, even as the CARS-Committee-recommended reduction of four faculty FTE occurs through attrition.
12. The Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies should identify the faculty positions and/or research areas that have been or will be eliminated in order to meet the CARS Committee target of 22 faculty FTE. Efforts already underway to identify courses needed for other departments and programs that could be taught by NEJS faculty should continue. Opportunities should be sought for NEJS faculty positions to be made joint with other departments, in order to reinforce the curricular capabilities of those departments while maintaining the ability to deliver the NEJS curriculum. We ask the NEJS faculty to prepare their plan for curricular reductions by March 1, so that these can be included as part of the package of restructuring changes brought to the Board of Trustees in March.
13. The physics department should consider whether the undergraduate major in biological physics could be phased out and replaced by a track within the physics major.

14. The faculty in Comparative Literature, European Cultural Studies, English, German Studies, Russian Studies, French and Francophone Studies, Hispanic Studies, and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies should consider a restructuring of these literature and culture offerings to increase flexibility and student choice, and to facilitate better sharing of resources. We ask these faculty to finalize the broad outlines of their proposal by March 1, so that this can be included as part of the package of restructuring changes brought to the Board of Trustees in March. It is understood that this would be only an outline of a new structure or structures, with details still to be worked out.
15. The undergraduate major in Italian Studies should be terminated, effective with the class of 2015. We should continue to offer instruction in Italian language, and a minor in Italian Studies.
16. The undergraduate major in Hebrew Language and Literature should be terminated, effective with the class of 2015, and the existing major in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies should be modified to recognize Hebrew as a track within it.
17. The undergraduate minor in Internet Studies should be terminated, effective with the class of 2015.
18. The undergraduate minor in Yiddish and East European Jewish Culture should be terminated, effective with the class of 2015. Courses in this area should continue to be offered and recognized within Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.

The Committee discussed at length the possibility of resource savings through changes in the University Writing Seminar and the Foreign Language Requirement. We have no structural proposals in regard to these two programs, but do encourage the Dean, in consultation with the Director of University Writing, to continue to seek to reduce the cost of the UWS program, by considering slightly larger section sizes and experimenting with post-docs or other full-time instructors as a supplement to PhD students as UWS instructors.

#### **IV Conclusion**

The original CARS Committee proposals are currently projected eventually to increase net GSAS revenues by \$3.2 million, and to reduce the A&S faculty budget by \$5 million (35 faculty FTE). These CARS initiatives came on top of reductions in the A&S faculty, staff and operating budgets of \$2.8 million already implemented in 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Taken in their entirety, the proposals described herein would yield about \$3.8 million annually in long run savings. These savings are in three categories. First, we estimate that through these proposals about \$2.3 million (17 FTE) of the originally projected CARS faculty savings of \$5 million will be locked in to the structure of departments and

the curriculum, through commitments to pare the curriculum and reorganization of how the curriculum is delivered.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this “solidification” of projected CARS savings, the proposals herein are estimated eventually to save an additional \$1.2 million per year through reductions not addressed by the original CARS recommendations. Finally, these proposals will allow the university to avoid an additional \$.3 million of costs per year that are not currently being incurred, but would need to be added sometime soon but for the reorganizations contemplated herein.

These proposals now enter the “deliberative process” specified by the Faculty Handbook. They will be reviewed by the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Graduate School Council, and the Faculty Senate. The four School Councils will be asked by the Provost if they wish to add further comment beyond what occurred in the preliminary consultations. There will be an open forum for undergraduates and one for graduate students. We anticipate that the Faculty Senate will likely call for a special Faculty Meeting. The Provost will then make a decision accepting, rejecting or modifying the proposals, after which they will be conveyed to the Board of Trustees at their March meeting.

These proposals for arts and sciences are intended as our contribution to the comprehensive plan being constructed for the Board of Trustees in March, which we understand will also include reports and proposals on administrative costs and structures, centers and institutes, increased contributions from IBS and Heller, and new revenue-generation ideas from the Bold Ideas Group (BIG). Some of these, such as the issue of centers and institutes, interact significantly with our proposals, making it unfortunate that they are being completed on a slower time frame. We anticipate reconvening as a Committee once these other pieces are available in order to consider possible interactions with arts and sciences.

The Committee has tried hard to approach its task from the perspective of what choices are best for Brandeis as a whole in the long run. While these proposals represent diminution of some important aspects of our mission, these changes will, in the aggregate, make us more financially viable, better able to deliver the curriculum we remain committed to, and more flexible in responding to new demands and opportunities. We ask for your understanding and patience as we deliberate about these proposals in the coming weeks. Brandeis has faced tough times before. With your support, we're confident that we'll come out of this one a leaner but vibrant community of scholars and students.

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<sup>3</sup>The remaining \$2.7 million (18 FTE) of the original CARS faculty savings will be achieved by non-replacement of departing faculty within the remaining curricular areas.