Provost's Decisions Regarding Brandeis 2020 Proposals

March 8, 2010

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In January, 2010, the University accepted a multidimensional and aggressive challenge from the Board of Trustees to identify and to take bold steps that will improve significantly the financial health of the University over both short-term and long-term time horizons by balancing our resources with our commitments. This process was actually begun in FY09, when all units across the University were tasked with identifying and implementing budget expense reductions and added revenue contributions totaling $10.8 M. As part of this process, 76 staff positions were eliminated.

Under the leadership of the Board of Trustee's chairman, Malcolm Sherman, the chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee, Meyer Koplow, and the University President, Jehuda Reinharz, the University community was further challenged this fiscal year to:

- develop plans for reductions in academic commitments within the graduate and undergraduate programs of Arts and Sciences both to reduce resource demands and to ensure targeted faculty reductions,
- set targets for increased direct financial contributions by FY15 from the professional schools to the University above those realized in FY09,
- identify new revenue streams through expanded academic programs, and
- identify efficiencies across the administrative units of the University that will save money in the short and long run.

The first challenge—to reduce academic commitments in Arts and Sciences—was tasked to a newly constituted Brandeis 2020 Committee for analysis and recommendations. This 23 member committee, ably chaired by Dean Adam Jaffe, was assembled from the original 11 members of the Curriculum and Academic Restructuring Steering Committee (CARS), the Dean's Curriculum Committee, the faculty representatives to the Board of Trustees, the chair of the Faculty Budget Committee and an augmented roster of faculty chosen to ensure the diversity of the committee along multiple dimensions.

The second challenge—to set targeted increases in the direct contribution margins of the International Business School (IBS), The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and the Rabb School of Continuing Studies—has been undertaken by the Provost, the Academic Deans of Heller and IBS and the head of the Rabb School, in collaboration with the Office of Budget and Planning.

The third challenge—to identify new revenue streams—has been undertaken by the Bold Ideas Group (BIG), an 18 member committee of faculty, chaired by the provost and composed of Academic Deans, administrators, and a member of the Board of Trustees.

The fourth challenge—to identify administrative efficiencies—has been undertaken by the Administrative Resource Review Committee, chaired by the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, and composed of eight administrators and a faculty member from the Faculty Budget Committee.

In addition, the Provost has convened a seven person ad hoc committee of faculty and staff, chaired by Prof. Susan Birren, Biology, to investigate ways in which various Centers and Institutes at the University can increase their fiscal and academic contributions to the overall University academic programs, as part of this comprehensive plan for redressing the chronic financial challenges that have long beset our operations.

Each of the committees responding to these challenges has been working diligently over the past few months, although the time schedules for results and recommendations differ. Our goal is to bring together the results of these varied investigations to produce an integrated and comprehensive plan that will guide the University in securing our academic and financial health. We intend to emerge stronger, more integrated as a University community, and more prepared to adapt to the tremendous opportunities that we see the 21st century.

This report focuses on the first of the four challenges presented to us—namely, the proposal submitted by the Brandeis 2020 Committee to reduce the academic commitments within Arts and Sciences—both in the undergraduate and graduate programs within its purview. This committee was announced at the January 20 faculty meeting and given a deadline to produce a proposal for changes in Arts and Sciences by February 22, 2010. It met its deadline, in large part because of the extensive work and data analysis that had been prepared for the CARS committee efforts of the preceding spring semester of 2009.

The Brandeis 2020 Committee is to be commended for the comprehensive and intensive work it expended under extraordinary time pressures. While its task was clear, the work was difficult, challenging, and painful. As we all must acknowledge, it is a brutal exercise to identify valuable, venerable, and meaningful academic programs to phase out or to transform into a different type of offering or to reorganize to be more nimble and collaborative in the future. It takes true University citizenship and a deep commitment to and faith in the future of the University to make such painful recommendations that inevitably affect core members of our community—students, faculty, alumni, staff. This committee of 23 esteemed members of our faculty and students rose to the challenge and I applaud their wisdom, perspective, and courage.

When it released its report on February 22, the deliberative process, mandated by the Faculty Handbook and supervised by the Provost, commenced. I have received many e-mails from faculty, students, alumni, and persons external to Brandeis on various components of the report. In the period between the issuance of the Brandeis 2020 report and the present, I have also participated in the following meetings:

Committees:
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee
Graduate School Council

School Councils:
Creative Arts Council
Humanities Council
Science Council

Open Forums:
Undergraduate Students
Graduate Students

Student Group Meetings:
Anthropology
Cultural Production

Faculty Groups:
Cultural Production Program
Theater Arts Design Program
American Studies Department
Faculty Representatives to the Board of Trustees

Additional Groups/Individuals:
Senate Council
Theater Arts Staff
Chairs of the Departments of Anthropology, Theater Arts, and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies
Director of the Cultural Production Program

I extend my thanks for all the communications I have received from impassioned parties and for the efforts of so many on our campus to discuss with me their views about the proposal from the Brandeis 2020 Committee. This has been a spirited and often difficult discussion, culminating in an impressive special faculty meeting on March 4 that was well attended by faculty—including those affected by the proposals and those not affected but wanting to hear the discussion and be supportive of this process—and by stirring and eloquent statements from the leadership of programs under review. Throughout this difficult process, we have collectively worked hard to preserve our commitment to Brandeis University as a community of scholars, creative artists, students, and extremely supportive staff who are all invested in retaining and building a strong, vibrant, and relevant University that will continue to be a beacon of higher education in the 21st century.

DECISIONS

In my judgment, the Brandeis 2020 Committee's proposal of 18 specific actions constitutes a balanced, thoughtful, and strategic plan that is responsive to the mandate of the Board of Trustees, and this plan, while rendering difficult choices, will preserve our standing as an excellent liberal arts college within a robust research University. President Reinharz has confirmed repeatedly that this is his priority and vision for this University, as have all the chairs of the Board of Trustees with whom I have worked.

After listening carefully to many members of our academic community, and acknowledging that there are significant losses or changes to some very stellar and historically important programs, I have decided to accept the full set of recommendations of the Brandeis 2020 Committee, with one modification to the proposal regarding the Ph.D. program in Anthropology, so as to hold intact the collective judgment of this broadly based faculty and student committee.

Many of the committee's proposals can and should be implemented directly by the Dean of Arts and Sciences or will require the Dean to continue to work with various faculty groups to achieve, over time, the recommendations of the Committee. Recommendations that call for the suspension and ultimate phasing out of an academic program require approval by the Provost and ultimately, approval by the Board of Trustees. In order to be clear about my decisions, I note the following:

1. I concur with the proposal to suspend indefinitely admissions of external students to the Ph.D. program in Anthropology. While the anthropology doctoral program had some difficulties in the recent past, leading to relatively weak time-to-degree and placement data, efforts by the current complement of talented faculty have helped to cultivate a promising group of M.A. and Ph.D. students. The department has also brought in significant new revenues to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) through an expanded master's program. The high quality of the (tuition-paying) master's degree students, many of whom enroll at Brandeis because they want the opportunity to progress to a Ph.D. program at Brandeis, has been evident and confirmed in my meeting with M.A. students. I believe that the Ph.D. program should be retained on a smaller scale, limited only to admission of students vetted through the M.A. program. This will maximize the opportunity to maintain the significant revenue stream of the M.A. program, while reducing the cost of the Ph.D. program and limiting it to those students most likely to excel. The Dean of Arts and Sciences will determine the number of slots in the Ph.D. program.

2. I concur with the proposal to suspend admissions indefinitely to the Cultural Production master's program and to phase out the program when the current cohort of students has completed their program. This decision is made despite the ardent testimonials received from faculty, current students, and alumni regarding the unique contributions of the program towards interdisciplinarity at Brandeis

and the view that this is a unique program in higher education that transcends offerings at other institutions. This may well be a loss for Brandeis, but I am aware that there have been problems regarding mentorship and focus of the program that made this program a target of serious review by the Brandeis 2020 Committee. I have heard the argument that this program produces net revenue for GSAS, and while that is true, I am convinced that the University would have to make additional fiscal commitments in the long run to ensure that this program achieves and maintains a level of excellence that we would expect for any master's program. While a young and innovative program will be lost, my judgment is that Brandeis's portfolio of rigorous master's programs will be maintained even with the phasing out of this program.

3. I concur with the proposal to suspend admissions to the M.F.A. Program in Theater Design and to phase out the program when the current cohort of students has completed their program. This decision is based in part on the projected costs of revitalizing and restructuring the M.F.A. Program in Theater Design, as noted in the CARS Report, as well as in recognition that many University theater arts departments have excellent programs without an M.F.A. program in design. I also concur with the recommendation to develop a more robust undergraduate curriculum in the history, performance and design aspects of theater arts. While I am impressed with the many moving testimonials regarding the legacy of this celebrated program in Theater Arts, I am convinced that with the talents of the faculty and staff of the department, there is great potential for a new, exciting, and innovative model of education to emerge.

4. I concur with the proposal that the American Studies Department be closed as a department and then be reconstituted as an interdepartmental program offering one of the most popular and celebrated majors for undergraduates. This organizational change, which will be effective July 1, 2010, is designed to preserve the major and to ensure that it continues to thrive with the involvement of Americanists in other departments/programs on campus in keeping with the CARS recommendation for a reduction of 4 faculty positions within the current department over time. I recognize that the Department agrees to the reduction of faculty in the department and would like to maintain its departmental status. However, I agree with the Brandeis 2020 proposal that its reorganization as an interdepartmental program solidifies these reductions and secures an opportunity for it to remain a vital University program that takes more full advantage of the other talents and interests in our faculty to preserve a vibrant American Studies major.

5. I concur with the proposal that the undergraduate major in Italian Studies be terminated, effective with the class of 2015. As recommended in the proposal, the University will continue to offer instruction in Italian language and a minor in Italian Studies.

6. I concur with the proposal that the undergraduate major in Hebrew Language and Literature be terminated, effective with the class of 2015 and that the existing major in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies be modified to recognize Hebrew as a track within it. The chair of NEJS has confirmed with me that this action will be undertaken. Once specific language to implement this change in the NEJS major has been developed, it will be submitted to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) through the normal process for modification of existing majors.

7. I concur with the proposal that the undergraduate minor in Internet Studies be terminated, effective with the class of 2015.

8. I concur with the proposal that the undergraduate minor in Yiddish and East European Jewish Culture be terminated, effective with the class of 2015. Courses in this area should be offered within Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. The NEJS department has confirmed that this proposal would be accommodated within their departmental offerings.

OTHER CHANGES

At the meeting of the Graduate School Council on February 25th, the Council approved the merger of the Ph.D. program in Biochemistry and the Ph.D. program in Biophysics and Structural Biology to form a single Ph.D. program in Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry. This action will be taken to the Board of Trustees meeting later in March for final approval.

The reduction in University-funded Ph.D. slots in the departments of Computer Science and Chemistry will take effect in AY 2010-11.

The Dean of Arts and Sciences will ensure that stand-alone GSAS Master's programs will prepare a three year plan to achieve benchmarks for enrollment, expenses, revenues, and metrics of student success and satisfaction. Programs that do not achieve their benchmarks by 2012-13 will be phased out.

I have received a plan from the NEJS department detailing how it will achieve its target of 22 FTE and have accepted their plan. The Dean of Arts and Sciences will monitor the implementation of this plan.

The physics department should consider whether the undergraduate major in biological physics should be phased out and replaced by a track within the physics department.

The Humanities School Council is now engaged in planning for increasing interdepartmental flexibility and student choice by facilitating better sharing of resources. I have received a plan from the Council that includes the possible creation of Mandel Seminars in the Humanities, a Master's Program in interdisciplinary humanities, and an interdepartmental committee in the humanities to oversee these changes and maximize

their efficient implementation. The Dean of Arts and Sciences will monitor the progress needed to achieve the collective goals advanced in the Council.

The Science Council endorsed the proposal to create a Division of Science that will allow it to streamline and coordinate its offerings for undergraduate and graduate programs. And it has accepted the mandate to reduce faculty in the sciences by 10 FTE over time. The evolution of this division and its ability to reduce curricular and research investment in specific areas as proposed in the Brandeis 2020 report has been accepted, in principle, by the Science Council. It remains a responsibility of the Dean of Arts and Sciences to effectuate these transformations.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Since our inception as a liberal arts undergraduate institution within a vibrant research University, we have constantly faced a shortage of resources but an abundance of ambitions. The current economic crisis has forced us to adjust in many significant and painful ways to a new reality. This crisis has affected every member of our community in different ways. Under the leadership of the President and the Board of Trustees, we have confronted this new reality with many actions that have been difficult, but were necessary in order that we remain a unique and treasured institution of higher education. The proposals by the Brandeis 2020 Committee, and the decisions enumerated in this report, are part of a larger, more comprehensive and ongoing effort to secure the future of Brandeis University and to ensure that it continues to provide an innovative and exemplary array of academic programs for generations of students to come.

Cc: Jehuda Reinharz, President
Malcolm Sherman, Chair, Board of Trustees
Thomas Glynn, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee, Board of Trustees
Meyer Koplow, Chair, Budget and Finance Committee, Board of Trustees