

**From:** Marty Krauss <krauss@brandeis.edu>  
**Subject:** **Provost's fall letter**  
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**To:** Faculty <mailfac@lists.brandeis.edu>  
**Cc:** Academic administrators <acadadmin@lists.brandeis.edu>

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Dear Colleagues,

I hope the semester's off to a good start for all of you. I write to inform you of several new initiatives at the University.

### **New Centers and Institutes**

As many of you know, the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies was created over the summer with generous support from the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. Prof. Ilan Troen of the NEJS department has been appointed the Director of the Center, which will expand the current Israel studies programs and promote scholarship about Israel and its history, culture and society.

The Lurie Institute for Disability Policy was created at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management from a generous gift from the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation. The Institute will support research, policy development, education and training about autism and other developmental disabilities. A national search for the Nancy Lurie Marks Professor of Disability Policy is underway.

The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy was created at the Heller School from a generous gift of the Robert F.X. and Laura Sillerman's Tomorrow Foundation. The Center will strengthen the country's family foundations to become social entrepreneurs through the provision of research-supported advice on effective grant making. Prof. Andrew Hahn has been appointed the Director of the Center.

And the Institute for Investigative Journalism has been named the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, thanks to a generous gift from Gerry and Elaine Schuster. The Institute enables working journalists to conduct investigative projects on significant social problems that could lead to changes in public policy or opinion. Ms. Florence Graves is the Director of the Institute.

### **Online course evaluations**

Last spring we conducted a pilot project for online course evaluations. The technology worked well, and we achieved a 55% response rate. Lessons learned from the pilot will help increase this response rate. After consultation with faculty and students, we are now ready to move to a fully online system as of the fall semester, 2007. Online evaluations have the important advantage of providing prompt results to faculty; the typed comments make it easier for students to write them and for faculty to read them. A paperless system is also advantageous ecologically and economically. We will be mounting a broad promotional campaign to let students know the importance of course evaluations and to encourage them to complete the forms. We will be enlisting your support in these efforts---students tell us that the strongest motive for completing an evaluation is knowing that it matters to the instructor.

### **Interdisciplinary calendar**

Following up on a suggestion from Prof. Greg Freeze (Dean of GSAS), we introduced last spring a new interdisciplinary calendar as part of the myBrandeis online calendar. By clicking on "interdisciplinary," you can see a calendar of academic events (lectures, colloquia, etc.) that are of interest beyond the host unit. Starting this fall, the interdisciplinary listings will be fed into a weekly email update; faculty and students will automatically be included on the mailing list (with an option, of course, to unsubscribe). Scholarship and teaching increasingly cut across traditional disciplinary boundaries. Our hope is that this new weekly update will encourage further interaction across academic units.

### **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**

The accountability movement that has swept through public education in America has now reached higher education. NEASC has pointed to the absence of a systematic approach to assessing student learning at Brandeis and has enjoined us to address this.

To assist with this process, last February I formed a Provost's Advisory Committee on Assessment of Student Learning, which I am chairing. The focus of the committee is undergraduate education, and its members include faculty from all four schools within Arts and Sciences, along with staff from the Dean's Office, the Provost's Office, and the Division of Students and Enrollment. The committee membership and charge can be found at [www.brandeis.edu/provost/Assessment\\_Cmte.html](http://www.brandeis.edu/provost/Assessment_Cmte.html).

## **Graduate Student Support**

In response to the expanding number of graduate programs and the increase in both Master's and doctoral students in all three schools, Alwina Bennett was appointed Assistant Provost for Graduate Student Affairs. Alwina will coordinate services for students that promote community connection and support and compliment student life outside of the classroom. She is located in and oversees the new Graduate Student Center located in Kutz 124. A series of workshops ranging from navigating the American health care system, to writing for publication has also begun, and early indications are that the students are enthusiastic and appreciative of these resources.

The Counseling Center in the Mailman Building has expanded its staff to include additional counselors for graduate students, including our many international graduate students.

I look forward to seeing you at the October 11 faculty meeting.

Sincerely,

Marty Wyngaarden Krauss  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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