The thoughtful and detailed reflections shared with us through the Brandeis Students Against Sexual Violence (B.SASV) petition Progress Report released on March 14, 2016 raise many important issues for our campus. Perhaps most notably, they raised concerns regarding obstacles to reporting and the lack of awareness of campus resources. These are the same concerns raised by the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Misconduct report we conducted last year and released in 2015, and raised again in a second release on the results by race, ethnicity and international status last week. A community-wide discussion of the latest release of climate survey data is planned for April 5, 2016 at noon in Sherman Function Hall and we encourage you to attend.

We recognize and agree that issues around reporting sexual misconduct and awareness of resources for survivors of sexual violence need to be addressed immediately. While many initiatives are currently underway, it is abundantly clear that there is a need to improve campus-wide awareness. The Office of Prevention Services has taken many steps toward such a campaign, but a much larger effort is needed and will be made.

We reiterate our commitment to changing the culture on our campus. As noted by Interim President Lynch when we released our Campus Climate Survey results, “as painful as these data are, we will not shrink from the self-examination and action they demand.” Sexual violence has no place in higher education and is not acceptable at Brandeis University.

One of our greatest concerns is that misinformation will inhibit survivors from seeking resources. Therefore, for the well-being of our community it is important to make the following points of clarification about current resources:

The Psychological Counseling Center (PCC)

- The PCC currently has seven clinicians on staff with advanced training and extensive experience working with trauma survivors. The PCC is actively searching for an additional trauma therapist, and in the meantime has hired two part-time trauma specialists to cover the caseload until that position is filled. The number of available hours for survivors seeking counseling has been maintained and the trauma support groups continue to meet regularly.
- The PCC employs a multilingual staff and foreign language treatment is currently offered in Cantonese, French, German, Hebrew, Mandarin, and Spanish.
- Students in need of urgent care are made a priority at the PCC regardless of what business hour they come to the center. There is also a dedicated therapist available at 11am and 3pm each weekday for walk-ins.
- There is no session limit for survivors seeking services at the PCC. While
students are billed after the 12th session each year, such fees are waived for all sexual assault survivors and for any student for whom financial constraints create a barrier to treatment.

Student Training and Leadership

• No student who has been found responsible for sexual misconduct, or who is the subject of an informal or formal investigation may serve in any administrative leadership position with oversight over other students. Every student who applies for such an administrative leadership position is vetted to ensure that they have not previously been found responsible and are not in the process of an informal or formal investigation. The suspension or removal from leadership positions is detailed in the student code of conduct Rights and Responsibilities and this policy includes Community Advisors and Orientation Leaders.

• Students in campus organization leadership positions are mandated to attend bystander trainings as a result of the Student Union’s amendment: Article 13, Section 10, Part 3. This is planned for implementation for the coming year.

• Training in sexual misconduct prevention is required for all Community Advisers and Orientation Leaders. All current CAs and OLs were trained thoroughly by True to Life Training with Jana Jacobson, including their role as a responsible employee.

• Teaching Assistants (TAs) are required to be trained in Title IX. These sessions began in 2015-2016, including 150 graduate TAs, and will be done annually moving forward as a requirement for the position. A pilot training program was also offered for undergraduate TAs and will continue into 2016-2017.

• All senior administration leadership attended Title IX training including topics of: the prevalence of sexual violence, myths and common misconceptions regarding perpetrators, the neuroscience of trauma, understanding the hurdles of sexual assault biases, and understanding trauma-informed responses, in particular, the Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI) method.

Publications, Communications, and Feedback

• The Rape Crisis Center 24/7 phone line provides access to a licensed, trained therapist at all times. The technology system which supports the hotline was found to be defective by multiple campus users including Brandeis, and these problems have been resolved by LTS.

• Rape Crisis Center advocates widely dispersed the “Get Help” flyers in bathrooms, academic and administrative buildings, and flyers have been disseminated widely in all residence halls.

• The Survivor’s Guide is currently available in print in offices across campus. The Survivor’s Guide is also available online on several
departmental websites and on the RCC website, along with translated versions in Chinese and Arabic.

- The ability to give Public Safety anonymous feedback, exists at: Public Safety> About the Department> Feedback Form.

We are deeply grateful for the ongoing efforts of the staff and students working in the Office of Prevention Services, the Office of Student Title IX Investigations and Compliance, and the Rape Crisis Center. None of these offices existed at Brandeis three years ago; our determination to create these resources and continue to improve them are reflective of the university’s commitment. Today all three offices have full-time staff members, four in total. Working with teams of students, and colleagues in the Psychological Counseling Center, the Department of Community Living, the Dean of Students Office, and others across campus, our resources have expanded dramatically, as we strive to ensure that each and every sexual assault survivor at Brandeis knows there are people on hand for support and counseling.

As the B.SASV report notes, it is now crucial that we do more. If we are to change our culture, we must commit to ongoing communications and campaign efforts. No single specific activity – whether it be a training session, a poster or a website, or a counselor – will alone make the kind of change that is needed. There must be a comprehensive effort, a joint effort, and every part of our community must be involved.

Toward that end, we will:

- Launch an aggressive and comprehensive campus communications campaign to change our culture regarding sexual violence and to raise awareness of reporting and support options.
- Develop clearer and easier-to-understand guidelines and resources.
- Work across campus to continue improving the quality and quantity of training.
- Revise our party registration process and policies to reflect our goals of campus culture change.
- Explore the best technology solutions available to support our community in reporting and access to support and services information.

It is important for our community to know that these efforts are already underway, that the Administration’s commitment to these issues is strong, and that it is reinforced with ongoing action. The Task Force for Sexual Assault Response, Services and Prevention was constituted by the Provost and the Senior Vice President for Students and Enrollment in the summer of 2014 and charged with reviewing the university’s policies and practices regarding sexual misconduct and making recommendations to improve the university’s response, policies, prevention education, and training protocols. The Task Force continues to take primary leadership on these initiatives, and the Administration takes full
responsibility to provide the appropriate resources for these efforts. Success requires the involvement and support of the entire community. As has always been the case at Brandeis, we are strongest when we work together. It is our joint responsibility – we must and will change the culture on our campus.

Sincerely,

Irving R. Epstein
Interim Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Andrew Flagel
Senior Vice President for Students and Enrollment

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Co-chair, Task Force for Sexual Assault Response, Services and Prevention

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