Brandeis University Strategic Planning
Strategic Planning Input Sessions
November 2011 – January 2012
Summary of Faculty Sessions

Overview

At the start of the 2011-2012 academic year, President Frederick Lawrence launched a comprehensive strategic planning process for Brandeis University with the intent of creating a plan that will set the institution’s trajectory for the next couple of decades and provide a framework for decision-making for the next five years. He asked Provost Steve Goldstein to lead the effort. Committed to in-depth participation by the entire Brandeis community, Steve set in motion a series of input sessions for faculty, staff, and students from across the institution, including the School of Arts and Sciences, the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, and the International Business School. He also met with the Board of Trustees and with Brandeis alumni. Supported by Elaine Kuttner, planning consultant and Principal of Cambridge Concord Associates, the Provost played an active role in each session. All groups had the opportunity to discuss their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, current and expected external challenges, and their hopes for the future of Brandeis.

This paper highlights the principal themes and findings from the discussion groups with faculty. It is based on eight individual discussions that included approximately 175 faculty members from across the institution. Every session was well attended, and rich, vibrant discussions ensued. It was clear that Brandeis faculty members care deeply about the institution. Even with very busy schedules, they are willing to contribute both time and insights to this important endeavor.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Each group was asked to identify what they believed to be Brandeis University’s greatest strengths, so that they can be built upon in the strategic plan. They were also asked to identify the institution’s weaknesses. As is often the case, all groups found that the institution’s greatest strengths were often simultaneously its greatest weaknesses.
Size and Structure

**Liberal Arts College and Research University:** As a top-tier liberal arts college embedded in a comparatively small, high-caliber research university, Brandeis offers its students a unique learning environment. This size and structure present both opportunities and challenges.

Its size allows for both formal and informal collaboration across disciplines and schools as well as remarkably productive relationships between faculty and students. There are great opportunities for interaction across different aspects and levels of pedagogy — undergraduate and graduate. When discussing the merits of this particular model, faculty members used terms such as nimble, interactive learning environment, student-friendly, and highly collaborative. As one faculty member stated, “Brandeis offers creative and flexible engagement across all schools of the university, among faculty and with students.”

While opportunities abound, the challenges are many. A small research university, without economies of scale, is very expensive. As a small private research university, Brandeis must continuously seek new resources to cover its many in-depth programmatic areas. “Our commitment to research distinguishes us, but we’re stretched and we often fall short of the resources to do it well.” “When resources shrink, difficult choices must be made — choices that sometimes create a sense that certain programmatic areas are not seen as essential to the overall enterprise.” It should be noted that the areas most often cited as lacking appropriate funds were the humanities, particularly the creative arts. It will be important for the strategic plan to acknowledge this ongoing tension and find ways to orchestrate priorities to support the full range of programs needed for a robust and balanced liberal arts education in the future.

**A High Quality School of Arts and Sciences and Two Top-Tier Professional Schools:** Central to the mission of Brandeis is the academically rigorous School of Arts and Sciences, which includes a full liberal arts undergraduate curriculum and thirty graduate programs that spans the disciplines. This comprehensive school is made up of vibrant faculty who are engaged in both teaching and research, and its multi-faceted curriculum supports a large variety of student pursuits.

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management and the International Business School attract to Brandeis top faculty and students interested in interdisciplinary research and the intersection of research and practice in specific professional areas. All of Brandeis has benefited from the Heller School’s prominence in the field of social policy and health and human services management, its highly recognized research enterprise, and its steady growth over the past ten years. And with the introduction of IBS, with its well-respected faculty and creative programming, Brandeis has been able to open yet more doors for students looking for ways to apply a broad-based liberal arts education in a global environment.

**Intimate Learning Community:** The learning environment, particularly the quality of the relationship between professors and students, has always been a hallmark of Brandeis, and the small size of the institution has always been assumed to be an essential factor in that situation. However, many faculty members expressed concern that enrollment growth, coupled with decreases in faculty size, were causing an increase in student-faculty ratios, and were making effective faculty-student interaction more challenging. When this topic came up, some faculty members called for ways to bring faculty-student ratios back to the levels of several years ago.
Others talked about better engaging graduate students to support the undergraduate programs. Some cited opportunities for creative engagement such as team teaching or more experiential learning. Yet others talked about the role of technology, and using it in a way that would enable the faculty to interact with students in more creative and intensive ways.

**Brandeis Students and Faculty**

**The human capital of Brandeis:** Students, faculty and staff were often cited as the greatest strength of Brandeis. “Students are motivated, committed to doing the work, and value education. Many students graduate with two or three majors.” Faculty members talked about a Brandeis education as transformative, taking you from where you are to places you didn’t know you would want to go. Continuing to attract top quality students with enthusiasm for learning is critical moving forward. “Our students combine academic rigor with intellectual curiosity in a way you don’t find at other places.”

Brandeis students were also described as passionate about Brandeis. “Students used to come here because they couldn’t get into other places. Now they come by choice and they love it. “

The Brandeis faculty is also cited as strong and committed. “We get the kind of faculty dedication you don’t get at most places.” Faculty members are seen as accessible, both to students and to their colleagues, within and across departments. “Faculty work across departments and that’s where great advances happen.” “We have great staff that are strong and committed to the mission.”

Certainly one key strength is that faculty members seem to enjoy working at Brandeis and with one another. They have developed a culture that supports working and innovating together in ways that may not be possible at other institutions. It has not been easy for faculty, or for staff, over the past several years. As with many university faculties in the country, they have been asked to do more with less. The Brandeis faculty has done so graciously, and with the hope that better times would follow. For so many years, the idea of “planning” has been associated with the disappearance of resources and the need to cut. The hope is that this planning effort will result in a greater sense of moving forward and of building the Brandeis of the future.

**Jewish Identity**

Brandeis University’s Jewish roots and identity were discussed often, and were acknowledged to be both a strength and a challenge for Brandeis. Founded by a strong Jewish community, committed to a vision of freedom and social justice, Brandeis has become the great institution of its founder’s dreams. No one can deny the powerful role that the Jewish community played in the institution’s inception and its growth over time. Certainly Brandeis University’s relationship with the Jewish community, and its connection with its Jewish roots, continue to inform its forward movement. “To ignore the Jewish character is to ignore what makes Brandeis unique in the world.”

Having said that, there is also a deep and profound need, often voiced by faculty, staff and students, for Brandeis to be recognized, and branded, not solely as a Jewish institution but as an open, diverse, scholarly institution. The challenge appears to be that of striking a balance that allows the university to fully acknowledge its Jewish roots, while still presenting itself as a dynamic, diverse and academically rigorous institution of higher education for all students who seek an excellent education.
Several faculty members pointed out that Brandeis has a great “brand” among the Jewish community but is poorly known outside of this base, which impacts its ability to attract top quality students. “We have little competition for the Jewish base but we need to strengthen the brand overall.”

**Commitment to Social Justice**

Many people see Brandeis University’s focus on social justice as rising from its beginnings — its Jewish roots. Perhaps the fact that social justice was a founding principle, embedded in the very nature of the institution, makes the concept feel so vital at Brandeis. “How social justice is defined and played out at Brandeis has changed over the years, but it is definitely a signature aspect of who we are and how we act in the world.” The commitment to social justice is seen as a significant strength of the university and a distinguishing characteristic.

At the same time faculty stressed the need to ensure that the commitment to social justice is ‘not just a token idea. “We can’t let it become something that is taken for granted, or something that is talked about in order to make people feel good about themselves and the institution.” Many people talked about finding new ways to integrate the idea of social justice into the fabric of today’s Brandeis, and into all of the disciplines. Such an effort would require robust engagement, ongoing examination of the topics, and grounded debate to keep it meaningful. One faculty member asked, “How do we extend our proud historic social justice efforts of the past into the future?”

Several faculty members took the time to identify some social justice issues in which they would like to see Brandeis become more involved. Among them were issues related to economic disparities, human health, and global sustainability.

**Research and Social Justice**

With its strong emphasis on social justice and its significant research capacity, Brandeis is positioned to carry out the kind of research that will make a difference in the world. One of the institution’s many strengths in this area is the Heller School’s emphasis on translational research in a setting that emphasizes policy and social justice. Faculty noted that this is something that Brandeis might consider leveraging as it moves forward.

**Campus and Facilities**

Although the campus and its location were generally seen as positive, some significant concerns were raised about facilities. Many buildings are dated and create barriers to effective programming within them. These same buildings tend to give pause to prospective students and their parents. “Prospective students see our buildings and realize that they don’t compare well to other schools.” Faculty also explained that facilities issues also impact the potential for new and emerging programs. They pointed out several times that certain programmatic areas, such as the creative arts and social sciences, are significantly limited by the quality and size of the space they inhabit. “We know that at times we lose students for reasons that can only be traced back to the feeling they had in some aspects of the physical plant.” “It’s a competitive environment, and we need to be aware of the impact that facilities play in recruiting.”
External Challenges and Opportunities to Consider in Planning

The Economy

The current uncertain economic situation impacts Brandeis in several ways. Most discussed were the growing need for student financial aid and the fact that it puts pressure on the university, particularly since Brandeis University’s commitment to social justice reinforces the importance of need-blind admissions policies. The need to attract strong candidates, to some extent by offering them financial aid, along with the rising costs of running a comparatively small institution with both a liberal arts and research mission, is becoming a significant financial challenge. Many fear that Brandeis, as is also true with its peer institutions, is pricing itself out of the market.

A few faculty members wondered aloud if the economic crisis offers opportunities as well. They talked of taking this opportunity to teach differently. “Can we take advantage of these times to teach about how to do business with a conscience, find ways to inject more liberal arts into business?” “What is the purpose and impact of the Occupy Wall Street movement?” “What does the crisis mean to the social justice issues already prevalent in our country and in the world?”

Society’s Changing Attitude toward Liberal Arts Education

The world of higher education has a long history of embracing the liberal arts as a core model for undergraduate education. Over time the model has permeated many institutions and has always been well supported by the public. However, to some degree this appears to be changing. In these tight economic times, with rising college costs, there is more pressure to prove the value of a liberal arts education. The fact that graduates are getting mixed messages from employers adds to this issue. “Students are going into a world where there are no jobs, even with a college degree. They want more connection between curriculum and career.” “Given the price of a liberal arts education, we have to think about the value added and communicate that value.” As this kind of pressure builds, faculty members fear that the result will be a small tier of elite institutions that continue to offer a full liberal arts experience, while many more will shift their focus to training and job preparation. One faculty member made the following point: “Success will come, not to those who give in, but to those who reassert the value of a liberal arts education.” Another faculty member commented, “Success will come to those that develop a new paradigm about what they are and find innovative ways to communicate and realize it.”

Several groups discussed the fact that this situation presents opportunities for liberal arts institutions such as Brandeis. Virtually all faculty who took part in these discussions felt that Brandeis should not simply begin to move toward a job preparation model, but instead should continue to be true to its core values while also building ways to bring real world issues and experiences into its approach. “We need to do that in a way that is unique to Brandeis.” “With growing student interest in real world experiences, such as internships, co-op programs, and other ways to apply learning beyond the university, we need to create experiences that connect them to their future, provide opportunity and vision.”

There is also growing interest in alternative delivery models for higher education, and helping students utilize information in new and effective ways. Students are telling us that they’re configuring knowledge in different ways than we have done. In some faculty sessions there was a
sense that the issue is not as much about content as it is about how that content is effectively conveyed and creatively linked with content in other fields, so students can apply it in new ways in a continuously evolving world.

Some faculty members cited several interdisciplinary “hot topics” that Brandeis might build upon, such as environmental sustainability, climate change and energy policy, public health and education.

**Decreasing Levels of Support for Research in the U.S.**

Brandeis has long been known for its high quality research. One of the smallest top-tier research universities in the country, its capacity for faculty research in the sciences and humanities is one of the distinguishing features of the institution. However, decreased funding is putting Brandeis University’s research mission, to some degree, in jeopardy. Faculty researchers at the Heller School are feeling particularly vulnerable since in many cases half of their salaries are research-grant dependent. As the NIH, NSF and other government funding agencies cut back, it could mean up to a 50% cut in pay for those individuals. The overall situation is compounded by the competitive environment that includes a rise in research support in other countries and the emergence of new schools that are attracting international students with an interest in research.

**Changing Demographics**

A number of demographic factors will impact Brandeis in the future. It is expected that the size of the high school cohort will decline in the next several years, meaning fewer “traditional” 18 to 22 year old college students. “We will be competing for smaller numbers at a time when people are asking if a college education is worth it.”

At the same time, the students who graduate from high school will be different. There will be a greater variety of cultures represented and more students from non-elite high schools. Colleges and universities will also need to be prepared to serve the educational needs of mid-career and older students, along with the traditional cohort. Life-long learning and a growing number of people over 65 looking to stay active and engaged will present both opportunities and challenges. It was noted that should Brandeis choose to expand its services to this non-traditional market, it will be able to build on the current strengths and successes of the Rabb School model.

A growing number of international students, at this time particularly from China and India, are looking to attend university in the United States. This is having a major impact on the nature of the student bodies in institutions of higher education throughout the US. This growing diversity of students will impact curriculum, teaching, and student life. International students — and their American counterparts — will need help with cultural adjustment, and some international students may also need language support. Integrating a diverse student body and ensuring a supportive, collaborative, and academically rigorous environment will challenge colleges and universities in an increasingly global world.

Dealing with such diverse audiences will require Brandeis to consider how it can best represent U.S. diversity in its students, as well as the right balance of international students. It will also be necessary to build greater diversity into faculty and staff and develop a profound engagement with the notion of cultural differences and cultural knowledge.
Impact of Technology on Higher Education

One topic that emerged consistently in every discussion was the role that technology will play in the future of higher education — in the classroom, outside of the classroom, in research, etc. “The modern university will be more about the technological infrastructure. The growth of online education and distance learning is already impacting higher education, and this will only continue to grow.” Several faculty members projected that lower-cost online education may be increasingly attractive in tight economic times and this would present a challenge to residential colleges and traditional institutions.

On another aspect of technology, “Students are arriving at Brandeis with sophisticated technical knowledge and equipment, and with social media a part of their DNA, and they expect their institutions to be at the same level of technological sophistication.” This growing use of technology can present unique challenges for the traditional faculty-student relationships. “At Brandeis, it is essential that we determine how best to accommodate smart new technologies while maintaining effective and rewarding engagement between faculty and students.”

Envisioning Brandeis 10 to 15 Years from Now

Although the strategic plan will address a five-year horizon, it will be developed in the context of longer-term vision. The specifics of that vision have yet to be determined; however throughout the faculty input sessions, many aspects of vision were introduced. A single statement that embodies the element of vision brought up in the faculty discussions may be something along these lines:

Brandeis University will be well recognized as a top-tier institution with world-class academics and research, informed by principles of social justice, capturing the imagination of its students, faculty, and alumni. It will animate partnerships with other institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, foundations, research organizations, innovative business enterprises, and philanthropists. Brandeis will have an appropriate endowment, and the overall resources to enable high levels of innovation and excellence throughout the institution.

Each group was asked to envision the future of Brandeis University 10 to 15 years from now. The results have been organized into 12 topic areas and are presented below.

Create New Linkages Throughout Brandeis for Greater Quality and Innovation

Many faculty sessions included a call to develop greater programmatic linkages between and among the components that make up Brandeis. The faculty suggested that over the course of this year, in the context of strategic planning, the following questions should be explored:

- How can we break down organizational and pedagogical barriers that currently stand in the way of creating inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches and programs for our students?
- How can we more effectively build on the expertise embedded in the Heller School to enhance our arts and sciences education and enable a greater realization of our social justice mission? And, in turn, how could the arts and sciences components of the
institutions more effectively interface with the Heller School in ways that would bring additional breadth and depth to Heller School programs and curriculum?

- How can we better integrate the international business capacity we are building in IBS so that our undergraduates and our arts and sciences graduate students can better understand the world they live in and the economic, business, and management challenges they will encounter over their lifetime?
- What aspects of our current overall model should we be re-evaluating to ensure that Brandeis can realize its full potential?

Consider New Ways to Configure the Liberal Arts Structural Model

As the world and the higher education competitive environment continue to change, there is no doubt that new models for higher education will emerge. With this in mind, several faculty members contributed their ideas for creative ways to structure the liberal arts model at Brandeis — changes that are both innovative and responsive to the evolving needs of a global world. Much thought was also given to the fact that a good, well-communicated strategy along these lines might attract a new cadre of students to Brandeis.

Some ideas for changing liberal arts delivery models for Brandeis include:

- Offer a way to complete both a Bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree in a compressed time period. The most extreme example of this would be to cease giving Bachelor’s degrees and require all students to complete both degrees in either four or five years.
- Adopt a European 3+2 model. This builds on the fact that many students try to complete degrees in three years and leave early.
- Develop an educational program based on three years at Brandeis and one year of technologically connected study and/or international study: bring Brandeis to the world, and the world to Brandeis.
- Develop an educational program based on multiple semesters, work-study, online courses, and a different residency model. This would enable Brandeis to provide education throughout the year, rather than only 160 days/year as the current two-semester schedule offers. This approach would demonstrate how to provide a flexible education in a resource-constrained environment.

Redefine the Liberal Arts Education for the 21st Century

Many faculty members felt that Brandeis should take a lead in redefining the liberal arts education, enhancing and augmenting the approach and content to meet the needs of the 21st century. What might that look like?

Many faculty members expect that an emphasis on interdisciplinary and cross-departmental work will characterize the great majority of future educational offerings. Some suggested greater linkage with the professional schools — particularly Heller. Some suggested an integrated arts/humanities/social science curriculum. Several faculty members felt that customized interdisciplinary programs should be developed based on the interests of students and the specific expertise of the faculty.
“There will likely be a greater emphasis on the relationship between practice and learning. What does one learn by making a painting or writing a poem?” Every field has an element of relevance to the real world that we may be missing. In addition, Brandeis could commit to increasing “experiential learning” programs. This might include a greater emphasis on field-based non-traditional learning models. It might also include providing the infrastructure for students and faculty who want to do collaborative research on real-world topics.

Another aspect of strengthening the future liberal arts experience would be to build greater capacity in the humanities and the arts. “The humanities are a critical and distinctive feature of a liberal arts education. We need to nurture that strength.” When discussing the creative arts, many faculty members talked about space and the need for better facilities. One group talked at length about emphasizing international and transnational art and the relationship between that and technology. “We need to allow for non-western performance, mixed media, and so on, with technological support so that anyone can access it anywhere, around the world.”

Brandeis has a strong track record and a clear commitment to the sciences, and this will be a key part of planning for the future. Some faculty talked about leveraging the sciences as they relate to real world issues — environment, human health and health of the whole planet, and so on. Some pointed out the fact that Brandeis already has all of the parts of an integrated engineering program and essentially needs to prioritize and organize those elements into an integrated whole.

Faculty members felt very strongly that, no matter what decisions were made about the future, Brandeis must continue to encourage and support exceptionally strong relationships between students and faculty, and also help students connect with one another in meaningful and productive ways. “Brandeis must continue to be a place of enormous intellectual growth and stimulation, where science majors also major in English.”

**Support Faculty in both Traditional and New Roles**

Faculty members often discussed their intent to continue to provide nothing less than excellence in teaching and research. “Whatever changes occur, it is essential that the approach reflect the highest academic standards.”

With increased emphasis on interdisciplinary education comes the need for faculty who are interested in working across previously set boundaries. “It will be important to put in a mechanism whereby faculty hires can have synergistic impact across multiple disciplines and schools.” It was noted that this would require addressing certain aspects of the tenure process, which is currently designed to support individuals embedded in a single department or field.

A couple of faculty groups suggested developing different approaches to assessing potential and granting tenure. They suggested that some aspects of the tenure process might be based on teaching, some on research, and some on meaningful service. “Brandeis could take the lead in creating incentives for faculty to engage in meaningful public service.”

It was also noted that Brandeis should make an effort to keep junior faculty fully engaged with senior faculty, across disciplines, and with students. “Junior faculty should also be highly engaged in addressing the big questions facing Brandeis and liberal education. It is their future that we are planning.”
Make a Brandeis Education More Accessible and Affordable

Many of the ideas discussed in the sessions have embedded in them ways to make a Brandeis education more accessible as well as affordable. This issue has become one of the greatest challenges of our time, and it will be more important as the world of higher education becomes increasingly competitive. Changing demographics demand that more institutions reach out to a broader spectrum of students whose economic situation does not allow for an expensive four-year stay at a college or university. Future students will continue to seek smart alternatives.

Another approach to funding students over the coming years was suggested — that of developing a sizeable endowment that would eventually enable a significant percentage of Brandeis students to attend at no cost. This, of course, would require significant fundraising efforts and a keen interest on the part of Brandeis alumni and philanthropists.

Invest in Innovation

One group suggested that Brandeis needs an overt mechanism for directly supporting innovation. They noted that many other universities have innovation labs or entities designed for that purpose. Such entities provide the focus and often the resources to try to refine new ideas. One faculty member gave voice to this by saying: “Given Brandeis’s strengths, it could be known for centers for innovation that are interdisciplinary and focused on teaching students to be literate in the arts, sciences, humanities, social sciences, and the work of solving real problems in the world.”

Engage Alumni in New and Meaningful Ways

Many of the faculty discussion groups stressed the importance of alumni to Brandeis and the roles that alumni can play in Brandeis University’s future strategy. “Brandeis alumni are valuable resources and can provide real-world connections for students.”

Faculty often described Brandeis alumni as an almost untapped source of information and connectivity for students seeking an understanding of how their work at Brandeis connects to the working world. “We should engage alumni as the way undergraduates gain internship experiences. We should invite alums to come back and see that we value what they can contribute and are building on their contributions.”

The faculty suggested the creation of a Brandeis-wide, alumni-focused mentoring program and suggested finding other ways to connect the alumni to the student experience. “This could be the Brandeis version of Northeastern University’s Co-op program — a concept that does not fit us.”

Creating an effective technological social networking infrastructure was often suggested. Also, there was support for the concept that once one enters Brandeis as a college student, one remains a part of the Brandeis community for the rest of his or her life. “Building a culture of belonging while students are on campus, and then continuing to maintain and enhance those connections when they graduate, is important to future success.”

As a relatively young institution, Brandeis has a comparatively small and young alumni base. “We have a young and under-committed base. But the alumni base will grow into its role over the next
Many faculty members expressed the view that actively engaging alumni with the institution would benefit everyone — the alumni, the students, and the institution as a whole.

**Build New Programs Based on Existing Strengths**

It is clear that Brandeis has many program- and curriculum-related strengths that are recognized within the academy and could be better leveraged in the future. Many faculty session attendees suggested ways to create new, integrated programs, or interdisciplinary areas of study, that would enhance the overall institution. **NOTE: The following list represents several ideas that emerged in this particular series of faculty discussions. It is by no means an exhaustive list, and we fully expect that other ideas will emerge as this process moves forward. The ideas are ordered to reflect how often we heard them; however, there is no attempt to indicate priority or appropriateness of the idea for Brandeis at this time.**

- **Integrated Creative Arts Program and Building:** Often cited was the need for an enhanced and more integrated creative arts program to bring together the many facets of the arts that Brandeis has long embraced. One faculty group envisioned an arts center that would bring together a wide variety of art forms — dance, visual arts, theater, music, and more, and could enable the use of advanced technology to link Brandeis arts and artists with the rest of the world. “Students and faculty could participate in the international arts scene from Waltham, MA.” The related idea of offering a film program, fully integrated into the fine arts component of the institution, was also discussed several times.

- **Law School:** The idea that Brandeis University should have a law school, or a strong preparatory program for those considering law school, has been discussed often over the years. Many faculty, staff and alumni believe it is a natural fit for the institution. When asked what drives that line of thinking, the answers vary, but they usually include elements of the following: It is a “natural fit” for Brandeis due to its mission of social justice. Brandeis has the level of intellectual rigor required for such an undertaking. There are pockets of excellence in many areas that are required for an effective cross-disciplinary approach to law. The institution is named after Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, one of the most important figures in United States history. Such were the various comments and rationales stated at several of the input sessions.

- **Engineering Program:** The idea of a Brandeis engineering program was suggested several times. This was described as a program that would be well integrated with the existing sciences and humanities. It was discussed as a good fit with Brandeis’s strengths, as well as an area of great need both in the U.S. and abroad. A Brandeis engineering program might allow students to identify a concentration in environmental sciences, health care, resource management, or other relevant areas, and give them the ability to help developing countries address issues related to water, energy, health, agriculture, etc.

- **Undergraduate Business:** The idea of an undergraduate business major grounded in Brandeis’s values and built on its social justice commitment was also shared in a couple of faculty discussions.

- **Medicine:** Another concept brought forward was that of looking seriously at Medicine — a Brandeis approach to a medical school and/or partnerships with other institutions that
would enable Brandeis to offer such a degree. Considering its strong track record and existing strengths in the sciences and research, one faculty member commented: “For Brandeis, this would not be a huge reach.”

- **Entrepreneurship Focus and Center**: Proposal for an Entrepreneurship Center which would coordinate and support all entrepreneurship activities on campus. The center would sponsor lecture series and conferences. It would also provide space and mentoring for incubating new businesses created by faculty and students with priority given to entrepreneurial efforts that advance a social justice mission. *NOTE: Although entrepreneurship was brought up in faculty discussions, this particular approach was shared in a small-group meeting of Alumni and a Trustee.*

Other ideas that have come forward thus far as a result of the sessions, and still to be described briefly in this report, include:

- **Integrated Humanities Initiative and Lab**
- **Interdisciplinary School of Informatics**

**Enhance Global and Local Partnerships**

Faculty members assume that Brandeis is active in the world and will continue to be so engaged. Brandeis has always been a strong member of an international community and therefore has a strategic advantage regarding the development of new global partnerships moving forward. This may be the time, as Brandeis recalibrates its future trajectory and leverages the strengths of its new leadership, to create a strategy for global partnering. This is likely to have a relationship to the institution’s approach to attracting and retaining an enhanced cadre of international students.

At the same time, faculty discussions called for new ways to engage with Brandeis University’s local partners, the city of Waltham, MA, and the surrounding cities and businesses.

**Invest in Technology**

As technology increases in its overall importance to education and research, it is expected that Brandeis will further engage in technology at an intellectual level. “Create a conversation about how our disciplines and our students stay engaged so we’re not left behind in the new economy.” It was often said that Brandeis should reconcile its highly personalized approach to teaching, based on mentoring relationships, with the demands and benefits of online education. “Do we need someone else (young) to teach us how to use technology with our existing educational model?”

Strengthening technology is also critical for supporting faculty and staff. Research computing was cited as increasingly important for the sciences, social sciences, and business.
Enhance the Campus and Facilities

Faculty members talked often about the institution’s facilities. Every group discussed the need to improve and better maintain these investments in the future. They also recommended specific facility improvements and additions.

Most often cited was the desire for an interdisciplinary creative arts building that brings all the creative arts together in one place. Brandeis has always had a strong arts curriculum. This, along with the tendency toward cross-disciplinary programming and the need for deep integration with technology capabilities — even the opportunity to do “real-time” art with other artists around the world — calls for a new approach to space. It should be noted that this idea was brought forward not only by creative arts faculty but also by individual faculty members from other disciplines. It was discussed several times as a strategic component of Brandeis in the future.

The theme of developing new kinds of spaces to better enable collaboration came forward several times. One faculty group spent time describing the need for a new building for the social sciences — one that supports and pre-disposes programmatic collaboration and synergy among faculty and students.

The library was cited as an important resource that needs increased financial support. It’s the life-blood that allows information to circulate around campus and it needs financial support to thrive. There were several calls for greater investment in new technology, more flexible study and meeting spaces, as well as other more traditional library resources including staff, in order to keep up with changing approaches to research and overall student and faculty needs.

A conference center and related programming was identified as a way for Brandeis to build a reputation for hosting high-quality conferences on topics that reflect the university’s strengths and its commitment to social justice. “This would result in greater visibility for Brandeis. It would help our stature and give our students a chance to experience incredible people on our campus.”

Develop Promotion Strategy that Reflects the Strategic Plan

Brandeis is an excellent institution, known for its strong academic programs, and is beloved by students, faculty, staff and alumni. It is perhaps best known in the Northeast and in the larger Jewish community. Brandeis has the capacity to continue to move forward as a top-tier educational institution over time. However, that will require that it gain a greater understanding of its core strengths today and in the future, and translate them into clear and compelling messages. It will also require a new promotion strategy that reflects the long-range vision and new strategic plan.