Re: Mandatory Training for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

To: Dean Dorothy Hodgson, College of Arts and Sciences

CC: Robin Switzer, VP Human Resources; Mark Brimhall-Vargas, VP for Diversity Equity and Inclusion

In view of our increasingly diverse community and the challenges of political polarization facing our culture today, it is time for us to reconsider our responsibility to each other and those we invite into our community to understand and respond to our differences with empathy and respect. As Faculty members of a University, we serve in many capacities for which our academic training has not fully prepared us, including but not limited to mentoring students and colleagues from different backgrounds; teaching in an inclusive and changing classroom; and managing staff, faculty, and students in a dynamic University hierarchy. Federal and state policies, moreover, create a complex system of rights and responsibilities for everyone in this system.

In response to the changing nature of higher education, the Brandeis Senate advises with conviction that Faculty should be mandated to receive training that will prepare us to be better partners in addressing institutional and structural challenges and in fostering a positive and productive campus climate for diversity, equity and inclusion. Training should be mandatory immediately for all Faculty members in management positions and all Faculty members designated to interview and hire University personnel. Training about inclusive pedagogy, issues that pertain to compliance with local and federal regulations, and our campus culture and values should be made available in a phased process which prioritizes new hires, promotion to new ranks and positions, and membership in Handbook chartered committees.

As part of this process, we request that responsible parties draft and make public sensible training plans which include incentives and explain qualifications for service positions mentioned above. We advise in addition that any system of training be (1) in line with best practices, (2) useful and directly applicable to faculty work, and (3) offered with other demands on faculty time in mind. We also suggest that mandatory training be introduced with clear and thoughtful language explaining its full benefits for the University community.

May 15, 2020

JPC (Chair), with full consensus of the Faculty Senate