Brandeis University

To: President Leibowitz

Carol Fierke, Provost, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs,

and Professor of Biochemistry

Stew Uretsky, Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration

Cc: Dean Dorothy Hodgson, Dean Katy Graddy, Dean David Weil

Re: Faculty Compensation

Date: February 10, 2022

From: The Faculty Senate

Bernadette Brooten, Sarah Curi, William Flesch, Sharon Fray-Witzer, Arthur Holmberg, Thuy Lam, Monika Mitra, Carol Osler, Muna Guvenc Ospina Leon, Nanda Nandakumar, Davide Pettenuzzo, Raphael Schoenle, Rajesh Sampath, Ilana Szobel, Rebecca Torrey, Jonathan Touboul, Sabine von Mering, Pu Wang, Grace Zimmerman

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We write to encourage the Administration to give focused attention to faculty raises for AY 2022–23 in light of the results of the Faculty Survey.

“Pay” was the concern most frequently cited by faculty respondents to this year’s Annual Faculty Survey. It was also the issue on which the most faculty chose to share written comments, comments that were often imbued with strong sentiments.

We highlight two specific faculty concerns. First, inflation and the declining purchasing power of Brandeis incomes. Second, inequitable compensation for some and perhaps many OTS faculty members.

Purchasing power of Brandeis faculty incomes

Over the past two decades, faculty purchasing power remained roughly constant in most years for most faculty. Inflation was roughly 2% and the annual “merit” increases were of about the same magnitude. Indeed, these annual increases have effectively served as cost-of-living adjustments.

Last year (AY 2020–21) faculty purchasing power declined because prices rose by 5.3% and pay was frozen given the COVID catastrophe. This academic year faculty purchasing power has already declined because prices rose by 3.3% from July to December 2021 (an annual rate of 6.9%) and last July’s cost-of-living adjustment was 2.5%. The average predicted inflation rate for AY 2021–22 is about 5.6% among professional forecasts from reputable institutions available online.[1] Using precise calculations this would imply that inflation will exceed faculty raises by 3.0% this academic year and by 8.5% over two years. A further concern is the risk that inflation remains high this year, rather than subsiding.

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[1] The forecasters: the Fed, the OECD, Kipplinger, Focus Economics, and Fannie Mae.

Troubles with retention and recruiting are likely to intensify if faculty cannot count on maintaining their purchasing power. The Senate recognizes that the University faces many competing demands on its resources, and that faculty compensation is already a matter of concern to senior management. Our goal is to ensure that the magnitude of this challenge is fully appreciated when resource demands are weighed against each other.

The Senate requests

- **Some restoration of purchasing power in the budget for AY 2022–23 or a plan for restoration going forward, and**
- **To learn the University's Plan B in case inflation continues to surprise on the upside.**

Before moving on, we stress that maintaining purchasing power is also very important for administrative staff. Staff and faculty benefit from the same annual cost-of-living adjustments and thus experience roughly the same consequences from inflation.

Inequitable compensation for some OTS faculty members

A second common concern in the Faculty Survey was inequitable compensation for OTS faculty. Though sharing salary information is not the cultural norm, examples of disturbingly low compensation for individual OTS colleagues are known to some Senators. Unlike the Senate, the Administration has the information needed to identify outliers and to examine whether there is any structural pattern in such inequities.

The Senate requests that the Administration conduct a survey of compensation for OTS faculty and rectify inequities.