

The Global Task Force: An Integrated Vision for the Brandeis Future

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Preface

In becoming a globally-engaged institution, our special character gives Brandeis University some considerable advantages:

- Our relatively small size allows us to build **integrated and interdisciplinary approaches** to global problems and ideas that large-scale research universities – with their departmental siloes -- cannot duplicate.
- The depth and excellence of our scholarly research means that we can build **working relationships with high-quality universities overseas** that even the best liberal arts colleges cannot construct.
- Our **liberal arts focus** means that we are preparing students with the skills in critical thinking, collaboration across boundaries, and the understanding of culture that they will need to succeed as professionals and as global citizens.
- Our **vital connection to the Jewish people** means that Brandeis University’s global efforts have natural homes and supporters in communities in every corner of the world; few other institutions can boast of a similar worldwide “family.”
- The Brandeis commitment to **social justice** helps create natural allies for us around the world, in an era when other higher education institutions are often regarded as commercial and mercenary.

These are not merely assets – they are **distinctive** assets that can allow Brandeis to carve out a visible and unique role as a global institution – **if** we make a robust commitment to do this right. And being more successful as a global institution means in today’s world being more successful as a university. Everything we care about – ever-improving quality of education, path-breaking research, recruiting the best students, advancing social justice, and generating new revenue – now depends in a daily way on the quality of our global engagement.

After all, universities now operate in a global environment where **flexibility, the use of technology, and the destruction of boundaries** of all kinds are the order of the day. Students expect mobility and choices far greater than any single institution can provide. New educational providers are challenging the primacy of established universities. Young people need both critical thinking skills and experience in the complexities of today’s world if they are to develop the knowledge and values they need to be successful professionals and engaged citizens.

The following recommendations of the Global Task Force are designed to build on Brandeis assets – and to place them in a context of today’s global higher education environment. While these recommendations can indeed be considered separately, we believe that they are much more powerful when considered together, and in the context of “Global Brandeis” as a defining feature of the University’s future.

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Executive Summary

By 2017, Brandeis University will be widely recognized as a leading global university with three distinctive features:

- a. Brandeis will develop an identity as the “global public square,” and the university will be known widely for its ability to bring multiple disciplines and perspectives to bear on major global issues and problems.
- b. Brandeis will be the university that demonstrates most clearly to employers and professional schools the rigorous assessment of the global knowledge and skills of its graduates.
- c. Brandeis will be recognized as a leader in building constructive partnerships for advancing knowledge and social change with professionals around the world.

Three major new strategic directions, each building on existing Brandeis strengths, will help us achieve those goals:

1. The **Brandeis Global Forum and Global Questions**, a sustained series of courses, programs, and publications that engage large segments of the Brandeis community with outside experts in generating new interdisciplinary knowledge about major global issues.
2. The **Brandeis Record of International Skills and Knowledge (BRISK)**, a rigorous and comprehensive method of assessing the skills of graduating Brandeis students in such areas as language acquisition, knowledge of other cultures, the ability to analyze global problems, and the ability to work in cross-cultural and virtual teams.
3. **Brandeis Partnerships for Knowledge and Justice**, a network of relationships between the University and academic, professional, and community groups around the world.

These three distinctive features will be supported by two key strategic building blocks, which are as essential to the success of Global Brandeis as the distinctive new initiatives:

4. A focused and strategic **regional strategy**, in which the University identifies five to seven key countries or regions, and a strong infrastructure to support partnerships and synergistic activities.
5. A **redoubled commitment to Study Abroad and campus internationalization**, including setting an ambitious target of sending 45% of Brandeis undergraduates overseas, and establishing four to six global learning opportunities led by Brandeis University faculty members.

Success with Global Brandeis will significantly enhance at least three key aspects of the broader Brandeis mission:

- a. It will put Brandeis in the best possible position in **competing for the strongest students** from the U.S. and around the world, for whom global engagement is a priority.
- b. It will enhance **faculty research** through innovative programming and partnerships, and it will extend the impact of Brandeis research on social justice and improving the world.
- c. It will generate **new resources** for global programs and for the University as a whole, through increased tuition revenue and by tapping into the global commitments and passions of the Brandeis donor community.

Global Task Force Strategic Direction #1: “The Global Public Square”

Brandeis will become known as a university where big thinkers constructively debate big ideas, and where our inter-disciplinary strengths and culture can develop bold new thinking on major global issues.

Rationale:

Brandeis cannot compete with larger institutions in terms of the breadth of its research impact in the global arena. But the University’s size, scale and interdisciplinary culture give it a strategic advantage in serving as a form for advancing knowledge through constructive debate and conversations across conventional lines. The Global Public Square concept builds on existing strengths at the University, but promises to develop them in a systematic way that will deepen the University’s offerings and contribution to knowledge, and also bring attention to the global dimensions of Brandeis. Its long-term goals include:

- *New knowledge through innovative collaborations and partnerships*
- *Teaching innovation*
- *Campus-wide community engagement*
- *Visibility*

Strategies:

We propose that the University build two types of structures to nurture, develop, and publicize our role as the global public square:

1) **The Brandeis Global Forum (BGF).** Every two years, the University will adopt a major global interdisciplinary theme, topic, or concept, and will build around that theme an extensive series of courses, research projects, extra-curricular activities, events, and publications that will galvanize the University community and engage the broader public as well. Examples include:

- a) Women and Science
- b) Food: Culture, Society, Science
- c) Water: Environment, Politics, Culture
- d) Diasporas: Jewish Life in Global Context

The Brandeis Global Forum also provides an excellent opportunity to focus in a broad way on issues of sustainability both on campus and in the broader national and international arenas.

2) **Global Questions.** The University will identify a small number of topics that seem to be of perennial concern to societies worldwide. These will be the pillars of the Global Public Square – topics that deserve sustained attention across the University’s disciplines. We propose that the University raise funds to endow each of the pillars, then appoint faculty from a range of disciplines to direct research, teaching, and global education and outreach on each of the questions.

The hope is that faculty across the University will continue to develop the Brandeis tradition of organizing their intellectual efforts around critical questions rather than around issues solely within their disciplines.

Topics for Global Questions might include:

- a) Prosperity and Equity
- b) Global Ethics
- c) Democracy, Freedom, and International Justice
- d) Peacebuilding and the Arts

These broad categories will allow participants to put topical matters in a broad perspective. A conference on Syria’s civil war – a burning topic in 2012 – could fall under “Democracy, Freedom, and International Justice”; the fruits of the conference would be available for use by future researchers addressing similar issues after the Syrian war is out of the headlines.

Sustained interest in Global Questions would allow the University to compile, over time, a body of knowledge on each of the topics, perhaps in the form of research papers, conference proceedings, or policy papers. This body of knowledge could be a hub for sustained interest, learning, and networking long after students have graduated. Each of the pillars could “publish” the results of its work on the internet in a forum open to alumni, students – even engaged citizens worldwide.

The Brandeis Global Forum, in other words, is a rotating structure for the global public square. The Brandeis Global Questions provide long-term continuity and strength in teaching and scholarship. Global Questions themes may sometimes serve as the basis for Brandeis Global Forum activities, and vice versa.

Global Task Force Strategic Direction #2: Assessing Global Knowledge and Skills

Brandeis will establish a rigorous, systematic method by which graduating students can demonstrate their global knowledge, skills and preparedness.

Rationale:

At Brandeis, our liberal arts education turns out students whose critical thinking, international knowledge, and cross-cultural experiences prepare them in important ways for work and citizenship in a globalized world. Yet employers, political leaders, and the broader public (not to mention tuition-paying parents) are interrogating the practices of liberal arts institutions, wondering whether they are providing value and demonstrable skills. Developing a tool to assess students' global knowledge and skills would be a challenging project. But success would enable the University to argue persuasively for the "value" of a Brandeis education in an era of increasing scrutiny. Doing it right would also put us ahead of our competitors in this area, making a mark for Brandeis as an institution that both provides a quality education and is willing to make the effort to prove it.

Strategy:

Brandeis faculty would develop a new, multi-dimensional assessment tool, which might be called the "**Brandeis Record of International Skills and Knowledge (BRISK).**" Students would have the option of participating in BRISK. They might demonstrate different elements of the knowledge and skills at different points in their academic career. But the important point is that students would graduate with a specific credential, and perhaps with a measurement that would allow prospective schools and employers to distinguish among different students' skills and abilities.

BRISK would evaluate student skills in critical thinking and writing, as well as their ability to meet the objectives outlined in the following "global learning goals" developed in 2009-10:

1. A significant knowledge of the history, traditions, and contemporary dimensions of at least one culture besides the student's culture of origin
2. An understanding of how issues of culture and cultural difference have shaped the intellectual foundations and the scholarly practice of the student's chosen field(s) of study
3. A significant knowledge of the cross-cultural dimensions of at least one major international or global issue or development (such as endemic poverty, literary modernism, or business ethics)
4. The ability to communicate effectively and respectfully with others in unfamiliar cultural contexts

Our working assumption is that the development of BRISK would involve considerable faculty study and input, and that part of the process would include consultation with alumni, trustees, and others outside the academy on how to make this kind of assessment most useful. We have not identified the precise parameters or methods for BRISK, but the task force does recommend that the group developing this assessment strongly consider a portfolio-based process, as a method that may be likely to capture best the strengths of Brandeis University's liberal arts education.

An essential element of this strategy is that the process of developing the assessment tool would in turn lead our faculty to reconsider the nature of the University's curriculum, in light of our goals for our students. Systematic attention to student outcomes will lead us to focus on our commitment and investment in such areas as language instruction and cross-cultural communication. In other words, assessment and the continuous improvement of the University's curriculum and pedagogy will go hand in hand.

Global Task Force Strategic Direction #3: Brandeis Partnerships for Knowledge and Justice

Brandeis University should develop a number of small, high-quality partnerships with overseas institutions making ample use of available technologies. Product-based virtual collaborations between faculty and students can and should be an important component.

Rationale:

Well-developed, multi-dimensional partnerships with overseas institutions offer the opportunity to build on individual faculty connections and multiply their impact through enhanced scholarship, new opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, and new sources of revenue. Brandeis faculty members already work with hundreds of colleagues overseas. Our recommendation is to give sustained and focused attention to deepening the connections with a small number of those institutions. Such relationships should utilize, as appropriate, the best available technologies, especially in creating new opportunities for students and in enhancing the Brandeis University curriculum.

Strategy:

To design these partnerships, we should begin by asking what are the expected outcomes of our global engagement. Three that we view as important and desirable are (a) continued expansion of innovative collaborative research between Brandeis faculty and overseas faculty; (b) a broader, more diverse community of students, and (c) cross-border course development leading to a more global curriculum.

The first two of these outcomes – research and student exchange – have been integral to global higher education partnerships for a long time, and we should indeed pursue and develop them vigorously. The third outcome – a significant effort to expand our curriculum across borders – is much less developed in global higher education. This is an area of great potential for Brandeis, given our particular assets and approach.

We suggest that particular attention be paid to opportunities for expanding and enhancing the Brandeis curriculum through **joint courses using distance technology**, and even to the development of academic programs shared between Brandeis and overseas institutions. Such initiatives can and should be tied closely to other innovative efforts at Brandeis in the area of distance learning and the use of educational online technologies. This is happening on a small scale now (the Heller School does have a small number of courses offered jointly with overseas institutions). But what we are proposing is an extensive effort to engage our faculty with overseas partners not only on research but also on teaching.

Such cross-border courses will help Brandeis expand its curriculum by giving our students access to faculty with expertise not represented on our campus. It will give birth to new interdisciplinary approaches to learning. And it will provide our students with opportunities to work in cross-cultural teams on meaningful research projects – a process

that will prepare them for the “virtual team” environment that is now so common in professional life.

From the task force discussions, the following has emerged as a set of criteria for seeking international partners:

- The partnership should be issue-based. As an example, we could be seeking partners within our social justice mission but picking an issue that is global and one that our faculty and student body is particularly energized about. Partnerships built along this model could be aligned with the Brandeis Global Forum or Global Questions (#1).
- The partners we choose will reflect on Brandeis University’s image, and we should keep this in mind. In other words, the culture of the institution should resonate with our values. The institutions we choose should care deeply about teaching, debate, and engagement.
- Seeking out smaller, newer institutions/programs appears to be a sensible strategy for building partnerships. Institutions that align well with our scale and age may have more flexibility for innovation than larger, more established universities.
- Brandeis and the international partner should share values, but there should also be complementarity of expertise – that is, a tangible sense that the partnership “adds value” to the research and teaching capacity of each institution.

In recent years, Brandeis has begun efforts in this direction. For example, a growing relationship with the National Center for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) is based on a common desire for enhancing scientific exchanges and broadening the global experience of Brandeis students while opening up possibilities of bringing Indian undergraduates to campus. An initiative that began with strong connections involving a small number of Brandeis scientists has now grown to involve almost a dozen Brandeis faculty members from several different departments.

In many cases, the partners will be academic institutions, but it may also be possible to develop multi-dimensional connections with governments, business, or large non-governmental organizations. For example, the University could develop a significant partnership with an overseas arts or performance organization, which could connect strongly to a Global Question area like Peacebuilding and the Arts, or to an important ongoing global arts program like MusicUnitesUs.

Partnerships for knowledge and justice are related to, but distinct from our recommendation regarding sustained overseas commitments (#4). While we hope and expect that strong institutional partnerships will develop in regions where Brandeis has multiple ties, we also recognize that there may well be times when opportunities to pursue strong institutional partnerships will develop in parts of the world where Brandeis has no previous sustained presence.

Global Task Force Strategic Direction #4: A Regional Strategy

Brandeis should develop a sustained presence in four to six specific countries or regions of the world to maximize opportunities for scholarship, recruiting, student experiences, social justice, and the generation of new resources.

Rationale:

As a relatively small university, Brandeis must establish some special and enduring relationships in places of particular importance to our students, faculty, and alumni. But we are not eager to follow the lead of some larger institutions to establish overseas branch campuses or similar major investments. “Sustained overseas commitments,” as described below, will allow us to create synergies involving our students, faculty, alumni, and extended communities overseas, for purposes of research, teaching, recruitment of students, social justice projects, and fundraising.

This strategic direction builds on, but is distinct from, strategic direction #3 (partnerships for knowledge and justice). Institutional partnerships are one important part of a regional strategy. But they need to be complemented by other activities to achieve the best outcomes for Brandeis: cultivating strong networks among our international alumni; finding good placements for our students to study and work abroad; recruiting top students to Brandeis at the undergraduate and graduate level, and other initiatives. These activities – together with strong institutional partnerships – will create synergies in selected countries and regions that will benefit the University and the communities it serves in many ways.

Strategy:

We recommend the development of four to six “sustained overseas commitments” by 2020. The concept of a sustained overseas commitment is, among other things, an alternative to the branch campus model that is appropriate to our scale and our ambitions.

A sustained overseas commitment is a coordinated set of educational, research, or social justice activities in a country outside the United States, involving substantial participation over time by Brandeis faculty members and students. A sustained overseas commitment may take many forms: a physical presence (a study abroad program, for example), a multi-dimensional partnership with a local institution, or an innovative arrangement with multiple players. This commitment has important resonances back on campus as well – scholarly activities, lectures, research, coursework, and performances can tie in to the given regions.

Each sustained overseas commitment might be designed to achieve directly one or more of the following goals:

1. Enhancing study and work opportunities abroad for Brandeis undergraduat and/or graduate students, and connecting those opportunities more directly to academic activities on the Brandeis campus
2. Strengthening research opportunities and research impact for Brandeis faculty members and advanced students
3. Extending the Brandeis social justice mission and other forms of “impact” in the world through partnership with governmental and/or non-governmental organizations
4. Developing innovative teaching and learning models that extend the Brandeis education mission without sacrificing quality
5. Extending the University’s commitment to the Jewish people to overseas Jewish communities
6. Generating net revenue for the University

In addition, sustained overseas commitments can help achieve indirectly some of the following goals:

1. Alumni outreach and fundraising
2. Recruitment of foreign undergraduate and graduate students
3. Enhancing a definable global profile in recruiting students from the United States
4. Increasing the depth and breadth of undergraduate education on the Brandeis campus
5. Widening research opportunity, quality, funding, and impact
6. Strengthening the profile and presence of Brandeis professional schools in key countries

Brandeis already has significant, multi-dimensional engagements in Israel and India. The sustained engagement in Israel is both a model for the University’s regional strategy, as well as an extension of the Brandeis commitment to its Jewish roots. It includes incipient institutional relationships with several Israeli universities (and one Palestinian institution), as well as an opportunity for recruiting students, building our alumni network, raising funds for scholarships, and placing students in internships in organizations focused on issues of social justice in the Israeli context. The Brandeis-India Initiative includes a lecture series, the building of new alumni/friends chapters in Delhi and Mumbai, and developing connections with two Indian institutions of higher education. In 2011-12, the University has convened a task force to consider further development of connections in Brazil, although no long-term commitments have yet been made there.

We recommend that the University establish a structure to make informed choices about which countries and regions should be priorities for Brandeis, and to monitor the commitments in specific regions over time.

Global Task Force Strategic Direction #5: Study Abroad and campus internationalization**Brandeis will redouble its commitment to Study Abroad and to supporting international students.****Rationale:**

As the number of traditionally aged college students shrinks within the United States, competition for domestic and international students will become more intense. Domestic students overwhelmingly want the opportunity to study abroad, recognizing the importance of a global education. International students are looking for institutions that not only provide academic excellence but also provide comprehensive support services. As an institution, we need to ensure that we maintain a strong tradition of students studying abroad while providing comprehensive support services to international students. Brandeis-specific study abroad opportunities are also an opportunity to take full advantage of the talents of our faculty, as well as to deepen and point a spotlight on the kinds of intensive, interdisciplinary, experiential courses that make a Brandeis education special.

Strategies:

If we are promoting Brandeis as a global institution, study abroad participation is an important measure of our success. Brandeis currently ranks 36th amongst research universities for the percentage of undergraduates that study abroad, with 32.8% of undergraduates studying abroad. To become one of the top 25 research institutions for study abroad, our numbers would need to increase to 42%; to become one of the top 20 institutions, our numbers need to increase to 45%; to become one of the top 10 institutions, our numbers need to increase to 60%.

Increasing the number of undergraduates who study abroad can have a positive impact on campus in multiple ways. First, it can be a tool for alleviating campus overcrowding. Second, students who are on study abroad programs—particularly those with home stays, internships, or research components—tend to be more competitive for highly selective fellowships such as the Fulbright. Third, students who participate in study abroad contribute to the learning of their peers both inside and outside the classroom. The experience of studying abroad, particularly in immersion programs, develops cross-cultural competency not only in the individual but contributes to a larger global dialogue on campus.

In addition to using third party providers for study abroad, we recommend the creation of four to six faculty-led **Global Learning Opportunities**. While these would typically be semester or summer long intensive learning experiences, other rigorous academic programs that include an abroad component might also be desirable. These Global Learning Opportunities will build on our faculty's expertise and provide exciting opportunities for cultural immersion abroad, again contributing to students being able to achieve the Brandeis Record of International Skills and Knowledge (#2). Global Learning Opportunities should build on the specific strengths of Brandeis University. We have launched this process with Brandeis in The Hague, which is a living embodiment of the University's commitment to principles of justice in a global context, as well as a dynamic opportunity for undergraduates to immerse themselves in historic events in the world capital of international law.

International students are also increasingly attending U.S. educational institutions. While international graduate students once outpaced their undergraduate counterparts, the gap is closing because of the large number of undergraduates from China. The top 12 countries sending students to the U.S. are China, India, South Korea, Canada, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Vietnam, Mexico, Turkey, Nepal, and Taiwan. These students enrich our classrooms and our community.

Competition for international undergraduate and graduate students will increase, particularly as domestic populations shrink. As a result, Brandeis must establish itself as an institution which provides comprehensive support services to international students, including housing, storage, ESL support, emergency travel funds, income tax preparation, and support for students with families. These services not only benefit international students, they demonstrate a powerful commitment to the internationalization of our campus.

International students will be important contributors to our other global efforts including the Brandeis Global Forum (#1) and the creation of sustained overseas commitments (#4), which are reliant on an active alumni base. Furthermore, by better supporting international students during their time at Brandeis, we are more likely to improve the global reputation of the institution.

Financial and Structural Implications

- 1) **Investments.** Taken together, these recommendations will transform the global profile of Brandeis University from a collection of assets to a signal strength. Investments will be required to launch the Brandeis Global Forum, the Global Questions, and to develop the infrastructure necessary to provide across-the-board leadership and management for these collected activities. But we have already seen payoff from our small steps in these directions. Small up-front investments in building connections in Israel and India (#4) have already generated several million dollars in new funds during the Lawrence presidency. We have the potential to generate much more with a robust up-front effort.
- 2) **Re-thinking faculty roles.** A strategic planning process is an opportunity to re-think fundamentals, and one such fundamental is the deployment of the University's greatest asset, its faculty. Clearly the meaningful engagement of the faculty is essential to the success of Global Brandeis. With that in mind, we propose the creation of a **Global Brandeis Faculty Fellowship**, a rotating group of at least eight faculty members from across the University who can invest time and intellectual energy in participating in and leading key elements of the global dimensions of the University. Each faculty fellow would have responsibility for leadership in a particular project or initiative: leadership of a Brandeis Global Forum or a Global Questions initiative (#1); developing or implementing the BRISK assessment effort (#2); creating an overseas partnership (#3); or developing a new study abroad program (#5). Global Faculty Fellows would also meet to provide campus-wide coordination and leadership on international issues, but their main responsibility would be to their individual projects. We propose that Global Faculty Fellows be relieved of one course for this work.
- 3) **Administrative structure.** The University should give sustained attention to the question of leadership for its global dimensions. The success of these interdependent elements depends on a structure with leadership that can maintain communication across administrative, academic, and geographical boundaries. This would be best taken forward by building the capacity of the **Office of Global Affairs** to achieve these goals.

Global Brandeis and the Values of the University

Brandeis will remain a research university with a liberal arts focus.

Research is inherently a global activity, as scholarly collaboration across borders is essential to the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Without the systematic attention to global relationships envisioned in the task force's recommendations (#3), Brandeis will fall behind in nurturing and sustaining the cross-border collaborations that are vital to remaining in the first rank of research universities. At the same time, the focus described here of taking advantage of our size, scale, and quality to promote interdisciplinary approaches to global ideas (#1) both draws on and strengthens our commitment to the liberal arts. In addition, our proposal to assess rigorously our students' critical thinking and analysis in a global context (#2) will compel us to redouble our attention to liberal arts ideals.

Brandeis will embrace social justice in its education and research endeavors.

Our recommendations regarding the Global Brandeis Forum and Global Questions (#1) promise to bring new rigor and focus to the University's engagement with social justice in a global context. Sustained attention to such fields as "global ethics," "peacebuilding and the arts," and "democracy, freedom and international justice" will bring new coherence and visibility to our social justice profile. Moreover, the development of strong regional ties (#4) offers the opportunity for Brandeis students and faculty to work closely with overseas partners on collaborative approaches to addressing social justice communities at the ground level in key regions of the world.

Brandeis will honor its Jewish roots and its commitments to pluralism, access, and diversity.

Our proposed focus on sustained regional commitments (#4) offers two specific ongoing ties to the global Jewish community. First, a coherent approach to our connections in Israel represents a tangible commitment to Jewish life and values. Second, our regional commitments in other parts of the world should naturally draw on and take advantage of Jewish communities in the diaspora (in places like Brazil, for example). Building the "Global Brandeis" brand will continue to make the University attractive to students from overseas, thereby expanding the diversity of our student body. Additional support for study abroad (#5) – both in terms of numbers and in terms of faculty involvement – is the single best way of immersing our students in other cultures and encouraging them to integrate those experiences with their intellectual and academic development.

Global Brandeis and The Strategic Planning Process: Questions and Answers

Is it strategic?

Our recommendations, taken together, represent a systematic, long-term approach to an ongoing feature of Brandeis University. We recommend not only that Brandeis adopt a more intensive and coherent approach to its global dimension, but also that the University develop a distinctive approach, based on interdisciplinary methods and a rigorous commitment to assessment. We recommend certain specific ideas – but within the context of an overall conception that can encompass a wide variety of implementations as ideas develop within our extended community.

Does it play to our strengths and give us an edge related to that strength?

Brandeis has a great deal to build upon in the global arena: its inclusion of faculty and students from around the world almost since its founding, the global scholarly connections of our faculty in the sciences and other fields, and the international focus of key programs in its professional schools, among others. Our recommendations promise to give us an edge by giving focus and coherence to our activities. At the moment, our global dimension, while well-developed, is poorly known or understood outside the University. Our recommendations, taken together, will make the University a leader – especially among institutions of our size and scale.

Will it make us more distinctive?

Simply being “global” (or saying that you are) is not distinctive in today’s higher education world. What is distinctive is to harness the global to invigorate the liberal arts. Other institutions focus on physical manifestations like branch campuses. Our recommendations focus on using the interdisciplinary approach of the liberal arts to tackle global questions and problems (#1). We also propose to give Brandeis a unique role in assessment and accountability when it comes to student knowledge and skills (#2). The specific approach to partnerships that we recommend (#3) also sets us apart from other partnership plans based entirely on student exchange. Our other recommendations (#4 and #5) are necessary building blocks that will reinforce the distinctive elements of our plan.

Will it increase our competitiveness for attracting the best faculty and students?

Prospective faculty and students are scrutinizing universities for the depth of their commitment to global endeavors and the innovations that underlie those commitments. Our recommendations will make a powerful argument for the global opportunities available for scholars and students at Brandeis.

Is it bold?

Taken together, our recommendations offer a route towards making Brandeis University an engaged player and leader in the global arena. In 2012, Brandeis is an institution with strong international connections that are also widely scattered. We produce excellent global scholarship and education, but we also miss many opportunities because we have not taken full advantage of our collective global strengths and synergies. The combination of Brandeis University's small-scale, high-quality research, and the international foundations of our institution offer an outstanding opportunity to bring a strong liberal arts focus in a prominent way to global higher education. But we cannot rely exclusively on individual faculty or student efforts to achieve this. The boldness of the recommendations of the Global Task Force lies in our conviction that sustained and systematic attention to an integrated series of initiatives will pay off with exciting new dimensions of scholarship, new models of teaching, and new resources to support the best of Brandeis.

Can we communicate it effectively?

Our proposed attention to large global questions (#1) is tailor-made for effective communication, as it will involve our faculty, students, and extended community in multiple "storylines" related to important issues. Furthermore, the proposed concentration of focus with regard to partnerships and regional commitments (#3 and #4) will help sharpen our message regarding global Brandeis and the liberal arts, by developing more integrated programs that will be sustained over time.

Is this recommendation likely to generate revenue?

Yes, in at least three ways. First, attention to global Brandeis generally will enable us to continue to strengthen our pipeline of tuition-paying students from overseas at both the undergraduate and the graduate level. Second, the partnership approach that we recommend (#3) will allow for the creation of new academic programs that do NOT depend on a branch campus model but DO allow for Brandeis to generate new tuition streams in collaboration with overseas institutions. Third, a more concentrated focus on global programs will provide exciting opportunities for individual and foundation donors with personal, professional, and philanthropic ties overseas. With a small up-front investment, we have already generated millions of dollars in the last two years in relation to Israel and India. A more substantial up-front commitment will yield even more impressive results over the medium-term and the long-term.

Will it require significant investment?

Our recommendations are not half-measures. We propose to use the University's strengths in the global arena as a lever to transform both the substance of our activities and our public profile. To do this will require some up-front investments at a scale to ensure significant faculty and staff involvement to provide the leadership that these activities will require. We believe that our alumni and extended members of our community will find these attractive investment opportunities in the University's future.