



**Fulfilling the Promise:
The Brandeis University Strategic Plan
May 2013**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brandeis University is an outstanding institution with a proud and distinct history. Established in 1948, long after the formative period of American higher education, Brandeis joined the ranks of the elite institutions, while carving out its own unique identity. A research university, committed to the advancement of knowledge and offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, Brandeis operates on a scale, and with the collaborative ethos, of a small liberal arts college. A non-sectarian institution, founded and sustained by the American Jewish community, Brandeis has at its core both the highest ideals of the Jewish tradition and the deepest principles of American democracy—intellectual inquiry, robust discussion and debate, pluralism, and a commitment to social justice.

In 2011, President Frederick Lawrence launched the effort that led to the development of our strategic plan, *Fulfilling the Promise*. The plan is rooted in Brandeis's distinctiveness and rests upon a strong conviction that we continue to offer something singular and valuable in American higher education. In response to current realities, in higher education generally and at Brandeis in particular, this plan sets out what we must do to ensure the continued vitality of our model and to enhance the University. It culminates in what we aspire to do, building on key strengths, to transform excellence into greatness.

The principles, purposes and guideposts set out in *Fulfilling the Promise* will underpin the many specific decisions we will make in the coming years about personnel, programs, facilities, and finances. Decisions will require careful attention. In light of the finite resources, tradeoffs are inevitable. We will make choices and weigh the tradeoffs in the broader context of our institutional aspirations. To achieve our ambitions, we will make investments that build upon each other progressively. A university-wide effort spanning two academic years, marked by passion, insight and innovation, created the plan. So, too, will successful implementation of the plan require the energy of our engaged community.

Strategic Goals and Transformational Initiatives

The body of this plan is organized into six *Strategic Goals* that represent the fundamental dimensions of Brandeis University and six *Transformational Initiatives*. The Goals and Initiatives articulated in the body of the plan are illuminated by specific objectives and recommended supporting actions. [The complete strategic plan is available online.](#)

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Focus on Intensive Learning Experiences of Enduring Impact

Brandeis students will have intense educational experiences that match their passion for learning and engagement. This education will be flexible and individualized to enable students to realize their personal and professional aspirations, while also encouraging them to explore new areas and broaden their horizons. It will cultivate critical thinking and the capacity to bring knowledge of the past and present to bear on complex problems, and will engender an abiding commitment to utilizing their learning to advance social justice.

A Brandeis education should embody our distinctive character and strengths: a small research university with the liberal arts at its core and a strong commitment to social justice. Intensive learning should be at the heart of a Brandeis education: experiences that not only add to students' knowledge, but alter the way they understand the world and act in it. This kind of education must encompass not only the classroom, but also the laboratory and studio, the museum, the library, and the field. Thus does theory and knowledge connect with practice. We must also empower students to assume responsibility for their education, providing flexibility in the structure (e.g., dual degrees, time-to-degree) as well as the content of their academic program, while encouraging them to enlarge their interests and explore new areas. These goals require a comprehensive and well-coordinated advising system that draws upon both faculty and professional advisors. At the same time, faculty must have the necessary support and tools, including an Office of Educational Innovation, and sufficient time and incentives for especially demanding forms of teaching.

The critical foundations of a Brandeis undergraduate education depend on a clear conception of our intellectual core. The study of history, language, literature and culture and facility with qualitative and quantitative thinking are the *sine qua non* of a liberal arts education. The exploration of human values, in all their social and historical diversity, is also essential, enabling students to participate fully in the human experience as enlightened and responsible members of their human communities, both local and global. Advancing these studies within the full range of fields that constitute the Brandeis curriculum will allow us to seize the opportunity to exercise intellectual leadership at a time when academic fundamentals are under assault even in the competitive world of elite institutions.

These critical foundations are rooted in the four schools of the College of Arts and Sciences: the Humanities, the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences, and the Creative Arts. By supporting the integrity of each school and fostering interdisciplinary exchanges among them, Brandeis will ensure that its graduates are empowered with broad and deep knowledge of human affairs. In order to implement this knowledge, Brandeis students require outstanding skills in research, writing, oral communication, and the use of technology.

Graduate education has grown rapidly at Brandeis over the past two decades through the creation of new master's programs. Academic standards must be consistently at the very highest tier in all our graduate programs, both master's and doctoral. Clear goals and metrics must be used to evaluate programs, and vigorous, targeted recruitment is needed to ensure sufficient quality and quantity of students. We must re-examine how we train graduate students to ensure that we are preparing them for the career paths they are pursuing. The increasing importance of graduate education in a wide range of fields offers opportunities to develop programs directed to new audiences, including part-time programs, distance learning, and hybrid options.

Goal 2: Strengthen Opportunities for Discovery, Creation, and Innovation

Brandeis will empower its collaborative community of scholars and students to engage in research, scholarship, and creative endeavors that push the boundaries of knowledge, discover how the world works, create new perspectives, and design innovations that improve society.

Our small size relative to other research universities offers special challenges and opportunities. Our academic standards must be consistently high, but we cannot afford to invest equally in every field. We must make strategic judgments about where we are able to attain and sustain national prominence. We shall capitalize on these opportunities by exploiting synergies among academic departments, programs, centers, and institutes; this is a natural extension of the interdisciplinary collaboration that is a particular strength of Brandeis. We are already recognized as a “connected university.” To underscore our national prominence, we should seize every opportunity to publicize the accomplishments of Brandeis faculty, staff, and students through a comprehensive communications strategy, carefully conceived and energetically applied.

Research, scholarship, and creativity require various tools, materials, and administrative support. We must ensure that these are fully adequate to our intellectual aspirations and the basic research performed at the University. Support for the pursuit and administration of external funding must be well coordinated. Today’s library, which encompasses information technology as well as books, precious archives, and other traditional materials, must be funded to keep pace with the growth of knowledge and intellectual tools. The transfer of academic research into practical applications has become an essential aspect of the modern university, requiring a robust Office of Technology Licensing.

Goal 3: Renew Investment in Faculty and Staff Excellence

Brandeis will attract and retain top-quality faculty and staff dedicated to research, scholarship, and creation, to teaching that makes a crucial difference in the lives of students, and to innovations that improve the world. Our mission requires that we go beyond transmitting knowledge to the participatory creation of new knowledge, new fields, and new approaches that help to solve some of the world’s most pressing problems.

A first-rate university cannot exist without a first-rate faculty. This requires not only rigorous procedures for hiring and promotion, but also salaries, benefits, and academic supports that enable us to compete with our peer institutions. A first-rate faculty must also be diverse in multiple ways, bringing a variety of backgrounds and perspectives to their individual fields and to the shared discourse of the University; this requires a concerted

effort, focusing on the recruitment and hiring of faculty, on the key components of retention and on flexible approaches to retirement.

The Brandeis mission requires that our faculty be both teachers and scholars, and our policies and practices must support both roles. We must offer faculty greater flexibility in how they allocate their time, and must give genuine weight to both teaching and scholarship in hiring and promotion decisions. There must continue to be a place on our faculty for outstanding teachers whose work is informed by scholarship, but who are not expected to produce scholarship. Research staff are also essential, greatly enhancing the research capacity of the University, and often contributing, as well, to teaching and advising.

Over 40 percent of our faculty are aged 60 or older, raising the prospect of an increasing rate of retirement and the need to hire replacements. We should build for the future by hiring predominantly at the junior level, with occasional appointments at the senior level when this will make a crucial difference to an academic program. When possible, Brandeis should pursue opportunities for thematic cluster hires of faculty with overlapping interests in multiple disciplines. This will simultaneously strengthen individual programs while forging new interdisciplinary synergies.

Staff members have a crucial role in sustaining the excellence of Brandeis. Our staff compensation, structures, and policies must support the recruitment and retention of first-rate staff. This includes various forms of formal and informal recognition for staff achievements, as well as opportunities for professional development. Staff expertise should be respected and staff input encouraged as a basis for improving operations.

Goal 4: Building the Engaged Lifelong Community

Brandeis University will be a university to which prospective students are strongly drawn, current students are deeply attached, and alumni are enduringly committed.

Brandeis University is not just a liberal arts university with three professional schools, but an organic community. How can we build upon this strength, which enriches and deepens the educational experience, while also increasing the attachment of alumni and making Brandeis more attractive to prospective students? Our small size, close faculty/student relationships, and strong campus ethos of collaboration and cooperation provide the essential conditions for community. We can actively work to strengthen community by enhancing intellectual collaborations in the laboratory and the classroom, student support services, residence life, and campus events and traditions. Building community also means that we embrace and articulate our unique identity as a nonsectarian, pluralist university with deep roots in the American Jewish community.

Alumni are an essential part of the Brandeis community. How can we more effectively encourage their active participation? This is a reciprocal endeavor. The University must offer programs and services to alumni, while also encouraging alumni to assist the University in recruiting students, serving as mentors, and providing opportunities for internships and jobs, as well as contributing philanthropic support. When alumni reflect on their Brandeis experience, it is virtually always the faculty that they recall most positively. Some of our remarkable *emeritus* faculty could play a significant role in reestablishing connections with alumni.

Underpinning all of this is recruitment and enrollment of students. Changing demographics require us to broaden our applicant pool. The college-age population is beginning to shrink in the Northeast, while growing in the South and the West. An increasing percentage of the college-age population is Asian and Latino/Hispanic. We must intensify our recruitment efforts, drawing upon faculty, alumni, and parents, as well as admissions staff. This challenge presents a welcome opportunity to increase the diversity of our student body to include all historically under-represented groups, while at the same time increasing selectivity.

Goal 5: Promoting Responsible Stewardship

Brandeis will ensure its financial strength into the future through stewardship that supports the University's academic mission in a sustainable manner.

We are stewards of this university, inheriting an institution built by our predecessors and bequeathing it to those who will come after us. The prudent handling of our resources – our finances and our facilities – is an obligation as well as a necessity. Our institutional processes and decision-making should reflect this. The value of programs and initiatives needs to be weighed against their costs (direct and indirect). Sustainability must be part of our academic work and be reflected in our operational choices. All those responsible for managing budgets have to be well trained to do so; financial reporting should be detailed and clear. Resources must not merely be protected, but enlarged. We must create organizational structures, incentives and authority to encourage entrepreneurial activity.

Our facilities have a practical influence on the work we do at Brandeis and are also the most tangible expression of our values and commitments. It is essential that we devote additional resources – quadrupling the \$2.5 million we currently spend annually – to renovate and renew our buildings. We should also seize opportunities to re-fashion outdoor spaces, a cost-effective way to enhance the campus appearance and experience. In light of the goals and priorities emerging from this strategic plan, we must update the campus master plan.

Goal 6: Create an Academic Incubator

Brandeis will be innovative in order to maintain its general excellence and to lead in areas of strength. We must identify and support programmatic initiatives that advance path-breaking research, scholarship, and creativity and that enhance our undergraduate and graduate curricula.

Strategic planning elicits a host of ideas for academic initiatives. The work of conceiving and articulating each of these ideas is healthy for the institution, even though only some of them will eventually come to fruition. Brandeis must establish a regular process by which academic initiatives are proposed and reviewed, and define clear criteria to be used to encourage, evaluate, and to provide support for the proposals. The process should make use of the University Advisory Council (UAC) to provide feedback to the authors of proposals and to offer advice to the Provost. The review criteria should include the significance and distinctiveness of the initiative, its relation to existing institutional strengths, its capacity to exploit or promote synergies among academic units, the resources required to implement it, a timeline, and a description of how success will be measured. Academic initiatives that entail the establishment of a new department or program must also be reviewed through the governance procedures set out in the Faculty Handbook.

Transformational Initiatives

We are committed to excellence, but we aspire to greatness. We recognize that our ambitions require significant resources, which can only be acquired through a vigorous capital campaign. In this section, then, we set out ideas on a grander scale: ideas rooted in the strengths and special character of Brandeis and worthy of strong philanthropic support. Each of these ideas depends upon enabling conditions in the form of personnel, facilities, and technology—some already in place, others that will accrue over time. It is the work that these conditions make possible, the education, scholarship and creation, across all our disciplines and professions – that drive these ideas.

Initiative 1. Investing in People—Endowed Scholarships and Faculty Chairs

The measure of a university is the people who constitute it. Endowed scholarships enable us to admit and enroll the best students, from diverse backgrounds, without regard to their financial means. In so doing, we uphold the founding commitment of Brandeis University to academic excellence and equality of opportunity. Endowed chairs enable us to attract and to retain outstanding faculty, and provide a secure foundation for enduring academic strengths, from one generation to the next. Endowed chairs also enhance the reputation of the University, through the association of the named chairs with Brandeis and through the excellence of those who occupy them. Both endowed scholarships and endowed chairs also relieve pressures on the annual operating budget, making it possible to enrich academic

programs in other ways. In short, each investment in a faculty chair or a student scholarship yields multiple dividends for the individual beneficiaries and the institution.

Initiative 2. Keystone of the Liberal Arts – Exploring Our Traditions and Our Future

A liberal arts education prepares students for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. The modes of inquiry that comprise the humanities and the social sciences take the human as their essential object and constitute the enduring core of the liberal arts. Each discipline within these areas has its own scholarly discourse, but each also contributes to the essential human conversation about how best we live our lives together and as individuals. What is the nature of a just society? What is required to realize it? How can one live with intention and purpose? These are issues in which we all have a stake and to which we all can and must contribute.

To sustain this discourse, we must ensure the continuing strengths of the humanities and social sciences at Brandeis, as the disciplines most directly concerned with questions of the just society and the purposeful life. To make ours truly a shared discourse we must also create an intellectual commons: a physical and programmatic space accessible to all. The library, as the traditional intellectual meeting ground for the University and as the primary repository of knowledge of the past, is the natural home for such a space. As digitization increasingly transforms the library, in part, into a virtual space, new possibilities open up for making it the locus of the lectures, colloquia, and discussions that constitute our common campus discourse. This will require re-purposing of spaces and enhancement of technology, so that the library can still fulfill its traditional functions while also taking on essential new roles including giving us the ability to listen and to speak, in real time, to the world. Addressing the questions that concern all of us, we literally enter into a shared space: in so doing, we uphold the highest ideals of a liberal arts university in the global community.

Initiative 3. The Sciences—Fundamental Discoveries that Change the World

What distinguishes the sciences at Brandeis is a special kind of enterprise and imagination that readily cuts across traditional disciplinary lines. Our great strength in neuroscience exemplifies this, and we are also early leaders in the emerging field of active matter. The Heller School's considerable expertise in health care policy and practice complements our preeminence in basic science. All of this points to the need to continue the renewal of our science complex and to fund faculty positions, staff support, and new programs that will enable Brandeis to be a leader in cutting-edge interdisciplinary scientific fields and in the intersection of biomedical research with health policy and practice.

Initiative 4. The Creative Arts—Integral to the Brandeis Mission

From its inception, Brandeis has recognized that the creative arts – both the creative work and scholarship in the arts – are an integral part of a liberal arts curriculum. Brandeis in the 21st century will recommit to being a renowned center for perfecting traditional media and for pioneering new modes of expression in the performing and the visual arts and fresh interpretations of both canonical and unjustly neglected works. Generative connections among the various artistic disciplines and genres will be fostered. These ambitions require new and renovated facilities that accommodate and enable the full range of artistic inquiry and expression and encourage conversation and collaboration across traditional disciplinary boundaries. A broad range of faculty expertise, in both permanent and visiting positions, is needed to achieve these goals, inspiring our students to advance the arts they study and practice, as is administrative support to enable talented people to do their best work and forge symbiotic exchanges among the disciplines and the larger University. It is also essential to continue to advance the Rose Art Museum, a flagship arts entity on campus, as a singular facility for the arts and home to cross-disciplinary exploration and curricular integration of the arts with global reach.

Initiative 5. Education for a Global Society—Business, Politics, and Cultures

We live in a global society, and no human enterprise – large or small, for profit or otherwise – exists apart from it. We must prepare our students to thrive in such a world and to contribute to it. Our international professional schools, strongly connected to the Arts and Sciences, position us well to do this. In order, to achieve the standard of excellence we require of ourselves, it will be necessary to enlarge both our facilities and our faculty. The recent expansion of the Heller School of Social Policy and Management into a second, connected building has demonstrated the importance of a sufficiently capacious facility, technologically equipped and appropriately configured. Our International Business School (IBS) needs a comparable expansion, to accommodate growth in its graduate programs as well as the new undergraduate business major and, down the road, executive education programs. Additional faculty with expertise in the global economy are needed – scholars who can connect academic research with business practice. We also need to ensure sufficient faculty strength, both in the Arts and Sciences and at the Heller School, to support a globalized curriculum. Brandeis can and should be a preeminent university in educating for a global society. The Rabb School for Continuing Education is also ready to grow, having emerged as a national leader in online education for professionals in the workforce and as home for the Brandeis Summer School.

Initiative 6. Spaces that Inspire – Renewing our Campus Home

For those who work here (and live here), our campus can enhance or impede, enliven or enervate, build connections or impose separations. Buildings will not make Brandeis great, but buildings can help make it possible for us to become great. Thus, in the sciences

and the creative arts, it is self-evident that both effective teaching and original work require first-rate facilities. In the social sciences and humanities, too, the quality of the facilities and programmatic support enable the best work. Indeed, a bold vision for top-tier institutions of higher education today entails a bold vision for the humanities, broadly conceived, and the social sciences. This is especially so for a research university with the liberal arts at its core. By opening the Mandel Center for the Humanities in 2010, a time of national financial crisis, Brandeis made a powerful statement reaffirming its longstanding commitment to humanist inquiry as a defining feature of a liberal arts education in the 21st century. Teaching and research in these disciplines deepens our understanding of the past, enlarges our perceptions of the present and, in so doing, stakes out viable possibilities for the future. As a university with well-established commitments for ethical participation in an increasingly complex world, we require additional renewal of facilities in the upper campus Mandel Quadrangle, and in the middle of campus, home to the social sciences to enable us to expand and strengthen humanistic research and education for the large number of students and scholars who pursue these areas of study especially as technological transformations open new avenues of critical inquiry. Brandeis will thus stand out as a leader in affirming the place of humanist inquiry in both the academic world and the public sphere.

Conclusion

Fulfilling the Promise sets out what it means to be Brandeis University in the 21st century and how best to live out that meaning. At the inception of this university, even before the first faculty was hired and the first students enrolled, a crucial decision was made to name the new institution after Louis Brandeis. It is a name weighty in significance, expressing a commitment to the high intellectual standards, strong moral conscience, and inviolable integrity that Justice Brandeis embodied. As Albert Einstein remarked at the time, “Brandeis is a name that cannot be merely adopted. It is one that must be achieved.”¹ That is the continuing challenge before us. Our task is not to reinvent or redefine Brandeis University. Our task is to fully realize Brandeis University in ways that remain true to our unique history, honor the attainments of our present state, and secure our continuing capacity for excellence in both education and scholarship well into the future.

¹ Abram L. Sachar, *Brandeis University: A Host at Last*, p. 15.