

Boston University Office of the President



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Building our Future and Dealing with Change

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Dear Colleagues:

Each fall I write to you in order to bring you up to date on the highlights of the previous academic year and to lay out some of the important issues which we will face in the year ahead. Much occurred last year, most notably the changes in our senior leadership ranks with the arrival of Jean Morrison as our University Provost and Chief Academic Officer, the retirement of Joseph Mercurio, our long-time Executive Vice President, and the restructuring of the administrative leadership that has resulted. I am energized by working with this new leadership team, who are working well together to best serve the University.

This year I would like to take a bit different approach in this letter. While there are many highlights this year worthy of inclusion, I have included only a few, which can be found in Appendix A. I would like to use the majority of my letter to reflect on the University and comment on some of the challenges we face as we continue to implement the changes that are necessary to pursue our goals.

When I joined you six years ago I found an institution with an amazing diversity of programs and a highly talented faculty and staff. The University already had undergone remarkable growth in a relatively short time. Starting as a regional commuter school only a few decades before, Boston University was emerging to become a major global private research university. In 2005 most members of our community had yet to really comprehend the magnitude of either the changes that had occurred, the opportunities in front of us, or the changes in processes, standards, and external support we would need to put in place in order to achieve and sustain our goal — *to be a great globally-connected private research university*.

Our strategic plan, [*Choosing to be Great*](#), was published in fall 2007 and began to document what we needed to do to reach this goal in terms of eight commitments; I have appended this

list to the end of this letter (Appendix B).

A University in Transition

In six years we have worked to align our processes, decision-making, and resource allocation toward achieving our goals. We have worked to tackle critical issues: faculty compensation, hiring, and retention; student recruiting, success, graduation, and now placement; facilities for teaching, research, and co-curricular activities; and support for research and graduate education.

We are making progress on each dimension, even in a difficult economic climate. Equally as important, there is a growing pride in the University and a confidence that we are building sustainable momentum.

Although there seems to be consensus regarding our aspirations among the whole Boston University community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, some of the changes needed to achieve our goals are proving to have difficult consequences for many members of our community. For example, adjusting faculty compensation to be in line with peer institutions, adding faculty positions, and creating new named professorships all have been welcome changes, but aligning our use of faculty titles with other research universities and raising our standards for faculty promotion and tenure have been difficult steps for many on our faculty. An equally complicated consequence is apparent in undergraduate admissions: everyone associated with the University applauds our rising recognition and competitiveness, but many are anxious about the impact of these changes on the ability of children of alumni, faculty, and staff to achieve admission to our now smaller, more elite freshman class.

There are many other examples of the growing pains caused by the rising standards at Boston University and the price we must pay to build one of the most comprehensive vibrant, diverse, and excellent academic communities anywhere.

Perhaps the biggest transition underway at Boston University this year is the implementation of Phase One of BUworks. I realize that our staff across all academic and administrative units is working with BUworks to adapt to the new processes and different functionality than was supported by our legacy systems. We also are dealing with the inevitable flaws in the design of a new complex software system that are only uncovered once it is implemented in the university environment. I very much appreciate everyone's hard work and patience as we work to resolve these issues.

The BUworks team will continue to work to fix problems, upgrade the system, and, when appropriate, increase functionality in response to user input. We will continue to focus on communication with the user community through meetings of user groups, as well as in larger forums, such as the Management Conference on Thursday, October 27th.

I hope we all take satisfaction in the sense of collaboration across all segments of the

University as we navigate this period of transition. Faculty, staff, and the academic and administrative leadership are working well together on a host of important topics, ranging from the implementation of BUworks, to implementing the changes in our [Intra-University Transfer](#) policies, adoption of a universal [Academic Conduct Code](#) for our students, and to the work being done by the University Appointments and Promotion Committee (UAPT) to implement uniformly high standards for promotion and tenure.

This is a good time to talk about several faculty-related issues that we hope to resolve this year, among other topics.

Membership on the Faculty

The Faculty Council, University Council, and their committees have been and continue to be working on important issues of faculty governance, including the question of what constitutes membership on the faculty. This is a critically important topic that is not explicitly addressed in our Faculty Handbook; it needs to be, as this definition and related qualifications define who can be an officer of the faculty, who can serve on search, appointment, and promotion committees, and who can play other critical roles in our university faculty governance. To ensure quality in our decision-making, I believe that members of the faculty who participate in critical roles in our governance, such as serving as officers of Faculty Council, or through membership on decanal search committees, should have passed through the uniform processes for appointment and promotion for the professorial ranks that are functioning on the Charles River and Medical campuses. This is a difficult statement to make as it excludes valued colleagues from processes where they have been able to participate before.

The discussion of the definition of the faculty is ongoing within the Credentials and By-laws Committee of the Faculty Council, which will be proposing language that modifies membership in the Faculty Assembly. Changes in the Faculty Handbook will also need to be considered. Hopefully we will have a resolution on this issue this year.

Length of Probationary Period of Tenure

This year, University Provost Jean Morrison and I have asked the Faculty Council and the University Council to consider one of the most important topics that directly affects the quality of our faculty: our set of processes for promotion and tenure within the University, including the length of the probationary period before the mandatory decision on promotion from assistant to associate professor. Our present probationary period of six years before the mandatory decision for tenure is among the shortest of all major research universities and increasingly is becoming an issue for our scholars who are asked to demonstrate national recognition of their work by the end of this period. The proposal is to lengthen this period by one year and regularize our processes to be in line with other institutions by eliminating the option for a three-year extension. I hope we will have a thorough discussion of this topic at our October 26th Faculty Assembly meeting.

Investment in Doctoral Programs

An important next step in our development as a major research university must be to align and resource our doctoral programs to attract and educate the very best doctoral students and place these graduates in important positions around the world. University Provost Jean Morrison is working with the deans to propose a new format for funding Ph.D. students and for allocating the needed resources. Although the proposal is not yet finished, it is clear that we will not have enough resources initially to meet all our demands and that we will need to use clearly defined metrics, based on the quality of the incoming graduate students and successful graduation and placement outcomes, in order to prioritize the sequencing of additional support.

We hope that we will be able to implement the first part of this program for recruiting for fall 2012.

Undergraduate Education and Student Success

Just as we become ever more selective in terms of the colleagues who join our faculty, we are working to improve the educational experience for what is an increasingly more qualified and selective undergraduate student body. As was reported in [BU Today](#), our incoming freshman class was the most qualified in our history and, at 4,033 students, the smallest class we have enrolled since 2003, even with the largest-ever applicant pool of 41,760. Most notably, the fraction of the applicants that were admitted (our selectivity) dropped to 49%, the first time in our history it has been below 50 percent.

Still, our residences are full because of the gains we have made in student retention and graduation rates. Our freshman-to-sophomore retention rate for fall 2011 was 91.8%, the highest our in history, as was our 6-year graduation rate of 84.9%. All our indicators are moving in the right direction, but we still have to make further improvements to enjoy the same student success as our peer institutions, mid-ninety percentile in retention and graduation rates over 90 percent. Our investments in student services and the creation of the new Center for Student Services, which will open next fall, are key parts of our strategy for improving student success and the quality of our undergraduate student body.

Our goal is to become more selective in our admissions and to use the higher retention and graduation rates to continue to reduce the size of our incoming freshman class. If we are successful, we will become a better university for our students and faculty.

Creating New Support

A key to our future success will be our ability to raise philanthropic support for our people and programs. We have been working hard toward this goal, making progress through very difficult economic times. The last 12 months have seen several remarkable announcements, including the largest two pledges in the history of the University: the \$15 million gift from Trustee Bahaa Hariri to establish the Rafik Hariri Institute for Computational Science and Engineering, and the

\$25 million gift from Trustee Rajen Kilachand to name the University Honors College as the [Arvind and Chandan Nandlal Kilachand Honors College](#), in honor of his parents, which was announced last month. These magnificent gifts are indications of a new level of support for the University from our alumni and friends, and with them we are able to create endowments which will enhance the excellence of the University.

Overall, the past fiscal year was the best in our fundraising history, with cash giving to the University at an all-time high of \$89.5 million, and more than 25,000 alumni contributing. We also received \$65.9 million in pledges toward future donations. Although we still have a great distance to go in order for our fundraising to be on a par with what we should expect for a university of the quality of Boston University, we are making progress.

Engaging our 294,000 alumni is a critical step toward making this progress. Last year our alumni association sponsored more than 800 events attended by 40,000 alumni world-wide. This new level of engagement is starting to have an effect on alumni giving; the number of our alumni who supported us last year rose by 12 percent, the first year-over-year increase since 2005.

One of our most important events of the year, our [Alumni Weekend](#), is coming up on October 28-30. We expect more than 4,000 alumni to come to campus for cross-campus and college/school sponsored events. I hope many of you will have an opportunity to participate in these activities.

Global Programs

Our strategy is taking hold to build Boston University's global programs, using the strong foundation from the past. The appointment of Willis Wang as Vice President and Associate Provost of Global Programs gives new leadership to the support and coordination of our global programs, including our 96 Study Abroad programs that are currently located in 41 cities in 27 countries.

We continue to work toward establishing a major academic presence in India. As I outlined last spring in my report, [Boston University & Global Higher Education](#), India offers Boston University an opportunity to have a substantial impact on quality higher education in one of the most important developing nations in the world and also to establish Boston University as a leading global university.

Using the University as an Engine of Growth

While philanthropic support continues to grow, with a \$2.13 billion budget in fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012), we must still rely most heavily on our ability to carefully manage the University to create the financial leverage needed to fund our programmatic improvements. Fiscal year 2011 continued our streak of strong financial years, with \$112 million being transferred at the end of the year to reserves. Of these funds, \$33.6 million has

been designated to support academic initiatives, which includes \$4.5 million of new funding for faculty recruitment. In addition, \$37.3 has been allocated to fund critical renovations and expansions in our schools and colleges, including a consolidation and expansion of the College of Engineering machine shops, which are used for teaching and research, and the renovation of the former Hillel building at 233 Bay State Road as a modern reception and admissions center; the ENG renovation project will start in January and the 233 Bay State Road project will commence in summer 2012. Major renovations that were completed this summer are described on the Facilities Management & Planning [website](#) and some are included in Appendix A. Next summer will also see the beginning of the long-awaited project for the renovation and expansion of the Law School as well as continued space renovations across our campuses.

Finally, we have begun this fall to program and design the first of two academic buildings to be constructed on the parking lot at 645-665 Commonwealth Avenue with the goal of beginning to address the space needs in the College of Arts & Sciences. The timeline for construction will be determined later this year.

It will be an ongoing challenge to continue to deliver the standard of financial performance I outline above as we operate in very unsettled economic times. Although our revenues are well diversified and we have a low dependence on income from our endowment, the turmoil in the capital markets complicates our financial structure and the impending cuts in federal spending will make it difficult to sustain our research intensity. Also, the continued slow economic recovery — if we do not dip back into a recession — makes it difficult for our students and families to afford a Boston University education, putting pressure on our financial aid budget and on possible tuition increases. Fiscal year 2012 promises to be as challenging as any of the last several years.

I hope that this letter helps put in perspective our continuing goals, our progress last year, and the challenges we are undertaking in the year ahead. I look forward to working with you to continue to make Boston University one of the great private global research universities in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. A. Brown". The letters are stylized and connected.

Robert A. Brown

Appendix A. Academic Year Highlights

Faculty

- On the Charles River Campus, we have welcomed 43 new members of the faculty, plus two visiting faculty have joined us on a permanent basis. In line with one of the goals of our Strategic Plan, to increase the size of the faculty, 17 of the total of 45 faculty appointments are to newly created positions, and two more are into positions that, after a gap of some time, have been newly funded once again.
- Additionally, hiring at the Medical Campus continued at a healthy pace, with a total of 48 new members of the faculty filling full-time positions over the past year at the assistant professor level or higher.
- Among our new faculty on the Charles River Campus, five have joined us as associate professors and five as professors. These senior hires include:
 - Andrea Bishop, joining us as chair of the Archaeology Department, is a distinguished scholar of archaeology of the classical east. She has developed ceramic typologies for several regions of the Near East.
 - David Bishop, who joins the faculty in both Engineering and Arts & Sciences, in the ECE and Physics departments, has a broad array of interests and contributions in fields as diverse as low-temperature physics, cyber-security and the protection of critical infrastructure.
 - Ran Canetti, a specialist in cryptography and computer security, has joined the Computer Science department in CAS as a professor.

I trust that all members of our faculty and staff will welcome and support these newest members of our faculty.

- Of those who earned promotions on the Charles River Campus, 16 members of the faculty were named associate professor and 12 associate professors were promoted to full professor. On the Medical Campus, 16 members were named associate professor and 18 full professor. In addition, 29 instructors were promoted to assistant professor.
- We named three senior members of the faculty this past year as William Fairfield Warren Distinguished Professors: Wendy Gordon of LAW, along with Thomas Kunz and Eugene Stanley of CAS. The Warren Professorships are the highest honor bestowed upon senior members of our faculty, who, with these appointments, continue to be involved in research and scholarship as well as in the life of the University.
- In late August, Provost Morrison announced the 2011-2012 Peter Paul Professorship awardees. Made possible through the support of Trustee Peter Paul, these professorships are presented to promising young faculty who have been at BU for no more than two years and who show clear potential for leadership in their respective fields. They are:
 - Colin Fisher, assistant professor of organizational behavior, School of Management;
 - Xue Han, assistant professor of biomedical engineering, College of Engineering;
 - Johannes Schmieder, assistant professor of economics, College of Arts & Sciences.

- Over the past year, we have had eight chairs newly endowed, and two of these have been filled.
 - Dr. Deborah A. Frank, a professor of pediatrics, director of the Grow Clinic for Children at Boston Medical Center, and founder and principal investigator of Children's HealthWatch, has been named to the Professorship in Child Health and Well-Being in the Department of Pediatrics.
 - Douglas Densmore is the Richard and Minda Reidy Family Career Development Assistant Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.
 - The other six new chairs are:
 - Clinical Assistant Professorship in Dermatology;
 - Research Assistant Professorship in Dermatology;
 - Ronald Garriques Professorship in Mechanical Engineering;
 - William and Patricia Kleh Visiting Professorship in the School of Law;
 - Slater Family Professorship in Behavioral Economics;
 - Maria Stata Professorship in Classical Studies.

Searches are underway to fill these positions.

- Members of our faculty continue to garner accolades and honors from outside the University for their work and accomplishments, including:
 - James Collins, a Warren Professor and a professor of biomedical engineering in ENG, has been elected to the National Academy of Engineering in recognition of his contributions to synthetic biology and engineered gene networks.
 - Sheldon Glashow, a professor of physics in CAS, was a recipient of the 2011 High Energy and Particle Physics Prize, along with colleagues John Iliopoulos and Luciano Maiani, for their crucial contribution to the theory of flavour, presently embedded in the Standard Theory of strong and electroweak interactions. In 1970, they argued for the existence of a then yet undiscovered particle – the "charm" quark – to solve a number of problems that particle physicists were facing. Their proposal, now called the "GIM mechanism" from the initials of the three authors, was confirmed four years later.
 - Fallou Ngom, an associate professor of anthropology in CAS and director of the African Language Program, won a Guggenheim Fellowship which will support his research and writing, as well as his efforts to nurture scholars of the Ajami language and his work in Senegal and neighboring countries.
 - Jeffrey Henderson, the University's William Goodwin Aurelio Professor of Greek Language and Literature and a world-renowned classics scholar, has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.
 - Isabel Wilkerson's much-praised book *The Warmth of Other Suns* received one of publishing's most respected honors this past spring, the National Book Critics Circle Award, in the nonfiction category. She is a professor of

journalism at COM and director of the narrative journalism program.

Academic Programs

- A few weeks ago, we announced the re-naming of University Honors College as the Kilachand Honors College. Trustee Rajen Kilachand, an alumnus of the Graduate School of Management, presented to the University on September 22nd the largest gift in our history – \$25 million – with the request that the UHC be named in honor of his parents, Arvind and Chandan Nandlal Kilachand.
- Two of our schools on the Medical Campus went through the reaccreditation process this past year.
 - The School of Medicine underwent a successful review by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.
 - The School of Public Health has received a favorable draft report from the Council on Education for Public Health following its site visit.

Facilities: Renovation and Renewal, Construction, and Summer Projects

- A total of 38 projects were completed during the summer construction season, which began the day after Commencement, while work continued on two major projects and planning continues on others. Some of these projects include:
 - Renovations to the building at 111 Cummington Street were completed to provide space for the temporary home of our new Rafik Hariri Institute for Computational Science and Engineering.
 - The organic chemistry teaching laboratories in the Metcalf Science Center were renovated, and the auditoriums in the Metcalf Center, COM, and the Stone Science Building all received technology upgrades and other improvements.
 - Classroom upgrades continued this past summer, with 32 rooms on the Charles River Campus receiving new media systems.
 - Wireless network upgrades are also continuing on both campuses. All classrooms on the CRC now have wireless access, along with all major residences and dining halls, and we are in the final stages of bringing wireless service to the remainder of the brownstones on Bay State Road. Our goal is to have full deployment of wireless service on the Charles River Campus completed over the next two fiscal years.
 - Sleeper Hall on West Campus, with 316 rooms, underwent a complete renovation. New energy-efficient lighting, carpeting, and furniture was installed in each of the rooms and the student lounge and all bathrooms were remodeled.
 - Several renovations were completed on the Medical Campus including a complete renovation and expansion of the lobby of the MED Instructional Building at 72 East Concord Street.
 - The residential brownstone at 203 Bay State Road underwent a complete

historical renovation.

- Construction is proceeding on the Albany Fellows Graduate Housing at 815 Albany St. on the Medical Campus, which will provide 104 two-bedroom apartments for School of Medicine students.
- On the Charles River Campus, the construction of the Center for Student Services at 100 Bay State Road is well underway.
- Finally, the design phase for the School of Law remodeling and expansion continues, as does the fundraising effort to cover a portion of the cost of the project, which is expected to be in excess of \$140 million. We hope to break ground this coming May on the new LAW wing, which will provide new classrooms, new study space, and additional library space.

Appendix B: Commitments from Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan is built around eight commitments needed to accomplish our goal of being a great global private research university:¹

1. To support and enhance a world-class faculty whose members are dedicated to teaching and engaged in research, scholarship, and their professions.
2. To continue to develop the special undergraduate educational environment that combines our commitment to a liberal arts and sciences education with professional opportunities, while creating flexible educational opportunities to leverage the depth of CAS and our other schools and colleges. To continue our commitment to inclusiveness based on merit for all students, irrespective of race, religion, or economic status, and to raise the financial aid needed to do this.
3. To expand and enhance the College of Arts and Sciences as the core of the University and our undergraduate programs. We are committed to increasing the number of CAS faculty members and expanding and renewing the College's facilities.
4. To enhance the residential campus and student life experience for our undergraduate students in the special urban environment of Boston.
5. To strengthen scholarship and research throughout the University by support of key disciplinary graduate programs.
6. To enhance our nationally recognized professional schools and colleges, including Medicine, Management, Law, and Fine Arts. Our commitments to Medicine, Law, and Management are key to our prominence as a major urban research university. The College of Fine Arts offers a special opportunity for projecting Boston University on campus, in the city,

and around the world.

7. To increase our emphasis on interdisciplinary research and graduate education in order to expand our leadership in important fields and the collaborative atmosphere across our campuses.

8. To continue to foster the engagement of Boston University in the city and the world, through public service and by extending the reach of our educational programs, including both study-abroad opportunities for Boston-based students and the creation of new opportunities for students around the world to experience a BU education.

1. [*Choosing to be Great*](#), Boston University, 2007.