Brandeis University offers buyouts to staff

Projects deficit of $6.5 million; faculty is not included in deal

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 05, 2014

Brandeis University is offering voluntary early retirement buyout packages to about 150 members of its staff to address a projected $6.5 million budget deficit.

The buyouts — offered to staff 60 years or older with 10 or more years of service at Brandeis by April 1, 2014 — do not apply to faculty members, university spokeswoman Ellen de Graffenreid said.

“Administrative staffing needs change over time, which can lead to some areas that are overstaffed and, frankly, some areas that are understaffed,” she said in an e-mail to the Globe. “The voluntary early retirement program is intended to help balance out staffing and workloads to make our operations more efficient and effective.”

When asked how many employees the university hopes will take the offer, how much money the university hopes to save, and whether layoffs might follow if the goals of the buyout are not reached, de Graffenreid said the university has not set “target savings, and the actual savings will depend on a large number of factors.”

She said that “depending on which staff choose the voluntary program,” some programs and offices may choose to replace those workers.

Steve A.N. Goldstein, Brandeis provost, and Steve Manos, chief operating officer, notified staff of the voluntary buyout program in an e-mail last week. Employees who accept a buyout will receive a year’s severance at their regular base pay, plus a $15,000 “transition allowance,” according to a copy of the Jan. 27 e-mail obtained by the Globe.

The e-mail said employees must notify the university of their decision by April 1, and if they opt to accept the buyout, their retirement date must be no later than May 30.

The e-mail also said staff members eligible for the buyout will receive “details specific to their situation, including their options for continuing health care coverage” within 10 working days after Jan. 27.

Brandeis has been criticized in recent months by students, faculty, alumni, and others with ties to the university after a Globe report in November reported that the school’s former president, Jehuda Reinharz, has received millions from the school for part-time work since stepping down three years ago.

In response to the controversy, the university announced two weeks ago a series of policy changes designed to set a more open and fair process for determining executive compensation.

The university spokeswoman said in an e-mail Tuesday that the payments to Reinharz were not a factor in the decision to offer voluntary buyouts.

Gordon Fellman, a sociology professor and a member of the Brandeis faculty for the past 50 years, told the Globe that he and others at the university were upset to learn about the buyout plan.

“People here are being asked to be bought out at a year’s salary and [Reinharz] got bought out at about

100 years' salary," said Fellman, who first voiced his displeasure about the buyouts to Brandeis's student newspaper The Justice. "That's been a real insult, and it's made people very angry."

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