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Brandeis students protest for university to lower executive pay

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 13, 2014 05:34 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

More than a dozen Brandeis University students protested today calling for campus executive pay to be reduced.

Students who organized the protest pointed out that tuition has increased and budget cuts have been made in recent years at the school, which is facing a budgeted deficit of \$6.5-million and recently began offering voluntary early retirement packages to about 150 employees.

Meanwhile, [University] president Fred Lawrence and ex-President Jehuda Reinharz continue to make hundreds of thousands in salary and, in Reinharz's case, millions post-retirement, the group said in a press release.

This is unacceptable, the release added. In order for Brandeis University to live up to its reputation as an aware and progressive institution, this injustice must be eliminated.

Plans for the protest were arranged in part on a [Facebook event page](#). The page listed 80 people who said they would attend the rally. The planned demonstration was also reported on earlier this week in school's student newspaper, [The Justice](#).

On Thursday afternoon, about 15 protesters braved a messy winter storm to rally outside of the Bernstein-Marcus Administration Center, according to the Facebook event page.

The storm prompted the campus to close early, at 1:30 p.m., a half hour before the noon to 2 p.m. window organizers had planned to protest.

University spokeswoman Ellen de Graffenreid said in an email: "Brandeis supports students' right to protest. The culture of the university encourages debate, discussion, and a frank exchange of conflicting views. Student protests have been an important part of the university's commitment to free speech and expression since Brandeis' founding."

Students said they plan to speak out on the issue until tangible changes are made.

Brandeis has been [sharply criticized](#) in recent months by students, faculty, alumni and others with ties to the university after a [Globe report](#) in November revealed that Reinharz has [received millions](#) from the school for part-time work since stepping down

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three years ago. That hefty compensation has been paid out amid tuition increases and budget cuts that included layoffs, reduced employee benefits and an aborted [proposal](#) to shut down the campusâ€™™ popular Rose Art Museum.

An online petition protesting Reinharzâ€™™s pay and calling on the university â€œ which considers social justice [central to its mission](#) â€œ to reform its executive pay practices has collected more than 1,700 signatures.

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

But student protesters on Thursday called for more change â€œ specifically for the university to agree to lower executive pay in an effort to help lower student tuition rates.

â€œIt was made clear with the recent statement of budget transparency on behalf of the administration that no steps have been taken toward significantly reducing executive pay in favor of reducing student tuition,â€ said the press release signed by organizers, Aaren Weiner, Elaine Mancini, Guy Mika, Joy Brenner-Letich, Mitchell Mankin, Iona Feldman, and Abbie Goldberg.

Tuition and mandatory fees at Brandeis rose 5.3 percent between the 2011-12 academic year and the following school year, according to data on the universityâ€™™s website.

From 2012-2013 to this current academic year, tuition and mandatory fees rose another 4 percent to reach \$46,106 â€œ a figure that does not include housing, food, health insurance and other expenses, which on average add at least another \$10,000 in costs. Brandeisâ€™™ dorm and meal plan rates have also risen in the past few years.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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