Annual Report
of the President
2015

Then, Now and Beyond
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Bar-Ilan University will be “…an institution of higher learning in the newly-established Jewish republic in which Jewish learning and the Torah of Israel would be studied together with all the latest findings in the fields of human research…”

Prof. Pinkhos Churgin, BIU Founding President, 1955
Academic Year 2014/15 has been one of great achievements and great challenges – a year in which we embarked on the vigorous process of implementing the ambitious strategic directions which I outlined last year, in the face of fiscal adversities which have made an already difficult task even harder.

I am pleased to report that in spite of the limitations set by budgetary cutbacks, impressive progress has been made which will ultimately not only stabilize the university after an intensive period of academic development and but also move us forward into a new period of targeted and balanced growth.

I state the above with caution and forethought. There is no magic wand or “quick fix” for gaping financial deficits which were accumulated over the past years, or sweeping changes in university practice and governance required in order to bring the university in compliance both with the State Comptroller’s report and the regulatory standards of the Ministry of Finance. There isn’t a faculty member or administrator at BIU who hasn’t been impacted by a dramatic change in institutional culture which reality has imposed upon us – sometimes for better, often for worse – but I firmly believe that responsibly preparing the infrastructure for our next huge growth spurt is just as important as the quantum leap itself.

This year has been especially important, not only for the reasons outlined above, but also because we are celebrating our 60th anniversary – a rare opportunity not only to rejoice, but to evaluate where we have come from, and where we are going. I have spent a great deal of time revisiting the writings of our namesake Rabbi Mei Bar-Ilan and our founding father Prof. Pinkhos Churgin, and I fervently believe that not only have we fulfilled their dreams, but have exceeded them.

In the pages that follow, I will relate to each of the strategic goals that I set out for Bar-Ilan in the years to come and our performance to date against those objectives. As esteemed members of our Board of Trustees, I think you will agree with me that the facts speak for themselves, and there is much to be proud of in our accomplishments of the past year.
BIU’s drive for excellence continues with great vigor, and some impressive strides have been made in research and academics, allowing us to reap the fruits of the aggressive faculty campaign taken over recent years and improve our research performance as a result.

1.1 Faculty Recruitment

Recruitment of new academic faculty continues this year, albeit at a slower pace, in both the experimental sciences (engineering, biology, exact sciences, medicine, interdisciplinary studies and psychology), as well as in the humanities, Jewish studies, law and social sciences.

I am proud to say that we are now able to begin seeing the tangible results of the faculty recruitment campaign, in terms of the marked increase in research funding. This sharp incline comes as a result of research income from I CORE, competitive grants and other sources which began to show vigor in 2013, leading to a 30% increase over incomes yielded during the previous year. Seven months into 2015, and we are already seeing a 34% increase as compared to a similar time period in 2014. These encouraging results are undoubtedly a direct outcome of the faculty recruitment campaign, and as we continue to bring in talented new faculty, undoubtedly, these revenues will increase exponentially.

The positive statistics augur additional benefits, particularly when taking into account the fact that much of the income was generated from the EU and new competitive granting sources, and also that higher research funding translates into more research overhead for the general budget and a larger percentage of governmental support. I believe that as our new faculty “settle in,” we will continue to experience a sea-change in the university’s research output. The most encouraging indication of this trend this year, three of our new faculty recruits won the coveted and prestigious Alon Prize, a huge “feather” in our academic cap.

1.2 Nurturing and Recognizing Scientific and Academic Excellence: A Welcoming Environment

New and veteran faculty alike require stewardship and cultivation in order to help them tap their scientific potential, and the enlightened “user-friendly” approach adopted by the Research Authority has contributed significantly to both the number of grants being submitted as well as the percentage of research funding being received.

This “client friendly” approach can be seen in the grantsmanship training sessions that are provided to researchers, the professional agencies who have been engaged in preparing and stewarding the grants; the self-evaluation processes put into place; the new website that was launched; a vigorous program for creating local and international collaborations that was created; and the incentives that are being provided for grant submission.
Since research performance is also a factor in career advancement, particularly for young faculty, steps have been taken to create a special award program honoring outstanding researchers.

Perhaps one exciting example of the success of this all-encompassing approach can be seen in the NIS7M ($2.75M) grant awarded to Prof. Michal Albertstein from the Faculty of Law.

Similarly, I am pleased to report that the German government has chosen Bar-Ilan University, together with its partner institution in Leipzig, to establish a prestigious Minerva Center examining the nature of the connection between Aramaic and Israeli culture during biblical times, under the able direction of Prof. Aren Maier of the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology.

Grants of this size awarded to a researcher who is not from the “hard sciences” has been an all-too-rare occasion at BIU. Prof. Alberstein’s and Prof. Maier’s “wins” have virtually dissipated the myth that there are no opportunities for competitive external funding for the liberal arts. This spectacular success is just one of several which aptly demonstrate the outstanding “return on investment” yielded from these recently implemented activities.

1.3 Physical Development: Keeping the Physical Plant Up to Pace with Scientific and Academic Development

Labs and Infrastructure
In spite of budget cuts and other efficiencies, every effort is being made to improve the research and teaching infrastructure on an ongoing basis. Indeed, some $12M has been allocated to a number of important renovation or retro-fitting projects – all in different stages of implementation. These include the experimental research facility, state-of-the-art organic chemistry, nanotechnology and engineering laboratories; renovation of the Wurzweiller and Life Sciences Libraries; creating a new social work clinical wing in the Weisfeld School of Social Work; improvements in the Law Clinic facilities; fitting out of the central equipment center in the Gonda (Goldschmied) Nanotechnology Triplex and much more.

I am pleased to announce at this time that we will be laying the cornerstone for the “Beit Hamidrash Ohel Sara in the name of Susy Wengrowsky” in the Midrasha at the Ludwig and Erica Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies. Funding for this and many other of these critical projects were made available through the generosity and vision of our donors – to whom we are deeply grateful - and from funding made available from research grants.

Medical School
In considering physical development, I would be remiss were I not to relate to the needs of our School of Medicine in the Galilee and resolution of the conundrum which exists since its establishment three years ago as to the most efficient way to meet its growth projections and the corresponding requirement for more physical space.

After careful review of the original decision to build a campus for the School in the outlying hills of Safed, the conclusion was reached that the exorbitant costs and the lengthy time frame required to install basic infrastructure simply made this option too expensive and impractical. The potential solution: to build or renovate suitable facilities in close proximity to the existing buildings.

At present, delicate negotiations are taking place with the regional and municipal authorities in order to identify and secure appropriate sites which can ensure the next growth phase of the School. We anticipate that marked progress will be made once an appointment of a Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galilee is made.

1.4 Campus Life
The Bar-Ilan campus teems with life during the days, and a cornucopia of activities and facilities are available to our students – from special events organized by our Campus Rabbi, Dean of Students, and Student Association to ongoing Jewish learning in the Erica and Ludwig Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies, which has become a central focus for students and faculty alike.

When the sun goes down, however, the BIU campus becomes almost eerily quiet. Classes continue into the later hours, but campus restaurants and cafes are closed, picking up a basketball game is not an option, and even enjoying a drink with friends is not a possibility.

To this end, Project “Lehair et Ha’Campus” or “Lighting up the Campus” has been launched. At present, options for establishing an on-campus late-night social venue are being actively explored, ways to publicize and market the evening activities of the Jesselson Institute and Campus Rabbi’s Office are being implemented, and we are in discussions with our neighboring municipalities to gain use of their sports facilities until such time as a permanent facility is built on campus.
The move toward inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary studies is no longer a "trend," but a mainstay of academic development for any institution of higher education of standing which aims to maintain and expand student enrollment, engagement and retention.

A dual "tack" is being taken which includes the launch of new interdisciplinary programs while simultaneously upgrading and expanding the existing ones. To this end, I am pleased to report that next year, the Multidisciplinary BA Program in the Humanities, with its wildly popular Asian Studies Track, will be re-opened and is expected to draw a huge following, as it did in the past. A new program in Information Technology Management also promises to provide an undergraduate degree experience which will equip students with the necessary skills and understanding of the virally-expanding applications of the new IT reality. Both of these programs promise to re-invigorate the Humanities – this in keeping with my commitment to strengthen our liberal arts capabilities.

Additional new study programs are being established in other scientific fields, such as the Communication and Information Science Program, Psychology and Law Program, to mention but a few.

As a public institution overseen by the Council for Higher Education, the review and approval process for creating new programs and study tracks is long and arduous. The university has submitted several programs to the Council for approval, including a Graduate Program in Regulation and Environmental Studies. Preparations are ongoing for opening a graduate degree in Vision Sciences, and we are currently recruiting new faculty and preparing labs and classrooms to accommodate this upcoming undertaking. A graduate degree in Gerontology is also "in the works" – a joint initiative of the Social and Life Sciences.

Another project on the drawing board is the opening of a Multidisciplinary BA program in Jewish Studies, which would enable students to choose from various subjects within the realm of Jewish Studies.

It is the university’s goal that students at the undergraduate level should have as broad an intellectual experience as possible. While universities overseas encourage a more liberal-arts experience, in Israel, the "professional school" approach basically limits the students’ academic exposure almost exclusively to courses in his or her major area of study. This, in our eyes, produces students not sufficiently well-versed in subjects of culture and arts. To this end, we have submitted a proposal to create a more flexible academic framework that will allow our students to be enriched by courses outside of their area of specialization. We believe that such a possibility will not only positively impact on student enrollment, but also in producing a student who is a "citizen of the world.”

The drive to create new exciting programs has not deterred us from ensuring that our current interdisciplinary offerings are up to par in terms of quality and effectiveness. The Graduate Division for Interdisciplinary Studies is currently undergoing comprehensive review, as is the Science, Technology and Society program – one of six operating under its auspices.

The interdisciplinary approach is also an essential direction for research, and the university is aiming to establish several international groups in emerging disciplines, which will be comprised of leading scientific experts from different fields.

BIU’s technological infrastructure is not vast, and it is clear that a drive for upgrading and expansion must remain a topmost priority. Indeed, BIU has lagged seriously behind most of our sister institutions in this regard. Some 134 of 165 classrooms are equipped with remote controlled projects and screens, with six classrooms equipped with smart systems, projectors and recording technologies.

Of the 8,000 courses offered at the university, about 6,000 are offered online, and annually, some 1,000 courses are added to this repertoire (filmed class lectures with supplementary website). About 150 of these courses are fully virtual and can replace the class lecture. We are determined to increase this number exponentially.

While we work to create new programming and employ new teaching technologies which are aimed to both attract and retain more students, I would be remiss were I not to report that at long last, the outdated, frustrating and alienating student administration computer program is being replaced with a new user-friendly software program that will, I believe, revolutionize the student experience at Bar-Ilan. Long a bane of the students’ existence, the new program will contribute greatly to providing easy data accessibility to our student body, streamlining bureaucratic processes and upgrading student services. After 15 years of the project being shelved for one reason or the other, the problem has been tackled head on, in record time. It is now in the design stage, and launch of the new program is projected for 2017.
BIU has edged closer to its goal of enabling Jewish students from all over the world to acquire our unique brand of academic education, and some months ago, an Office for International Studies was established, headed by Prof. Shlomo Shpiro, and staffed by experienced personnel from the world of international education.

The first major decision taken this year was to adopt a model which provides an integrative approach to university internationalization which would be based on the personal background, academic interests and Hebrew language level of the international student.

We decided to adopt this model because it is more practical and leverages the vast infrastructure and offerings of the university while providing for a range of student interests. More importantly, however, is the fact that it reflects the university’s core value of developing a generation of international Jewish leaders with a strong foundation in and understanding of advanced academics, Jewish life and learning, Hebrew language, and Israeli society and culture.

This summer, a graduate course in Conflict Resolution for overseas students is being offered, and after much debate, the unique summer program that we offer in Science and Technology for American undergraduate students will be held once again, due to popular demand and the generous support and encouragement of our Chairman of the Board. French-language courses in the Academic Preparatory Unit have been restructured at a higher university level. Prepared and taught by our Chemistry Department, these students will get credit for these courses if accepted into the university.

Discussions are at an advanced stage with the School of Engineering, and we are hoping that we will be able to launch a degree program in the School in October 2016/7.

At present, we are in the process of evaluating the best and most effective way to anchor the International Office into the existing university infrastructure, which is a complicated and challenging process. Until now, English-language programs for overseas students were provided under the auspices of the Dean of Students office. In its present format, English language students take English language courses in an English-speaking environment, and they are virtually isolated from their local environment and Israeli student peers. With the adoption of the new integrative model, the university is now in the process of transitioning its three flagship programs which have been up and running for several cycles, into the mainstream university study programs – a huge challenge which needs to be navigated with care and caution.

At the same time, instead of duplicating efforts and creating new operations, we will be working closely with the Dean of Students office and the Student Administration Authority to help improve and adapt our service structure for international students.

One of the biggest obstacles to overcome in our plans for establishing an International School is the housing issue which has plagued BIU for decades. This will ultimately be addressed via the Build Operate Transfer (B-O-T) scheme approved this year – however, this is a huge project and it will take years to be completed. Therefore, I am particularly pleased that an interim solution has been found which can offer immediate relief as soon as 2017, through the renovation of two campus dormitories, thus providing the International Program with an on-campus residential capability. This will be a great boon for the program, and augurs well for its success.

Our commitment to reach out to all sectors of the Jewish world also include the ultra-orthodox community, and some 65 Haredi students are now studying in designated preparatory programs on the BIU campus for the first time ever. Sephardic and Hassidic, men and women – BIU has been able to cross the cultural divide to provide the appropriate physical and social amenities for this pilot group. We are excited that next year, these Haredi students will begin their academic degree studies in economics and psychology.

BIU has been in ongoing dialogue with the Haredi College in Jerusalem, and while the extent of our involvement is still under review, I am pleased to announce that the long-anticipated Interdisciplinary BA Degree in Social Sciences will open in 2015/16.
BIU has made strides in its attempt to globalize its programs and relationships. Our excellent standing with the European Union, which has been a prime funding source for our research, has resulted in a significant number of research consortia with European universities, and we have a significant number of consortia in play, several of which are being coordinated by BIU.

Relations with China have been growing, and we expect will develop even more once our Asian Studies program is up and running. At present, there is a special International MBA program for Chinese students which in its second year, has enjoyed great popularity and success. The Council for Higher Education is providing a significant number of scholarships for these Chinese students in order to encourage their enrollment in the program.

With the opening of the International Office, we are anticipating a speedy entrée into the competitive world of Study Abroad programming, in addition to the Erasmus Mundus and Tempus programs that are currently in place for student and faculty mobility. The International team is participating in a number of global student fairs, and we are optimistic that as a result, important new cooperation agreements will be signed.

BIU has hosted over 50 academic delegations from overseas since October, and the Israel Foreign Ministry is so impressed with BIU’s campus and hospitality capabilities, as well as with our scientific excellence, that they ensure a constant stream of VIP visitors to campus monthly. This has helped in creating partnerships with a number of academic institutions.

As regards World University Ranking, BIU is in the top 3% of universities ranked; but sadly, BIU’s level of excellence has not been correspondingly reflected in the ranking numbers – a fact which I believe we can attribute more to our ability to produce reliable and comprehensive data with which to measure our excellence, rather than the actual excellence itself. We are currently finalizing a document which will define the criteria for academic excellence in every field, serving as the baseline for measuring research performance. In consonance with these efforts, we are also establishing a computerized data system which will enable regular monitoring of academic productivity across the board and for each individual faculty member. All this will be coordinated by a special team being put together by the Rector, who will be responsible for working to improve BIU’s international academic ratings.

This is a process which is creating the infrastructure for measuring excellence – something that has been not existed since BIU was established. I anticipate that it will have a cumulative impact over the years, and is not a “quick fix”. It is, however, a critical step which is much needed and essential not only to the way the world sees us, but to the way in which we manage our scientific and intellectual resources.
The Jewish values of social responsibility and communal commitment are etched into the lifeblood of our institution. To this end, I am particularly delighted to report that both students and faculty alike are intensively engaged in making the world a better place.

This year, once again, BIU is participating in projects supported by the Council for Higher Education, helping to build community-based academic programs. One such example is the project run by the Gabi and Louis Weisfeld School of Social Work, which aims to provide higher education to at-risk youth growing up in public institutions.

Our Law, Psychology and Social Work Clinics are expanding their operations, and there is no doubt that the effort and investment made in these programs is rewarded by the thousands of lives which are changed as a result of their interaction with our dedicated students and faculty.

Imbuing our students with a keen sense of social responsibility is also a major priority for us, and I am delighted with the activities of the Student Model UN program; Young Leadership Seminar for French Speaking Students; and a new program jointly established with the World Center for Aleppo Jews Traditional Culture Program, in which BIU students are hosted for one semester.

A new initiative being spearheaded this year is that of creating strategic partnerships with our neighboring municipalities. Close interactions are now being developed with Ramat Gan, Givat Shmuel, and Kiryat Ono. The plan is to create a vibrant partnership with these entities, in which BIU will become the intellectual platform for their citizens, and points of mutual interest can serve as the basis for joint programming.
External Relations
The ongoing efforts of the Division of External Relations to translate the university’s huge body of activities into support, recognition and appreciation of the BIU Brand and Corporate Identity continues to move forward according to plan. This can be seen in the enhanced university presence on the web and social media, i.e., addition of some 600 video clips which have been added to our YouTube repertoire bringing the total to 2,076 with over a million individual viewers and an increase of 40% in the number of “likes” on Facebook. A marked shift toward digital marketing has also been a focus of the Social Media Unit, particularly as regards student recruitment. This year, the shift from print to digital media in terms of money spent for marketing was about 80% of the total budget.

I am particularly pleased to report that the Division’s focus on the Alumni Community is also bearing fruit, and major membership drives supported by newsletters and films have led to 11,000 card-bearing members, and 45,000 alumni who receive our mailings. Almost 26,000 alumni follow our profile on LinkedIn. This year, a number of alumni events were held on campus, the most recent of which was that of the School of Engineering, who have proven to be committed partners with the Division in alumni development. In addition to milestone events such as these, career development programs have been launched, as well as significant work in job placement and relationship-building with companies which can potentially hire our students. Plans are in the works to set up the leadership infrastructure of the Alumni Community, and initial discussions held with prominent alumni have led to encouraging results. I am particularly proud to announce that we are launching our first Alumni Achievement Awards, which are being granted to outstanding graduates who have made significant contributions in the realms of Israeli security, local government, education, social action and business.

Managing the university brand is an important aspect of the Division’s work, and I can say with all honesty that I feel a tremendous sense of pride when I represent the university in a visual manner that is commensurate with the excellence towards which we aspire. The university’s flagship English-language magazine BIU Today and Newsbytes, in both their print and digital versions, continue to reflect Bar-Ilan University’s outstanding contribution to society in addition to being an important resource for our fund-raisers; while our Hebrew magazine, Bar-Siach (a play on words of Bar-Ilan and “conversation”) is a big draw for our Hebrew-speaking alumni.

Opening the university up to many different constituencies is also the priority of our Events and International Visits units and key to our strategic direction for the university’s positioning. Moving to a more pro-active stance of event initiation rather than just organization, the Events Unit has been responsible for bringing thousands of people to campus to partake in a multitude of interesting programs which demonstrate our many different intellectual platforms. Their TED-MED program brought overflow crowds to our Wohl Centre, highlighting the overwhelming desire of communities who live in the Ono Valley region to have contact with BIU.

The International Visits unit has worked tirelessly to ensure that BIU is properly positioned to receive the dozens of high level academic and scientific delegations which come to Israel seeking partnership with Israeli universities in...
general and BIU in particular. I have been pleased to meet with the many different delegations from universities around the world as well as with the diplomatic corps, with which I have had the opportunity to address several times a year at the Ambassadors’ Forum, as well as in the individual visits of the Ambassadors to campus. This work, done in cooperation with the VPF and the Director of International Programs, is growing from day to day.

Spokesmanship and Public Affairs
This year has been particularly prolific for BIU in the press. In addition to the ongoing work in disseminating newsworthy events at Bar-Ilan University, of particular note was the massive presence of BIU faculty during Operation Protective Edge, in which 150 interviews were carried out with our in-house academic experts; and also, my visit leading a delegation of philanthropists and businessmen from Latin America for a meeting at the Vatican with the Pope.

BIU’s visibility in the press is relatively high in Israel, and indeed, our “statistics” are impressive as compared to the other universities. This is less the case, however, in the overseas media. We received a huge boost in our international presence through the publication of outstanding major research breakthroughs which we immediately followed up with targeted media pitching with great result. A plethora of stories were published in the top newspapers and in the social media, with the latter taking a particular interest in these stories.

With the appointment of a staff member in Safed, I’m pleased to report that there has been a marked increase in coverage of our School of Medicine in the Galilee in the various media outlets. Recently, a media consultant was also appointed for the Faculty of Law. This should ensure that the activities of these two very vibrant faculties will be front and center in the media.

The Spokesman’s Office has taken the lead in academic marketing services for student recruitment, offering support and guidance to various offices in the University, particularly as regards Open Days, diverse study programs, conferences and events. The Office was actively involved in designing BIU’s marketing message, highlighting BIU as an institute promoting academic excellence while educating for Jewish and Zionist values and strengthening the bonds with the Jewish Diaspora, in keeping with this year’s marketing campaign theme – “Most Israeli – Most Bar-Ilan.”

In keeping with the times, significant resources are being devoted to the social media, for both advertising and marketing purposes as well as for dissemination of academic and scientific content. We are using various platforms to this end, such as the Ynet Judaism section, with the help of the university’s Dot Jewish Studies Channel.

Global Resource Development
The Global Resource Development operations continue their outstanding work in implementing a five year fundraising campaign designed to support a variety of key university projects critical to BIU’s advancement. Fueled by the symbiosis between professionals and dedicated lay leaders in Israel and abroad, who provide the “oxygen” for our ambitious drive for excellence, I am encouraged by the response to our campaign.

Strategically vital projects in our fundraising arsenal include faculty development and research efforts as well as student scholarships in all degree study tracks, specifically for doctoral students. Projects which facilitate BIU’s outreach and communal activities are also promoted. Our successes and accomplishments are due, in no small part, to our cooperation and partnership with our Friends’ Associations in Israel and across the globe. The Division works in tandem with these Associations to excite, motivate and engage our Friends in enhancing our presence and philanthropy in their regions as well as provide the vital back-office services.

The 60th milestone anniversary of the university has served as the impetus and focal point for much of our fundraising campaign this year. To that end, we held numerous events both here in Israel and overseas. Bar-Ilan made history as the first Israeli university to be received at the Vatican by Pope Francis. This monumental visit was a project of the Ibero-American Friends and was centered on the themes of Judeo-Christian relations and of building bridges. This will lead to several further events related to Jewish and Christian relations.

Among the additional international anniversary celebrations are:
• The British–Israel Award dinner was held at the home of the UK Ambassador to Israel H.E. Matthew Gould, as a joint effort of the Israeli and UK Friends.
• “Radical Islam at Your Doorstep” - an informative evening organized for the French Friends of BIU featuring noted journalist and Islam affairs expert Boaz Bismuth at the home of Israeli Ambassador H.E. Yossi Gal.
• Gala tribute in honor of Nobel Laureate and BIU Honorary Doctorate recipient, Prof. François Englert, will be held in Brussels at the residence of the Israeli Ambassador to Belgium, H.E. Jacques Revach.
• The Naime and Yehoshua Salti Center for Ladino Studies celebrating the establishment of their own Friends Organization at a festive event held in April, 2015. The Center clearly has become the face of the Judeo-Spanish community in Israel.

Both here and abroad, I have had a remarkable experience not only in representing the university in these events, but getting to know so many friends who have subsequently become leaders and supporters of BIU. It has been a truly gratifying experience to be able to personally connect with and engage these warm and hospitable individuals, and I am hopeful that my continued visits abroad will help us to expand the BIU family.

A number of ongoing campaigns and special projects were launched for this. Spurred on by the tragic deaths of two of our students who were killed during Operation Protective Edge, our fundraising teams across the globe launched an emergency campaign in their memory which provided scholarships to all of our students who fought in this action.

The current Board of Trustees session is perhaps one of the most exciting weeks in Bar-Ilan University’s history. Thirteen donor related events will take place during the week’s activities. Friends and supporters from around the world are joining us for these events and will be enjoying our hospitality in Jerusalem as a special mission from overseas.

But the highlight of the 2015 Board of Trustees is the launching of the PRESIDENTIAL AWARD OF DISTINCTION, which is taking place in Jerusalem and will pay tribute to the outstanding contributions of philanthropists and friends from Israel and around the world to the further development and achievements of our institution.
Over the past year, the university embarked on a painful but necessary process of balancing its budget, no small challenge after the huge growth spurt and ambitious plans put into place in the years before.

With the guidance of our lay leaders, and the courage of the university’s top management, a two-pronged approach was put into effect: the first, to implement budget cuts; and the second, to generate new revenue.

It’s a known fact that the largest expense in the university’s budget is Manpower, but union agreements limit the extent to which we can make the sweeping changes that are required. To compensate for this, we have enforced a hiring freeze over the next three years and are eliminating budget line positions through attrition. In addition, all administrative units are undergoing an efficiency review, in order to put an end to duplication, over-staffing and poorly utilized resources.

Reducing the budget has been a long and time-consuming process, one which exacts a high price in terms of labor relations and staff morale. The results of these efforts, although far from satisfactory, can be described as “encouraging”. As you will see in the financial reports presented to you under separate cover, we have succeeded in reducing the fiscal deficit since the beginning of the academic year. Creating new avenues for generating revenue streams has also been addressed. Efforts are being made to commercialize the campus facilities.

There is a huge market for academic “products,” and BIU has been slow to tap these sectors of the population and place them in a revenue-generating framework. Activities designed to meet this challenge are being launched, and I am confident that professional development and continuing education programs will become a major factor in the university’s revenue-generating repertoire.

BIU’s relationship with its sister company, the Bar-Ilan Research and Development Company, has undergone intense review. There has been a great deal of progress made in the commercialization of our research outputs, and at present, serious discussions are being held as to the best model to adopt. I am confident that we will come to the wisest decisions and policies required to make our commercialization activities a huge source of income and point of pride for BIU and the State of Israel.
The theme of this year’s Board of Trustees is “Then, Now and Beyond.” I believe this report reflects this theme, in all of its aspects and with all of the implications therein.

There is no doubt that Bar-Ilan University, in its 60 years of existence, has developed into a world-class entity which strengthens Judaism, excellence and Zionism. The challenge inherent in translating these noble precepts into operational realities is huge and often overwhelming – but I hope you share my opinion that we are steady on course.

As you can see, we have made progress on all of the strategic directions that we took upon ourselves – some in the beginning phases, others more advanced. We will continue to measure our progress and performance against these goals, so that we can honestly evaluate whether the actions we are taking are having the desired effect. I am fully confident that the outstanding management team which is in place together with our dedicated faculty and administration and supportive leadership, will help us advance even further on the Dashboard of Success.

With humility and optimism, I remain,

Sincerely,

Rabbi Prof. Daniel Hershkowitz
President