



Mandel Foundation gift of \$22.5 million to transform humanities

President Reinharz cites 'landmark' contribution

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WALTHAM, Mass. — In a much-needed move to protect and fortify the study of humanities in higher education, the Cleveland-based Mandel Foundation has committed \$22.5 million to build a center dedicated to the field at Brandeis University, the school's president, Jehuda Reinharz, has announced.

Reinharz said the Mandel gift – from Jack, Joseph, Morton and Barbara Mandel – and planned construction of the “world class” Brandeis center are historic for their commitment to the humanities and social sciences, and for their expected impact on American higher education.

“In partnership with The Mandel Foundation,” said Reinharz, “Brandeis intends to create a truly visionary place to restore prestige to the humanities and provide a model for other colleges and universities.” He added that the Mandel gift is believed to be the single largest commitment to the humanities by any foundation – at least in recent memory.

“This gift is transformative,” said Reinharz, “and it comes at a critical time.”

The humanities' role in education has been challenged in recent years because of the field's reputation for being more cerebral and ethereal than practical. Some view the humanities and their focus on thoughts and ideas as less compelling than the health sciences, business, and technology. And funding for them has lagged in the face of skyrocketing college costs, an uncertain economy, job placement concerns and a mushrooming consumerism in today's culture.

The Mandel family commitment to the new center is based on a belief that society must support the liberal arts tradition, and that for education to be truly complete it must be broadly constructed on a solid humanities foundation. The Mandel Center for the Humanities at Brandeis will stress the cultural and intellectual importance of studying fields such as literature, language and philosophy.

To encourage the free flow of students, faculty members, research and ideas, the center will physically link free standing buildings located within the campus's humanities quadrangle. A main goal of the project is to make the Mandel Center a preeminent base for interdisciplinary research, scholarship and teaching in the humanities.

Among other initiatives, the new center will create new interdisciplinary undergraduate courses, offering opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research on interdisciplinary topics through research internships, and organizing special local, national and international conferences and events.

The Mandel family already has established at Brandeis the Mandel Graduate Fellowship in English and American Literature and the Barbara and Morton Mandel Graduate Fellowship in the Humanities. The foundation also made possible at Brandeis the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, and

established the university's first professorship in Jewish education.

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