The Transitional Year Program

From Great Beginnings

A HALF-CENTURY after the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited a then-fledgling Brandeis University to deliver a speech, "Justice Without Violence," the civil rights leader's words continue to help inspire the University and define its mission.

At one point during his talk in 1957, King discussed school desegregation, which had become the law of the land following the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. King pointed out that despite the ruling, many school systems still had separate and inherently unequal public schools.

The Brandeis faculty, inspired by King's speech and acutely aware of the challenges many students continued to face, committed themselves to creating a program that would combat these disparities and help ensure students' success in their future academic pursuits.

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Embracing the Challenge
Dominique Smith '09 Keeps a Busy Academic and Work Schedule

WHEN DOMINIQUE Smith '09 graduated from Fontbonne Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, she was not content with the academic options available to her. A native of the Dorchester neighborhood in Boston, Dominique learned about the Transitional Year Program through her pastor, Miniard Culpepper, a friend of the TYP and member of the Brandeis Class of 1977.

Dominique, now a sophomore at the University, remembers feelings of culture shock when she first arrived on campus as a TYP student. The rigorous academic demands of the TYP required that she improve her classroom and study skills. Despite the heavy course load, Dominique excelled under the new pressures. “It was all about school,” she said. “I loved it.”

After completing the TYP, Dominique was admitted to Brandeis. During her first year, she found that the academic preparation and study skills she had acquired as a TYP Scholar served her well and made for a smooth transition. She also relied on a support network of TYP instructors and former Scholars.

Dominique manages a full course schedule while working as a customer service representative at a Stop & Shop supermarket in Dorchester, where she has worked for the past seven years. She also tries to attend as many University and TYP events as possible. Dominique plans to graduate with a double major in sociology and politics and a double minor in legal studies and social justice and social policy. She hopes to attend law school and become a corporate lawyer.

The TYP has had an indelible impact upon Dominique. “I have so much admiration and respect for the people who run TYP, and for the students who have chosen to do something great with their lives,” she said.
A TYPical Day for Taisha

8:15 A.M. – Rise and shine and a quick breakfast! I also use this time for any last-minute preparation for classes.

9:00 A.M. – Off to my “Black Islam” class with Professor Kaba (one of my favorites!).

NOON – Lunch at Usdan with three good friends and fellow TYP students.

1:30 P.M. – Back in the classroom for science with Professor Abrariga.

3:00 P.M. – Time to start my homework in the 24-hour TYP study area with a friend.

5:00 P.M. – Last class of the day: sociology with Professor Rondini.

6:30 P.M. – Back to Usdan for dinner. This is my only time to relax during the day, so I never spend it studying!

8:00 P.M. – I’m off to my Adagio Dance Ensemble meeting to practice our routine for the next basketball halftime show.

9:00 P.M. – It’s time for homework again. I usually study anywhere from 9:00 p.m. until as late as 4:00 a.m. – depending on my morning class schedule!

TAISHA STURDIVANT knew the Transitional Year Program at Brandeis was for her the moment she came to visit campus. “Brandeis won me over right away,” she said.

The TYP offered a tight-knit community of scholars, and its structured program and unique resources would allow her time to become accustomed to life at an academically rigorous university. She knew Brandeis would give her the best chance to realize her intellectual potential.

Taisha, who grew up in Boston, is the first member of her family to attend college. During her sophomore year of high school, her mother passed away. She has never met her father. “Moving from house to house and between high schools was difficult,” she said.

Since Taisha arrived at Brandeis in the fall of 2006, the TYP has become her family. “We’re all in this together,” she said. “We motivate each other.”

Taisha applauds the Brandeis student body for embracing diversity on campus. “A lot of people here are willing to get to know you even if they’ve never met someone like you,” she said.

During Taisha’s first semester at Brandeis, she joined a poetry group, several dance troupes, and a variety of student alliances. “I dove headfirst into Brandeis culture,” she said. She has also excelled in the classroom.

Taisha is looking forward to remaining at Brandeis to study sociology and hopes to attend Harvard Law School after graduation. She plans to one day give back to her old neighborhood in Boston.

“I commend the TYP, and I wish it could help even more students learn about or attend a prestigious university like Brandeis,” Taisha said.
Transitional Year Program (cont. from page 1)

ing equal access to educational opportunities. Deeply moved by King's murder in 1968, they sought to honor the fallen hero and continue his work by establishing the Transitional Year Program for academically disadvantaged students.

Since 1964, the University had been operating an Upward Bound summer program for students who did not have access to quality secondary education. Through a mix of coursework and tutorial services, Upward Bound introduced these students to higher education. Although some of the students in the program pursued further studies, others did not.

Following King's death, there was a collective sense of duty at Brandeis to do even more to address the inequities that persisted in the educational system. Using a concept developed by Professor Christoph Hohenemser and some of his physics

students, and with the dedicated support of Professors Jacob Cohen, Robert Lange, Bob Seely, and William Goldsmith, the concept of the TYP was born.

Members of the Brandeis community pulled together to help fund the program. Committed faculty and staff contributed more than $12,000. Another 210 gifts, many of which came from students, further supported the effort.

Founding Brandeis President Abram Sachar worked to secure additional funding to ensure a successful launch of the program.

The TYP began operating during the 1968-69 academic year with three primary goals, which constitute its mission to this day - offering access to a competitive college education, valuing the contributions of TYP Scholars to campus life, and providing small classes with outstanding faculty and personalized mentoring.

As the alumni of the program continue to matriculate at Brandeis, adding to its thriving campus life and becoming distinguished alumni, the University remains committed to the program. On the eve of its 40th anniversary, the TYP stands as proof-positive of the commitment of King, University namesake Justice Louis D. Brandeis, and the institution to social justice.

HOW IT'S GROWN: In the past 40 years the number of TYP alumni and the program's support network has grown immensely.

THE FIRST TYP STUDENTS: Some of the earliest members of the TYP with then-director Clarence Hunter.

FAST FACT All TYP students receive scholarship support for the full cost of tuition and living on campus.
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Jules Bernstein '57

Connecting with My Past to Help Build Futures

ON THE OCCASION of my 50th Brandeis Reunion, I am honored to contribute to the inaugural edition of Commitment TYP. Although I graduated from Brandeis 11 years before the TYP was established, I feel very close to the program. Like many TYP Scholars, I, too, was the first in my family to attend college. Furthermore, the TYP was the reason I became reconnected to Brandeis, and why I am so engaged with my alma mater now.

Six years ago, I joined the President's Advisory Council for the TYP and Posse Program. We were instrumental in ensuring that all TYP Scholars lived in University residence halls and were included in all campus activities. We also helped raise funds for the programs from alumni and friends.

Through the Council, I met remarkable TYP Scholars, Brandeis alumni, and others, including TYP Scholars who attended the same high school as I did in Brooklyn, New York. We are now part of an informal Brandeis-Samuel J. Tilden High School alumni group, and keep in touch regularly.

The Council has been replaced with the Friends of the TYP and Posse Program, which will offer an opportunity for Brandeis alumni and friends to provide mentoring, internships, and other connections to TYP and Posse Scholars. Indeed, this summer, my law firm will be employing a Brandeis Posse alumnus, Edgar Ndjatou '06, who attends law school in Washington, D.C. I look forward to working with others to support the talented students in these programs.

The TYP is an essential part of Brandeis's identity. As we celebrate the 150th birthday of the University's namesake, Justice Louis D. Brandeis, we can be proud that the program and the University continue to carry on his legacy of seeking to achieve social justice.

A GOOD FRIEND: Jules Bernstein '57 is a former Chair of the TYP/Posse Advisory Council.

What are your hopes for TYP in the next few years? One of my immediate goals is to better engage our network of TYP alumni. I want our students to have the opportunity to know these outstanding members of their communities, and become inspired by their stories of dedication and perseverance.

What are some of the students' recent accomplishments outside the classroom? TYP students have shown a growing pride in the program in the past few years, signaled by the establishment of the "Night of Inspiration" program by Astrid Rojas '07; this year's "TYP Day" program, spearheaded by current TYP Senator Shaina Gilbert; and the creation of a TYP logo and seal by Tanisha Phoenix '09, a TYP alumnus. These efforts showcase the students' leadership skills and the many talents they bring to the Brandeis campus.

TYP is celebrating its 40th birthday in 2008. Where do you see the program in another forty years? Since TYP is at the cutting edge of college-access efforts that address financial, curricular, and other barriers to college, I would like to see it replicated by many other leading institutions in the years to come. Although I expect to be retired when TYP turns 80, I hope to be able to see the important contributions TYP alumni have made throughout society. I look forward to reading a book by one of my past students, seeing TYP alumni who are serving as my doctor or lawyer, or voting for a visionary TYP graduate running for office.
Established in 1968, the TYP is the oldest continuous program of its kind in the country and has had more than 1,000 students participate.

Tara Gully-Hightower '93
TYP Student Turned Teacher

IN THE CLASSROOM:
The role of Tara Gully-Hightower '93 as a teacher and mentor doesn't stop when she leaves the classroom.

“Tara remembered a day from more than 10 years before. “When we were almost done with the TYP, a group of us wanted to give back and asked (then-director) Tony Williams what we could do,” she recalled. “He told us to come back and teach.”

In 2000, Tara took him up on his offer, and soon after found herself working as an instructor for the program.

Tara's courses have evolved as the TYP curriculum has strengthened. This year, she has developed a fall semester writing course to correspond directly to her spring course on literary analysis. “I choose works that reflect the ideals and social justice mission of Brandeis, giving the course a special continuity to the classes students will have at the University,” she said.

Tara plans to continue as a TYP instructor for many years to come. “Every day I am able to give back, and it is truly rewarding to see the impact that I am having on the lives of the TYP students.”

MORE THAN 15 YEARS after graduating from the Transitional Year Program, Tara Gully-Hightower '93 is now a valued instructor, providing support and guidance for students by drawing upon her own experience as a TYP and Brandeis alumna.

“I credit a lot of my success with the confidence and academic foundation the TYP gave me,” said Tara, who earned master’s degrees in education and English and American literature after graduating from Brandeis.

While in graduate school and considering her career options, Tara

RECOGNITION: TYP Scholars' Achievements

TYP alumus WILL CHALMUS '07 wrote and directed Greed, a musical consisting entirely of rap music. Greed examines the dichotomy between selfless and selfish greed, while exploring issues of race, urban culture, coexistence, and social justice.

TYP Scholar SHAINA GILBERT will serve as a summer intern at the Boston Center for Community and Justice.

TYP Scholar VICTORIA MUTEBI was the subject of a feature story on the Brandeis Office of Development website (http://givingto.brandeis.edu/).

TYP alumna ALISA PIMENTAL '09 will study abroad in Egypt during the upcoming fall semester.

TYP alumus SHAWN WILLIAMS '07 will continue his studies at Brandeis as a graduate student at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management.
A PROUD REPRESENTATIVE: 

Heather Zakson Alvarez ‘86

Anonymous (two)

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Thank You!

We appreciate the generous support of alumni and friends for the Transitional Year Program. Their gifts provide crucial funds for scholarships for current TYP Scholars and former students who matriculate as Brandeis undergraduates, and fund summer internships and other special activities. Thank you to the following donors whose gifts have supported the TYP in the past year:

- Heather Zakson Alvarez ‘86
- Anonymous (two)
- Bank of America - Perpetual Trust for Charitable Giving
- Jules Bernstein ‘57 and Linda Lipsett
- Jennifer Eastman ‘68
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- William S. Singer ‘62
- The Starr Foundation
- Michael and Susanna Steinberg
- Stoneman Family Foundation
- Sidney Topol
- Dr. Blenda J. Wilson

If you are interested in making a gift to the TYP, please contact the Brandeis Development Office at 800-333-1948.

30 Years of Support

The William Randolph Hearst Foundations

FORMER BRANDEIS President Marver Bernstein, in a 1977 letter to Hearst Foundation Executive Director Robert Frehse Jr., expressed his gratitude for the Foundation's leadership support of the Transitional Year Program. "The constancy of the Foundation's friendship and support has made it possible for countless students to obtain a better education, a better job, a better opportunity to help their fellow human beings, and a better chance to contribute something constructive to our common life together," Bernstein wrote.

More than 30 years after its initial grant to the TYP, The Hearst Foundations continue to provide these opportunities to TYP alumni who have matriculated as undergraduate students at Brandeis. Established in 1997, The Hearst Foundation TYP Endowed Scholarship has assisted five former TYP Scholars attending Brandeis, including the current Hearst Foundation Scholar, Andy Rawlins ’08.

Andy, who completed the TYP in 2004 and is benefiting from the scholarship for the third consecutive year, said, "I am not only thankful for the Hearst Scholarship for making it possible for me to attend a great university, but also for the chance it has given me to make an impact on campus through cultural shows and events. I will continue to take full advantage of the opportunities the scholarship has given me, and I am very proud to represent the Foundation at Brandeis."

According to Ilene Mack at The Hearst Foundations (who, along with Frehse, has been with the organization since that first gift to Brandeis was made in the 1970s), TYP and the TYP alumni who matriculate at Brandeis are a "perfect fit" for the Foundations.

Together, The Hearst Foundation in New York and The William Randolph Hearst Foundation in San Francisco have established 665 endowed scholarships at institutions of higher education. The goal of these scholarships, as with all of The Hearst Foundations' grants, is to assist institutions in providing opportunities to underserved and underrepresented populations.

FAST FACT

Competition to enroll in TYP is intense; 200 students apply annually for the 20 available spots.
Finding Success
Norma Sanchez-Figueroa '84 Values the Strong Start the TYP Provided Her

CLEARLY, WHEN NORMA Sanchez-Figueroa's parents preached to her about the importance of education, she was listening. Throughout her life, the 1984 Brandeis graduate has taken advantage of the educational opportunities available to her.

Born in Puerto Rico, Norma spent much of her childhood there before moving with her family to Hartford, Connecticut. She excelled at Bulkeley High School, earning her diploma in just three years. Still, she felt unprepared for college. "In order to succeed in a highly competitive university," she said, "I chose to use what would customarily be the fourth year of high school to enroll in TYP at Brandeis."

When she enrolled in the TYP in the fall of 1979, Norma benefited from the support of English professor Kittredge "Kitsie" Henchman-Sallet and Tony Williams, the former program director. Henchman-Sallet worked closely with Norma to improve her communications skills. Williams offered encouragement when Norma shared her dream of becoming a lawyer.

Norma graduated from Brandeis with a bachelor's degree in sociology. After spending a year working at a small law firm, she returned to Massachusetts to continue her studies at Boston College Law School. She earned her law degree in 1988, clerked for the Massachusetts Superior Court, and then returned to Connecticut to open her own practice.

Norma has been married to the Rev. Nathaniel G. Mays, a former assistant dean of student life at Brandeis, for 13 years. They live in South Windsor, Connecticut, with their daughter, 4, and son, 2.

In 2005, Norma purchased a home that now houses her law offices on the first floor and a nursery for her children on the second. "I happily and successfully juggle lawyering with motherhood all under the same roof," she said.