

## BOLD TYPES

By **Jon Chesto** Globe Staff, Updated September 18, 2023, 5:50 p.m.

### Brandeis comes back to school with new message

It's back-to-school time at **Brandeis University**. This season is a little different, though, because of a massive branding campaign timed with the school's 75th anniversary. Digital ads will continue running until early next month, with print ads appearing through December.

President **Ron Liebowitz** said he has hoped to run a campaign like this for several years, ever since focus groups showed some brand confusion about the university, a secular school founded in 1948 in part to offer opportunities for young Jews boxed out of other colleges. People on the West Coast, Liebowitz recalled, thought Brandeis required students to study Hebrew while some on the East Coast thought Brandeis abandoned its Jewish roots. Neither opinion was quite right.

"I used to joke, plant me in Chicago," Liebowitz said, "and I'll do some recruiting."

Instead, Brandeis hired **DeVito/Verdi**, a New York agency known for edgy campaigns (including ones for **Suffolk University** and **Legal Sea Foods**), for the job. It helped that cofounder **Ellis Verdi** is an alum.

The edginess got people talking, although not all feedback has been positive: One print ad describing the school as "anything but orthodox" stirred up anger amid some in the Orthodox Judaism community.

The ads all tie into a theme that Brandeis and its students are committed to changing the world for the better, with slogans like "Take a seat and learn how to stand up for others" and "Students come here knowing everything and leave here questioning everything."