



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Dear Alumni,

Over the past few weeks, it has been a joy to watch the campus come alive again as students returned to College Hill. Our newest Brunonians have been filled with excitement as they have begun to forge connections and foster community on campus. Our returning students are equally as enthusiastic to be “home” and reconnecting with their classmates and mentors as they prepare for the year ahead.

As I do at the start of each academic year, I am writing to reflect on accomplishments of the past year and to share plans for advancing Brown’s education and research and for strengthening our vibrant, inclusive community in the year to come.

I also offer further reflections on the agreement Brown reached with the U.S. government over the summer, as well as the ongoing impact of federal actions, including persisting threats to research funding affecting all research universities. This has ongoing implications for Brown’s ability to conduct innovative research, as well as for our international students and scholars. The national landscape for higher education is still very much under threat, and the support and advocacy of Brown’s dedicated alumni and friends will continue to be critical as we navigate this exceedingly difficult moment.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PAST YEAR**

While this has been a uniquely challenging time for Brown and other colleges and universities across the country, it is important that we not lose sight of the incredible achievements of our community. Every day on campus I am proud to see faculty, staff and students working side

by side to advance Brown's mission of improving the community, the nation and the world through rigorous scholarship and education.

Our faculty continue to be recognized at the highest levels for their work. Last year, eight Brown faculty members were elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (an all-time high for a single year), and many others were recognized by prominent national and international organizations. Thirty-five recent graduates and two current graduate students received Fulbright awards to conduct research or teach English in locations across the globe this year. And, for the second consecutive year, Brown ranked among the top universities in the country for securing new patents for research discoveries.

Brown's student-centered learning environment continues to offer undergraduate and graduate students remarkable opportunities to collaborate with faculty and staff in creating knowledge that makes a real impact. Among many advancements, Brown researchers discovered a biomarker for Alzheimer's Disease prevention, unearthed a centuries-old altar to lend new context to ancient Mayan history, developed new devices that can help to detect and understand traumatic brain injury, and organized a major exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture that explores the global legacies of slavery.

We can also be proud that we are advancing important work to support a thriving academic community. The Thomas J. Watson Jr. School for International and Public Affairs officially launched in July, and we look forward to celebrating its inaugural year with a series of lectures and other events that involve the full Brown community. Renovations to Pembroke Hall will soon be complete, bringing the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women into a unified space with enhanced areas for academic and community gatherings. And, construction continues on the William A. and Ami Kuan Danoff Life Sciences Laboratories, which will support a vibrant life sciences ecosystem in the Jewelry District.

## **ONGOING IMPACT OF FEDERAL ACTIONS**

I and other members of the senior administration continue to be committed to helping Brown navigate this exceedingly difficult and highly politicized environment for higher education. As I have shared previously, one of the biggest challenges Brown has faced was a federal funding freeze beginning in April that threatened our ability to conduct ground-breaking research and also the jobs of hundreds of faculty and staff.

In July [we announced](#) that Brown reached a resolution agreement with the federal government to restore funding from the National Institutes of Health, Brown's single largest source of research funding, which supports the work of more than 1,000 faculty, post-doctoral researchers, staff and students. In addition, the agreement resolves three open reviews assessing Brown's compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws. The agreement also committed Brown to abide by provisions related to Title VI (the law prohibiting discrimination based on race, color or national origin) and Title IX (prohibiting discrimination based on sex or gender), as well as providing \$5 million per year, over 10 years, to workforce development organizations in Rhode Island.

I recognize and appreciate that the agreement has generated strong emotions and a wide range of views. Some are relieved that their research and livelihoods are no longer under threat due to the major freeze of research funding. Others have questions about what this agreement means for Brown's ongoing commitment to sustaining an inclusive community where every individual is fully valued for their unique perspectives and experiences. I encourage everyone to read the series of FAQs that have been developed as a resource on the agreement. They answer questions about Brown's commitment to comply with the federal agreement and federal laws while we [maintain our academic independence](#); our work to address [nondiscrimination while also sustaining a diverse and inclusive community](#); and Brown's [sex and gender policies and ongoing commitment to gender inclusion](#).

I feel it's important that every member of our community understand that, by no means was embarking upon this agreement an easy decision for Brown. But I do feel strongly that it was a necessary one. It was necessary for sustaining our capacity to provide our students

with an excellent education. It was necessary for giving Brown the ability to retain the faculty who teach in our classrooms and conduct research that is improving lives and communities. It preserves hundreds of externally funded research jobs that maintain the well-being of families. And it safeguards the essential resources that sustain Brown as a supportive teaching and learning community. This is an agreement, not for some, but for all members of our community.

We will fully honor the agreement and intend to comply diligently while remaining true to our values and who we are as a community. I want to emphasize that this agreement does not impinge in any way on our core value of academic freedom or change Brown's firm and long-standing commitment to treat all members of our community with dignity and respect, including members of our trans and nonbinary communities. Nor does it mean that Brown will elevate antisemitism over other forms of harassment, discrimination or hate. All discrimination is completely unacceptable and contrary to our policies and values.

### **Navigating Additional Federal Impacts**

While the agreement with the federal government mitigates one area of significant impact for our community, other serious challenges remain. Colleges and universities across the country, including Brown, are facing declines in federal funding that supports everything from basic and applied research to financial aid; increases in taxes on college and university investment income (although Brown's tax rate will not increase for now); policies that have made it more difficult for international students to gain entrance to and remain in the United States; and changes in how the federal government views "diversity, equity and inclusion" (DEI) initiatives.

The financial implications of these challenges are significant. Brown, like other institutions, is facing the difficult reality of rethinking how we fund our academic and administrative operations in a changed environment. We continue to focus on careful financial management, while making the strategic investments required to elevate our impact as a leading institution dedicated to excellence in education and research.

In the past year, we have significantly cut expenses, in part by eliminating vacant positions, slowing faculty hiring, and limiting discretionary spending. We are proud that even as we have reduced expenses, we remain need-blind and loan-free for our undergraduate students, provide all our students with access to exceptional educational opportunities, and ensure that faculty have the resources they need to produce ground-breaking scholarship across all disciplines.

A particular area of focus in the coming year will be to shift how we support research, moving away from a heavy reliance on federal funding toward a greater emphasis on philanthropy and support from foundations and corporations. Doing this will reduce Brown's vulnerability to overall budget cuts in federal funding, as well as changes in the research priorities of the federal government. At this time, it is especially important to galvanize support for important areas of research and scholarship that are under threat, such as climate science, public health, vaccines, issues related to women and gender, ethnic and cultural studies, and many other areas in the humanities.

As I shared last spring, Brown's alumni and friends can be a powerful force in advocating for and protecting Brown's research enterprise. I encourage you to visit the "[Brunonian Advocacy](#)" page to learn more about avenues for support and resources for building momentum around alumni advocacy.

## **PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD**

In the year ahead, we will continue to advance Brown's mission of high-impact scholarship and research within a diverse and inclusive community. I am especially excited about four of these priorities.

### **Implementing Values and Voice**

In May, the Brown faculty and the Corporation of Brown University approved a "[Statement of University Values and Voice](#)," which defines the University's core institutional values and sets forth when the University should, or should not, use its voice—through statements or actions—to intentionally express positions on social and political issues. The four core values that inform how the University advances

its mission of serving society through education, scholarship and research are: the pursuit of knowledge and understanding; the support of academic freedom and freedom of expression; a commitment to openness and diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences; and responsibility for a thriving academic community.

I am proud that our community came together to do this important work, and I encourage everyone to read the [full report](#) of the Ad Hoc Committee on University Values and Voice. This year, we will work to ensure that all members of our community understand Brown's values and the University's policy on voice, and appreciate how both our values and our use of voice support Brown's mission.

### **Reaffirming the Centrality of the Liberal Arts and Sciences**

Since its founding, Brown has emphasized the value of education in the liberal arts and sciences. At present, there are several forces challenging this ideal, including national economic forces and government policies that are not favorable to the liberal arts. At the same time, Brown has evolved into a major research university with five professional schools, and some have voiced concerns about whether Brown is placing appropriate focus on its core.

In the coming year, we will undertake efforts to reaffirm our commitment to the liberal arts and sciences. Dean of the Faculty Leah VanWey and Dean of the College Ethan Pollock will lead a discussion-based effort to assess whether Brown's integration of research and undergraduate teaching is adequately supporting the goals of an education in the liberal arts and sciences.

### **Teaching, Learning, Discovering and Working in the Age of AI**

Brown continues to lead the way in exploring how to deploy Artificial Intelligence in ways that enhance our academic and administrative functions. Over the summer, Michael Littman, a professor of computer science and Brown's inaugural associate provost for artificial intelligence, began coordinating University AI efforts across research, teaching, operations, policy, and communications, working in close coordination with Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Christopher Keith. This year, we will expand the AI tools available to support teaching, learning and business operations,

and create more opportunities for faculty, students and staff to learn how to use these tools effectively and ethically.

We also anticipate that AI will become a larger focus of research in the coming year. For example, with the support of a \$20 million grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation, Brown researchers will lead the AI Research Institute on Interaction for AI Assistants (ARIA) and explore natural language processing technology and its use in mental health applications.

### **Advancing the Discovery Through Dialogue Project**

Last spring, we launched the [Discovery Through Dialogue project](#) to elevate and invest in Brown's long-standing commitment to open inquiry and the free exchange of ideas across difference. As noted above, an openness to diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences is core to Brown's values and central to advancing our mission of education and scholarship. This year, Discovery Through Dialogue, which fosters opportunities for meaningful conversations across a wide range of perspectives, will become more robust with additional programming, training and professional development opportunities for all members of our campus community.

### **Highlighting Other Priorities in the Coming Year**

Other initiatives being led by senior administrative leaders across campus include:

- **Supporting Diversity and Inclusion:** For nearly 10 years, *Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for Brown University* (known as the DIAP) has grounded our work in classrooms and laboratories in the diversity of perspectives, ideas and experiences that is essential to fulfilling our academic mission. Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion Matthew Guterl will lead efforts to review our progress and develop a new plan for the future of diversity and inclusion at Brown.
- **Advancing Wellness for Students:** In recent years, Brown has taken steps to advance the holistic well-being of students, including through improved recreational opportunities and the wellness residential experience in Sternlicht Commons. Building on this

progress, Vice President for Campus Life Patricia Poitevien and Vice President for Athletics and Recreation M. Grace Calhoun will lead a task force considering how Brown can further advance a holistic approach to well-being across academics and campus life.

## IN CLOSING

I hope many of you will enjoy opportunities to attend regional events in-person or virtually, or visit campus this year. There will be many opportunities to strengthen bonds within and across generations of Brown faculty, staff, students, alumni and parents, including upcoming annual gatherings like Family Weekend and Reunion.

We also look forward to hosting [130 Years of Jewish Life at Brown](#), which will bring generations of alumni to campus from Nov. 7 to Nov. 9 to reflect on the legacy of Jewish life on campus through a rich and varied array of panels, seminars and social events. Registration for this event is now open to all, and I hope to see many of you there.

It remains a privilege and a joy to serve this remarkable community. I am deeply thankful for all that you contribute—as alumni, volunteers, donors, mentors and parents—to enrich the Brown experience for our extraordinary students, faculty and staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ch. Paxson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christina H. Paxson  
President