

Report to the President on the Plan for Academic Enrichment
January 18, 2008
Faculty Executive Committee

I. Executive Summary

The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC) was invited by President Simmons to review the Plan for Academic Enrichment (PAE) and to offer recommendations for the next phase. The FEC solicited feedback on the PAE from individual faculty through its website and through emails. The FEC also held open meetings for faculty throughout the Fall semester and closed meetings with groups of faculty including department chairs and junior faculty towards the end of that semester. The FEC discussed academic needs with members of Undergraduate Council of Students and other undergraduates. The FEC Officers met with members of the Graduate Student Council. The FEC is scheduled to meet later in January with a group of graduate students representing a cross section of graduate programs and another group of junior faculty.

There is a consensus among the faculty that the expansion of the faculty has had many positive effects for Brown but that investment in the infrastructure to support this expansion has not kept pace and needs to be augmented without delay. Among the most urgent needs identified by the faculty are support for graduate programs, support for the library, staff support for research, and growth of departmental budgets. Slowing further expansion of the faculty, hiring junior rather than senior faculty, and delaying major new construction projects should be carefully considered as resource reallocation strategies to expedite attending to the infrastructure needs.

II. General observations

The PAE has had many positive effects throughout the university. In particular, expansion of the faculty, improvements in faculty compensation, and increases in start-up packages for new faculty hires were cited as critical benefits of the PAE. Concerns have been expressed, however, that there has been no proportional increase in the level of infrastructure support to match the unprecedented growth of the faculty. Absorbing this expanding faculty has placed considerable pressure on stagnant departmental budgets, static or declining staff and graduate student pools, and in some areas physical facilities, particularly regarding office space and parking. There is a genuine unease that if this situation is not corrected soon, the tremendous advances made to date will evaporate and the investments will fail.

III. Specific needs

1. Graduate Programs

Across rank and discipline, the faculty is united in its view that expansion of graduate programs is absolutely critical to advancing the research enterprise at Brown. Graduate students are essential to research in the sciences and vital to the reputation of a first-class research institution. Expansion of graduate programs is needed to support the recent expansion of the faculty. A vigorous graduate program is also essential for providing research experiences to undergraduate

students in the sciences and for enhancing academic course offerings for senior undergraduates regardless of discipline. The reduction in NIH budgets has meant that fewer grants are available and those that are awarded tend to have smaller budgets than in the past. These facts coupled with the increased cost of supporting a student on a grant has made it extremely difficult for science faculty to pay for the students they need to get their research done. The senior administration must work with the faculty and academic departments to develop a strategic plan for increasing the size of the graduate programs and for increasing funding of graduate education.

Priorities for the PAE are to:

- Expand the size of the graduate programs.
- Lower the cost of tuition and health insurance charged to research grants.
- Increase summer funding from 3 to 5 years and distribute evenly within the university.
- Provide increased and equitable fellowship support for departments across disciplines.
- Increase support for graduate student travel.

2. Other infrastructure support for research

The faculty identified a number of areas in which current resources are inadequate to support research. Some of these problems originate from expansion of the faculty with no concomitant increase in the budgets that support the research enterprise; others are due to a failure to keep pace with technological advances and inadequate staffing of new initiatives; still others, are the result of relatively static budgets. The FEC's review revealed some common issues, including the library, research-support staff and departmental budgets, that merit immediate attention. Development and the Senior Administration need to get the message out that the library is to non-science faculty what a research laboratory is to science faculty. One way to make improvements in the library might be to tie the hiring of each new faculty member to a one time allocation of funds to the library. One concrete suggestion was that a minimum of \$25K per new faculty hire be built into start ups and designated for the library.

Under the PAE, we need to:

- Invest in the library. We cannot emphasize enough that the collections of books and journals must grow, and not necessarily at the cost of discontinuing existing orders (e.g. journal subscriptions), in order to support the research and learning experiences of faculty and students. We should also protect the browsing experience/culture by preserving on-campus library space for books and limit the trend of moving books/periodicals to off campus storage sites.
- Invest in developing and nurturing a first class professional staff across all academic divisions of the university with particular attention to the development of technological skills and computer literacy.
- Increase support for proposal preparation; chronic understaffing for grants preparation in expanded departments is penalizing successful and productive faculty.
- Increase academic department budgets especially in areas where there has been faculty growth.
- Plan facilities to accommodate the increased size of the faculty and any additional faculty expansion.

- Improve staffing for core facilities and specific high-maintenance instrumentation in the sciences.
- Invest more in high-quality instrumentation in BioMed and the Physical Sciences.
- Provide the strongest financial support for grant applications that request instrumentation (otherwise there is no chance for success).
- Establish stronger connections with partner institutions to advance the research and teaching enterprise across the various divisions. The importance of partnering relationships for both education and research in BioMed cannot be overemphasized.
- Decrease Brown's high benefit rate for postdoctoral researchers from 33% to the more common 15-20% used at peer institutions.
- Provide stipends for post-doctoral students in the sciences.
- Offer incentives/bonuses for meeting scientific, scholarly or financial (grants) milestones.

3. Faculty hiring and compensation

The expansion of the faculty under the PAE has been very welcome and has brought many positive benefits particularly for those departments in which PAE hires have been made. However, not all programs benefited from the faculty expansion; further, there is a perception or understanding among some faculty that the compensation and benefits for some of the PAE hires has resulted in inequities. The FEC will be addressing some of these issues under other mechanisms. The common themes to emerge in this review are that we should slow the rate of faculty expansion and focus on assistant and young associate professor hires particularly in those areas that have not yet benefited under the PAE and where there are clear needs, address the understaffing for language instruction and interdisciplinary programs, and expedite equity in faculty compensation and benefits relative to our peers. We should also make a more explicit effort to invest in faculty who have developed their careers at Brown and do as much to retain faculty as we do to attract new faculty.

We need to attend to the fact that many, if not all, of our language classes are significantly larger than those of our peers. Many of our peers cap their Chinese, Arabic and other language sections at around 12; Brown regularly run sections in excess of 18. Lecturers are overworked and under-appreciated (even more so than regular faculty). There seems to be no normal or explicit mechanism for adding lecturers as enrollments grow. East Asian Studies has been fortunate to be given a new lecturer line, as has Arabic, but their respective needs are much greater than a single new lecturer can address. The PAE made no provisions for expanding those members of the faculty who do most of the heavy lifting in the language classrooms. It is hard to imagine that demand for languages like Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese and perhaps Persian, Swahili and Turkish -, is going to decrease. Tenure-track faculty in the departments responsible for those languages (noting that Arabic has no department associated with it) may teach upper level literature courses, but are often not trained in language pedagogy, and are not likely to happily teach language courses which meet four or five days a week. So in order to build on the promise of the PAE, we need a mechanism and resources sufficient to respond to the changing needs of language instruction at Brown. This is particularly pertinent given the new emphasis on internationalization and the reported focus on countries such as China, India and Brazil, an initiative not covered under the PAE.

Brown is well-known for its interdisciplinary academic programs but has no stable structure to support the interdisciplinary enterprise and no mechanism to hire core faculty for new interdisciplinary programs. This is true for programs as old as gender studies and urban studies, for new programs such as Science and Technology Studies, and for particularly large programs such as International Relations (the largest concentration at Brown). Students suffer because of gaps in course offerings and advising, and faculty who develop these kinds of new initiatives get worn out, angry and cynical about Brown's lack of resource commitment to support new ways of thinking and organizing knowledge. Resources—lines, staff, increases in budgets, authorizations to do fundraising, or an expansion of the Table of Needs—must be directed toward interdisciplinary programs, else they will remain stagnant or disintegrate, despite students' interest.

Under the PAE, we need to:

- Continue faculty expansion (hiring and cultivating junior colleagues) but at a slower rate.
- Fill needs for language instruction (not included in the PAE).
- Add lecturer positions to staff large teaching laboratories in the sciences (not included in the PAE).
- Develop a structural solution for interdisciplinary hires and allocate interdisciplinary FTEs and sensible budgets.
- Continue improving competitiveness of salaries, benefits and leave policy for all faculty.
- Improve support for faculty travel. Due to increased costs, it is becoming harder and harder (sometimes impossible) for faculty to attend key conventions and symposia. With the increased emphasis on faculty visibility both nationally and internationally, university support for faculty travel should be a high priority.
- Improve support for family life issues for all faculty including child care, maternity leave, and parental care.
- Optimize standards for tenure requirements in BioMed and the sciences in general taking the extremely harsh funding environment into consideration.
- Continue improving diversity of the faculty. Some strides have been made in recruiting under-represented minorities, but a strategic effort needs to be developed to bring Native Americans into the academy. We do not have a strong program to reach out to Tribal colleges to train and recruit into all levels of our academic initiative. Native Americans have particular areas of excellence and expertise that are poorly represented at Brown, such as caring for the earth/climate change/global warming and its effect on plants, animals, and the sea.

4. The College

Brown's distinctive curriculum and its faculty's national reputation for delivering an outstanding undergraduate education are at the heart of Brown's success in competing for extraordinarily talented students. The PAE should seek to increase faculty recognition and compensation for commitment to teaching and advising, and for meeting the needs of the curriculum (eg small class experiences for all first and second year students, senior capstone experiences, service learning courses, research experiences). Research scholarship is, of course, important but to be a true intellectual community, we must officially value teaching and advising. One way to begin to accomplish this is through the establishment of programs that provide research support (eg graduate student and postdoctoral stipends, summer salary, research funds, UTRAs, and travel

grants) as supplementary compensation for outstanding teaching and advising. These programs should be developed through endowments.

Under the PAE, we need to:

- Increase recognition of and compensation for outstanding teaching and advising.
- Invest in advising and small classes by providing incentives to faculty for offering First Year Seminars and other courses in semester 1 as part of the CAP. Students indicate that CAP courses are dispensable in semester 2.
- Increase opportunities for all students to have a small class experience in their first two years at Brown by providing incentives to faculty for offering a seminar in semester 2 open to first and second year students and for serving as a general advisor for one or both groups.
- Establish an endowed advising program (President's or Chancellor's Faculty Advisor Program) to improve advisor-advisee matches, accessibility, quality of advising, etc. Under this program, students would nominate effective faculty advisors; nominees would be invited to participate in the program for a 3-5 year appointment. The program would be managed by the Dean of the College. Faculty advisors might hold "extra" office hours and organize other events for student development such as talks and dinner with scholars, community service projects, mentoring for graduate school or professional careers.
- Expand support for undergraduate research experiences, service learning opportunities and capstone experiences. Incentives should be used to help achieve these objectives when possible. It is also not enough just to increase stipends, we need to provide funding for supplies and other research expenses so that faculty without grants can attract students by offering viable research projects – this is a win-win situation.
- Increase resources/support for interdisciplinary concentrations and activities
- Invest in science education (science resource center) and retention – offer support for a two-week winter session for students in introductory math and chemistry courses (largely minority and female target population)

III. Additional comments/questions from faculty

A number of questions surfaced in the course of our review that should be addressed by the Senior Administration. The FEC expects to bring these issues forward at the University Faculty Meetings over the course of the Spring semester.

1. What does it mean to hire and retain the "best" faculty? To recruit the "best" students? To be the "best" university? Who defines what is "best"?
2. Why is the administration saying that it has been too easy (for how long?) to get tenure at Brown and that we need to raise standards? Are there different standards for tenure across the university? Is tenure for BioMed faculty preferentially dependent on overhead income from grants?

3. What has been the impact of the 100 new faculty hires? What fields were strengthened? What holes plugged? Why is there no proportional increase in number of courses and research opportunities?
4. What will be the strategy with respect to the international initiative? Will we develop new areas (humanities/social sciences) or invest in existing “proven” areas (physical sciences)? Will we focus on contemporary studies or invest in historical comparative approaches?
5. Why don't chairs in BioMed turnover at the same rate as the rest of the campus? We need academic renewal at this level.
6. Why is our success generally reported in terms of how we compare to our peers? Why not set our own goals and metrics and work towards them? Given the size of our endowment, success at Brown will look different from our peers – Such a model has served Brown well in the past.
7. The increased cost of a graduate student now means that it is almost as cheap to have a postdoc on your grant instead - and be guaranteed much greater productivity. Is this what the University wants?
8. So many aspects of Brown these days have become very hierarchical; it seems that a ‘business model’ has been implemented. Does ‘academic excellence’ (US News ranking???) require that we abandon teamwork and community?