A Short Handbook for

Concentration Advisors

Office of the Dean of the College
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island
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Introduction: The Advisor’s Role

As a concentration advisor, you are the faculty member responsible for delivering information about your academic programs to current and prospective undergraduates. It is an important job, and doing it well can have a profound effect on how students view their Brown experience. We have prepared this handbook to make the job a little easier for you. In it you will find an overview of the issues that you will typically face during the year, along with some “best practices” we’ve encountered in working with advisors across the University.

Brown’s open curriculum is one of the University’s great assets, embodying a philosophy of education that places intellectual and moral weight on a student’s right to choose. For this reason, the choice of a concentration represents a major event of undergraduate academic life, and the process of “declaring” (as we call it) is something both students and advisors need to take seriously. Students are asked to account for courses they will take and also—more crucially—to write an essay defending their concentration choice. As a concentration advisor, you can make this process more meaningful for students by taking the time to meet with them and to talk about their essays. These initial encounters will set the tone for the rest of your advising relationship.

You can also make a student’s choice more meaningful by clarifying the dimensions of your discipline. What are its basic aims, or modes of inquiry? How do the requirements of your concentration reflect these aims? The answers may seem obvious to you, but don’t forget that for many undergraduates your field is uncharted territory. Our hope is that all Brown students will come to a greater understanding of the intellectual and practical goals of their education through the work they do in a discipline. You can play an important intellectual role by explaining disciplinary distinctions to students. You can also encourage your concentrators to pursue independent research, to write an advanced paper, to complete a creative project, or to draw together some aspect of your field’s intellectual traditions through an integrated series of courses. Your encouragement will go a long way toward helping students grasp the point of their studies and fulfill their true intellectual potential.

Closely monitoring your students can serve as another form of encouragement. You will certainly want to maintain a record of their progress through required courses and to document any changes that you approve along the way. Some students may ask you to evaluate courses they have taken at other universities in order to receive transfer credit from Brown. Sophomores or juniors may want you to help them strategize for a semester or summer abroad. Seniors may need information about your honors program, or help in developing a capstone project. They will also need you to clear them for graduation, both in the fall semester (for midyear completers) and in the spring (for May graduates). You will probably want to point all of your concentrators toward research and fellowship opportunities, internships, and other work experiences. This booklet contains suggestions about managing all of these tasks.

The most important thing you can do as an advisor, though, is to get to know your concentrators. Because so many Brown undergraduates are self-motivated, we may sometimes think that they neither need nor want our advice, but this view is mistaken. The efforts you make to reach out to concentrators both socially and academically—and to connect them with other students and faculty in your department—will be repaid in countless ways. It is likely to be the single most significant, and gratifying, thing you accomplish in your role as an advisor. The next section of this booklet offers a few thoughts about how to foster a sense of community in your program. You will likely have other ideas, but in whatever you attempt, remember that you are not alone. The staff in the Office of the Dean of the College is very pleased to help, so feel free to call us with your questions and concerns. At the back of this handbook, you’ll find a list of useful contacts; we look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, we want to thank you for serving as an advisor, and we wish you and your students great success in the coming year!

Katherine Bergeron
Dean of the College
Developing a Sense of Community

Students at Brown value community. You can enrich your students’ experience of the concentration by helping them make connections not only to your discipline but also to you, to students, and to faculty in your department. Such connections begin in individual meetings and continue through a whole range of group activities, as described below.

Outreach to First-Years and Sophomores

Your first point of contact with future concentrators may take place even before classes have started. Each year, the Office of the Dean of the College (DOC) sponsors an “Academic Expo” on an afternoon during Brown’s first-year student Orientation, to expose incoming students to the range of courses and concentrations available to them. It is a lively affair, and, as a concentration advisor, it is important for you to attend. You might want to bring along a current concentrator, too, to begin building connections among students. Check the calendar at the back of the book for the time and place of this year’s Expo.

A little later in the fall semester, and again in the spring, the DOC holds concentration fairs that allow you to meet with prospective concentrators and to answer questions about requirements. For the spring event, we encourage you to come with calendars in hand, so you can set up advising appointments with students ready to declare in the coming weeks. The time, date, and location of these events are listed in the calendar at the back of this handbook.

Individual Advising Meetings

Regular office hours are the usual way that advisors meet with current and future concentrators. Plan to set aside about two hours per week for this purpose, and post the times on your department’s website. The heaviest traffic you’ll encounter will be at the beginning of the semester, and during the so-called “advising period” during fall and spring pre-registration (late October and early April each year). The “advising period” is a time when prospective concentrators will want to discuss the possibility of declaring, and other students may come with different concerns. The issues will vary by semester level. New concentrators might be interested in research or capstone opportunities. Those who are planning to study abroad may need to figure out how to fulfill concentration requirements at a university outside the U.S. You can ensure a stronger relationship by requiring your concentrators to “check in” with you each semester. At the very least, you should require all students in their seventh and eighth semesters to meet with you at least once each term so that you can approve their plans, and so that they can be cleared for graduation.

Departmental Undergraduate Groups (DUGs)

The 2008 report of Brown’s Task Force on Undergraduate Education included a recommendation that “every concentration be required to foster an active Departmental Undergraduate Group (http://brown.edu/College/tue/).” A DUG is a group of students that meets regularly to help other concentrators in the department connect with one another, with faculty, and with alumni. DUGs enhance the sense of community in a concentration in a variety of ways: by hosting visiting lecturers; organizing discussions about the discipline for prospective concentrators; holding information sessions on a concentration’s honors program; participating in concentration fairs; and contributing to departmental newsletters, websites, and undergraduate academic journals. Anything that brings your concentrators in contact with one another and with your faculty will help to cultivate an intellectual community and make your department a welcome home for undergraduates. If your department doesn’t have a DUG, you might try working with your students to create one.

Each DUG is eligible for up to $1000 in annual funds: $500 from your department will be matched by $500 from the Office of the Dean of the College. To apply, your DUG must have one or more student leaders, a faculty sponsor (which may be you), and a list of activities. Every DUG is expected to hold at least two events each semester and no fewer than four per year. One of these should be a social event welcoming new concentrators. Requests for funding are submitted to the Office of the Dean of the College, along with a list of proposed events and a budget, and you or the faculty
sponsor should endorse the request. We recommend that you work closely with your DUG to ensure continuity from year to year, and to learn from your students about how they can help create a stronger community in your department. For more information about DUG events and funding, contact Dean Christina Furtado at Christina_Furtado@Brown.edu.

Other Departmental Gatherings

The beginning and the end of the year are often good times to bring concentrators together with members of your department. Many departments hold welcome-back parties in the fall; some host holiday gatherings after classes have ended in December. While these events are not necessarily your responsibility to organize, you can make a difference by sending an email to concentrators reminding them of the date and time, and inviting them to be present.

A number of departments across campus also host events for students who have achieved honors in the concentration. In such events, honors students are sometimes asked to present a brief account of their work for the benefit of those gathered. You can increase the value—and fun—of these events by inviting recently declared sophomores and juniors to attend. The graduating seniors can explain the timeline of their honors work and offer helpful tips on such things as finding primary and secondary readers and reserving a carrel in the Rock for thesis work. Some departments publish a list of seniors who are graduating with honors along with their thesis titles and summaries. Such initiatives help spread the word about your honors program and plant seeds for future student projects.

Brown Degree Days

You can also advertise the value of your concentration to students by bringing successful alums back to campus. In 2008-09, following the lead of departments that had sponsored some very successful alumni events, the DOC, the Career Development Center (CDC), and the Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) launched a new initiative that helps more departments reap the same benefits. The initiative, called “Brown Degree Days,” will take place again this year, during March and April of the spring semester. Departments will receive a modest amount of funding from the DOC to host events and assistance from Alumni Relations in locating alumni. In 2009, nearly twenty departments participated in the program. The Department of Physics had the most impressive turnout: They invited thirty alums to an all-day event featuring panels on a variety of topics, and drew a lively audience of over a hundred people (see http://www.physics.brown.edu/alumni/DegreeDay.htm). Such events obviously foster community among current concentrators. At the same time, they build stronger networks between students and alums—networks that can, of course, enhance career opportunities for your students. Details about how to organize and advertise your event will be sent later in the fall. For more information contact Christina_Furtado@Brown.edu in the DOC or contact OAR at alumni@brown.edu (x3-3307).

Faculty Advising Fellows

Faculty Advising Fellows are experienced academic advisors with special responsibilities for meeting with students beyond the normal advising relationship and for supporting other academic advisors. In 2009–10, the Faculty Advising Fellows Program will operate out of a new drop-in advising center on the second floor of the J. Walter Wilson Building, a space we are calling “Advising Central.” Every weekday afternoon, Fellows will be on hand for an informal tea, where they can meet with students—and with you, if you like—to offer advice about useful resources and colleagues across campus. Because this program is designed to enhance the advising of all Brown students, it is also meant to be a resource for your concentrators. The Fellows would be pleased, for example, if you were to bring a group of concentrators to an afternoon tea in J. Walter Wilson. The Fellows also host regular lunches and dinners with students at different venues on campus. This might be a way for you to sponsor a gathering with your own concentrators. The Faculty Fellows program would also be happy to help you host an outside speaker, if your speaker were willing to meet after hours—and outside your department—with other students on campus.
Finally, the Faculty Advising Fellows are meant to serve as a resource for you. A number of them have been concentration advisors in their own departments, and they are more than willing to speak with you about their experience and to pass on practical advice. So feel free to stop by J. Walter Wilson some afternoon to meet a colleague, or simply send a Fellow an email. We hope they will be a source of information—and inspiration—to enhance your work as an advisor. If you would like to know more about the program, or if you have an idea about an event you would like to propose, please contact Yolanda Rome (Yolanda_Rome@Brown.edu) or consult the program website at http://brown.edu/college/advising_central.

**ASK: Brown’s New Electronic Advising Tool**

One of the challenges in creating intellectual continuity (and hence community) for concentrators has to do with the sometimes difficult “hand-off” of students from their sophomore advisor to their concentration advisor. In some cases, the first-year or sophomore advisor will know more about the student than you could ever know. This year the College is launching a new electronic advising tool that should begin to bridge this gap. The tool is called “ASK” (for “Advising SideKick”). In the first phase of the project, first-year students uploaded letters to their advisors, along with course preference forms, that they completed over the summer. Later in the year they will be able to upload an example of their best work. Next year, sophomores should be able to submit their concentration declaration directly into ASK. The advantage for you and for our students is not only greater convenience but also greater continuity of information. Advisors will be able to view students’ work all the way back to the summer prior to matriculation, and thus have concrete evidence of students’ growth over time. Ultimately, the tool will include a portfolio in which students may archive the work they have completed in the concentration, and a mechanism for you to communicate with your advisees. We look forward to working with you and other concentration advisors as we develop on-line advising support.
All students are required to declare their concentrations before their fifth semester. This culminating event of the sophomore year—the official beginning of your advising relationship with concentrators—is also your first major responsibility as an advisor, and it can consume a fair amount of time at the end of the spring semester. This section discusses the process in more detail, and offers suggestions for how to manage it.

Because we want students to be deliberative and informed when they choose their concentration, we expect them to have met with you at least twice before completing a declaration. This can mean a lot of meetings for you, especially if your concentration is large. Needless to say, it is important to start early so that students have ample time to meet with you while pondering their options. There are a number of ways to encourage prospective concentrators to begin sooner rather than later. Here are a few:

- In January, ask faculty in your department to announce your office hours in their classes, and encourage prospective concentrators to make appointments early. Post the same message on the web.
- Require concentrators to submit an early draft of their declaration. The deadline will motivate them to begin the declaration process sooner than they might have otherwise; it also promotes a more thoughtful approach to the entire process.
- Schedule and publicize special “declaration days” office hours early in the spring semester.
- Ask your DUG to hold a concentration declaration workshop for prospective concentrators, and have students sign up for office hours at the workshop.

These events prompt students to think about the relationship of their aims and aptitudes to your concentration, and help draw them to you well before the filing deadline.

Pre-Declaration Meetings

Your initial meeting with a prospective concentrator should focus on the student's intellectual interests and the concentration's requirements. You might ask, for example: What do you find compelling about this concentration? Do you consider it a bridge to something you will do after college? Will it be necessary or desirable to take one or more courses during summer session? Does it make sense to study abroad given your interest in this field? Finally and most basically: Will you be able to complete the concentration in the time you have remaining at Brown?

If after this first meeting the student decides to declare, you should ask for a draft of the essay that will become a part of the concentration declaration form. This is described in more detail below. By asking for a draft, you'll be able to gauge the depth of the student’s seriousness and require revisions to the essays and course list, if necessary.

Before meeting a second time with an intended concentrator, ask the student to bring a copy of his or her internal academic record at Brown and, if relevant, a copy of transcripts from previous schools or study away/study abroad institutions. You will need this information in order to finalize the list of concentration courses they have already completed as well as the courses they intend to take. Review this course list along with the final version of the declaration essay.

The Concentration Declaration Form

To declare a concentration, students are required to complete a standard concentration declaration form. It consists of two parts. The first is an essay representing the intellectual rationale for the concentration. It should articulate the student's goals in the concentration in relation to the broader learning objectives of a Brown education—including the goal of improved writing skills. The second part is a list of courses already taken, and those that will be taken in the future, to realize these learning goals. The list should be realistic: Although students are not obliged to take every course on the list, they do need to have a reasonable plan
for completing all required courses by the end of the eighth semester.

Some departments have their own worksheet for students to use in laying out their requirements (see, for example, Comparative Literature’s “planning help sheet” and “requirements checklist” at www.brown.edu/Departments/Comparative_Literature/undergrad/). Such documents can be very useful in planning and tracking a student’s progress. Please keep in mind that departmental worksheets do not substitute for the official form, which is filed with the Registrar and the Dean of the College offices. The standard concentration declaration form is available at www.brown.edu/College/advising/documents/dsc_form.pdf.

This declaration form ultimately functions as a contract between you and the student, and, by signing it, you become the student’s official advisor for the remainder of his or her time at Brown. Four copies of the form must be completed and signed. The student should retain one copy, the department another, and the two remaining copies must be submitted to the Registrar’s office, which keeps one and sends the other to the student’s confidential file, in the Dean of the College office in University Hall. Once students file the signed form with the Registrar, they may pre-register for the next semester. Although students are the ones responsible for filing on time, you might want to remind them of deadlines.

For most students, the deadline for declaring a concentration is in mid-April of the fourth semester, just before the fall pre-registration period. For students who have taken time off, however, the fourth semester may occur during the fall term, and thus the deadline will come just before spring pre-registration (i.e., in late October). These deadlines are published on the Registrar’s website; students are notified each semester by email as the deadline approaches. Dates are also listed in the calendar at the back of this booklet. (www.brown.edu/Administration/Registrar/calendar.html)

Declaring a Second Concentration

Students at Brown are allowed to “double concentrate” if they can complete requirements for two concentrations in the standard eight-semester sequence of study. Who should do this? Those who have intellectual passions spanning two distinct areas are good candidates, but even they should leave room for other kinds of study. Too often, students double concentrate for the wrong reasons (e.g., because they think it will improve their chances of getting into graduate school). You might therefore discuss with them the costs and benefits of declaring a second concentration. For many, the cost of limiting course selection will outweigh the perceived benefit of listing two concentrations on one transcript. Students who get the most out of their Brown degree often study just one discipline in depth and many others along the way, drawing out the connections between subjects. Those destined for graduate school can easily highlight such intellectual connections in their applications, even without a second concentration.

If a student is determined to add a second concentration, he or she must file another declaration form by the end of the preregistration period of the seventh semester. This deadline is published on the DOC and Registrar websites, and is listed at the back of this handbook. The process for filing a second concentration is otherwise exactly the same as the process for filing the first concentration.

Changing Concentrations

Students may change their concentration at any time, under the condition that they can complete all new concentration requirements by the end of eight semesters. If the new concentration cannot be completed within eight semesters of enrollment, it will not be approved. Bear in mind that the deadline for declaring a second concentration is the end of the pre-registration period during the student’s 7th semester.
Concentration Requirements

One of your main responsibilities as advisor is to oversee concentration requirements. This means you will need to know the requirements yourself, so that you can properly convey them to students. They should be able to understand not simply what they have to take but why, and thereby understand their responsibility to the methods, content, and questions of your field and its intellectual traditions.

Your concentration’s requirements are published in two places: at the end of the Course Announcement Bulletin, and on your department’s website. It is a good idea to check these places regularly—as well as any departmental brochures that list requirements—to make sure that all sources say the same thing, and that students are thus receiving accurate information. To make any changes to your concentration’s published requirements, your department must first petition and receive approval from the College Curriculum Council.

**Prerequisites and Advanced Placement**

Many concentrations offer one or more gateway courses that every student must pass before taking higher-level courses. Some concentrations offer placement exams or accept Advanced Placement test scores as substitutes for pre-requisites. In all cases where AP credits are accepted, the student must earn a 4 or 5 on the AP to make the substitution. Some AP scores are automatically transcripted when students matriculate at Brown; others are added only upon students’ request, after they have completed a required course in the appropriate department. AP scores noted on the academic record are recognized by Banner if they fulfill a pre-requisite, and students may register for a higher-level course accordingly. The point is this: As a concentration advisor, it will probably fall to you to vet students’ requests for AP score substitutions, so it is important for you to be familiar with the rules of your department.

**Transfer Credits**

Students may come to you asking to transfer credits earned at another institution, so they can count them toward their concentration. These requests happen most frequently at the beginning of the semester—when transfer students first matriculate at Brown, or after students return from studying abroad or from studying away in the U.S. Most concentrations allow a maximum of two (2) transfer credits toward requirements. (For study abroad, the rule of thumb is that two credits may count toward the concentration for one semester; another credit is sometimes allowed when a student stays for two.) Once again, you should be familiar with the rules for your own concentration before approving any such requests.

Essentially, there are two sets of criteria governing the transferability of credit—those for your concentration and those for the College. Therefore, we recommend that you tell students who are planning to study away to get approval in advance from your department as well as from the College. While retroactive approval has the advantage of providing you with full information about the course and the student’s performance, it poses the disadvantage (to the student) of undertaking coursework that your department may not accept for concentration credit or that the College will not transcript. Christina Furtado (Christina_Furtado@Brown.edu) is the dean who handles transfer credits. More information is available at www.brown.edu/College/courses/study_away.php.

Here it is important to note that not all concentration requirements must be transcripted. Occasionally, a department will approve a course for concentration credit that cannot be transcripted—usually because it carries only three credits rather than the required four. In such cases, students can still graduate if they have met Brown’s degree requirements (thirty courses on the Brown transcript, eight semesters of enrollment credit, writing proficiency, and completion of a concentration).

**Studying Abroad**

International education is vitally important for students in the 21st century. As a concentration advisor, you should encourage your students to think seriously about studying abroad for a summer or a semester, and to consider studying a language, even if such study does not seem directly pertinent. It is surprising what kinds of doors can open for those who have developed
this kind of cultural fluency. The Office of International Programs has created a useful web tool to help you and your concentrators find programs that fit their academic interests. It allows you to search for Brown-approved study abroad programs filtered by area of concentration, language, and country. You can access the new system at www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/programs/search/.

In 2009, the Office of International Programs also launched a new independent study initiative, based on Brown’s longstanding Independent Study Program (ISP) and Group Independent Study Program (GISP). Now, concentrators who are planning to go abroad can pursue a “Global Independent Study Project” (GLISP) with a Brown faculty member at home. Because such projects are tied to the students’ academic interests, they can help a semester abroad become a more integral part of the concentration. The hope is that projects begun during a semester away might even become the basis for a senior thesis project once the student returns to campus. For a list of recent GLISPs, see www.brown.edu/Administration/OIP/programs/gis/recipients.php.

A number of summer international experiences are available through the Office of Continuing Education. You can direct your students to these opportunities, or learn more about them yourself, by visiting http://brown.edu/scs/undergrad/summer/. Information on international fellowship opportunities can be found on page 11.

Tracking Student Progress

As mentioned above, the concentration declaration form functions as a kind of contract with a student. Any changes to a student’s plan must be entered there, so that all advisors can track a student’s progress toward graduation. Your department may regularly allow certain substitutions for required courses, or, alternatively, you may require concentrators to petition for such substitutions. Whatever your method, it’s critical to document any authorized substitutions to preclude future misunderstandings, and to have a record for a later advisor in the event that you step down. This will be especially important as a student enters the final two semesters of coursework. Some larger concentrations with multiple advisors make good use of Brown’s webCT environment (“MyCourses”) to share information about concentrators among advisors, and to keep all of it in one place. Brown’s new “ASK” online advising tool, described on page 6, will eventually have this functionality as well.
Delving Deeper (Junior Year)

As concentrators enter their fifth semester, your role as an advisor will no longer be narrowly focused on the choice of concentration and whether or not a student can complete it. Meeting with your juniors, you will probably want to know more about their goals and aspirations.

Some questions you may want to ask are listed below.

- Are there fellowship or internship experiences that they should consider, and that can amplify coursework in the concentration?
- Have they thought about pursuing a senior project? Do they know where to find more information about these opportunities?
- How are they planning to work on their writing abilities in their final two years?
- Are they considering post-baccalaureate study?
- Do they want to take time off before pursuing graduate work?
- How many faculty in the department know them well enough to write a letter of recommendation?

Students report that the most meaningful advising encounters have emerged through conversations like these—when discussions of a concentration program expand to include broader questions. As you begin to work with your juniors, we encourage you to take your conversations to this next level.

Research, Internships, and Fellowships

Many juniors will want to pursue directed research, internships, and fellowships. Juniors are positioned to gain valuable experience working in laboratories or doing research for credit or compensation; they can apply for fellowships both at Brown and at the national level, working closely with members of your department. You should look into Brown’s Undergraduate Teaching and Research Award (UTRA) program, which offer research stipends for work pursued during the summer ($3,000) or during the academic year ($1,000).

Other notable internal awards are the Starr and Royce fellowships, which promote community service and social change. The Swearer Fellowship and the Brown International Scholars Program support a wide variety of international projects. Juniors should also be made aware of several highly competitive national fellowships, such as the Udall, Goldwater, Beinecke, and Truman fellowships.

Indeed, we rely on you to recommend your best students for all of these awards. Sometimes an encouraging word from a faculty mentor can make all the difference to a successful application. Linda Dunleavy in the Office of the Dean of the College (Linda_Dunleavy@Brown.edu) can tell you more about national fellowships. Or you can consult our newly updated website on fellowships [www.brown.edu/College/fellowships/awards/](http://www.brown.edu/College/fellowships/awards/). A few additional links and contacts are listed below, should you want to learn more about Brown’s many internal awards.

- For more about UTRAs contact Besenia_Rodriguez@Brown.edu, or David_Targan@Brown.edu, or consult the DOC website at [www.brown.edu/College/utra/](http://www.brown.edu/College/utra/).
- To learn about Swearer Center international fellowships, see [http://swearercenter.brown.edu/whatwedo/fellowships-swearerint.html](http://swearercenter.brown.edu/whatwedo/fellowships-swearerint.html).
- Or, for the new Brown International Scholars Program, see [www.brown.edu/Administration/International_Affairs/international/BrownInternationalScholarsProgram.html](http://www.brown.edu/Administration/International_Affairs/international/BrownInternationalScholarsProgram.html).
- Information about internships can be found on the Career Development Center website at [http://careerdevelopment.brown.edu/undergrads/index.php](http://careerdevelopment.brown.edu/undergrads/index.php). Note that students should begin researching internships as early as October: most application deadlines fall in January and February.
- More information on research and fellowship opportunities can be found at [www.brown.edu/College/research/research_awards.php](http://www.brown.edu/College/research/research_awards.php).
Brown’s Writing Requirement

A final opportunity to emphasize with your juniors is the chance to improve their writing. Strong writing skills allow students to excel in all kinds of academic work; they lead to significant cognitive gains in the concentration; and they are among the abilities most sought-after by future employers. There is every reason to urge your students to take the time in college to work on these skills; they may never have another opportunity like it.

Indeed, at Brown, this opportunity is an obligation. Even though our curriculum, by tradition, leaves open the question of “general education” requirements, the University has nonetheless maintained a requirement for the baccalaureate degree that all students demonstrate the ability to write well. The implication of this requirement is that students should work on their writing over the course of their four years. Brown’s 2008 Task Force on Undergraduate Education (http://brown.edu/College/tue/) called for a reinvigoration of this writing requirement, and the College Curriculum Council, in conjunction with the College’s Writing Advisory Board, responded in 2009 with the following updated statement on writing:

To earn the baccalaureate degree, all Brown students must demonstrate an ability to write well. Why? Good writing is essential to learning. Across the disciplines, scholars, teachers, and students write to explore ideas, uncover nuances of thought, and advance knowledge. Writing is not only a medium through which we communicate and persuade; it is also a means for expanding our capacities to think clearly.

As a Brown student, you are expected to work on your writing in your general studies and in your concentration. You may begin to fulfill this expectation by taking at least one course that engages you in the writing process: a course in which you draft and revise papers, and in which you receive clear feedback on your prose. These courses will be designated with a “W” in the Brown course catalogue.

When you declare your concentration in the sophomore year, you will have an opportunity to discuss the writing you have completed at Brown and the writing you intend to do. To hone your skills, you are encouraged to produce an independent research paper, a seminar paper, or an honors thesis in your concentration. Remember to save examples of your best work each year. This evidence will allow you to demonstrate your abilities not only to Brown advisors but also to future colleagues and employers.

Because the concentration can be the focal point of a student’s academic experience, it makes sense that students should work on their writing in the course of completing their concentration. As an advisor, you will want to steer students toward courses that allow them to develop these abilities; indeed, you should encourage them to learn how to express themselves better in your discipline. You may want to poll your colleagues about their different teaching styles, to find out which of their courses emphasize the writing process. These could then be listed as “W” courses in your discipline. If you would like more information about Brown’s writing requirement, contact Kathleen_McSharry@Brown.edu, Associate Dean for Writing and Communication, or Douglas_Brown@Brown.edu, Director of Brown’s Writing Center and the Writing Fellows program.

Life after Brown

Many of your juniors will be preoccupied with the question of what they will do after college. Don’t be surprised, then, if students come to you with question about their future. You may feel that your life experience does not equip you to help them—and that’s no surprise, either. Those of us who have remained in school all our lives may not be the best mentors for students entering other professions. And yet you should remember that there are other people on campus who can help. You can direct your students to the advisors in the Career Development Center (CDC) for guidance. Or you can work with members of your DUG and the CDC staff to fashion an event that will help your concentrators as a whole. There are many options to consider. To arrange a consultation, call the Career Development Center at x3-3326.
Meaningful Outcomes (Senior Year)

As the question of learning outcomes dominates national debates on higher education, and as jobs become scarcer, many people—including some of your concentrators, perhaps—are beginning to wonder about the effects of the college experience: What's it all about? You have a unique opportunity to address that question as your students approach the final year of the concentration. This last portion of the handbook contains practical information about the senior year, as well as ideas about how you can encourage seniors to make the most of their Brown experience, by digging deeper into the central purposes of their liberal education.

Ideally, the last year at Brown should provide all students with a meaningful culmination of their educational experience. To that end, the 2008 report of Brown’s Task Force on Undergraduate Education recommended that all concentration programs define learning outcomes for their concentrators, provide students with opportunities for “capstone experiences,” and develop systematic plans for assessing their students’ success in achieving departmental learning outcomes (http://brown.edu/College/tue/).

This recommendation obviously represents a long-term objective for Brown, one that the College Curriculum Council is now undertaking in collaboration with Office of the Provost. As a concentration advisor, then, it is not exclusively your job to see that all this work gets done. Nonetheless, you can make progress in your department simply by steering your seniors toward their own positive learning outcomes, through some kind of senior-year project.

Senior-Year Projects

If your concentration already requires a senior project, then it is your job to make sure students can fulfill this expectation. If you don’t require it, you may want to persuade seniors to take on this intellectual challenge voluntarily. Better yet, you should plant the seed with your juniors so they begin planning early. Such a “capstone” experience might take many forms: It could be a focused internship, a teaching apprenticeship, a performance, an exhibition, a large creative work, an advanced seminar paper, a laboratory experiment, a thesis—in short, a substantive contribution to the discipline. Whatever the form, it should lead undergraduates toward the kind of intellectual engagement that faculty experience all the time. For this reason, the project should be supervised by a faculty member who can monitor the student’s progress and give feedback. By completing such a project, seniors will have, in effect, already answered the question, “What’s it all about?,” because they will have produced something that reveals the impact of their studies both to themselves and others. Not only that, this kind of intensive intellectual experience can lead them toward outcomes they never imagined. Incidentally, the DOC has a modest amount of funding to help support senior projects. Students should consult with David_Targan@Brown.edu, or with the Dean of the College.

Honors in the Concentration

An honors thesis is one type of capstone project—albeit with a few more strings attached. Your department’s honors program will define the terms on which advanced undergraduates may distinguish themselves through in-depth course work or research in the discipline. Entry into such programs varies by department; you should check the rules for your own program and make sure that they are clear to you, as well as to your faculty and students. Most often, students are required to apply by the end of the junior year, or by the very beginning of the senior year; and they must show evidence of having done high quality work in the concentration. As an advisor, it is your responsibility to advertise this program to juniors, to review their applications (sometimes in conjunction with an honors committee), and to remind faculty members who are supervising honors projects—and students who are doing them—of the relevant deadlines. As discussed on page 5, you can recognize your honors students by arranging appropriate celebratory events at the end of the semester. You might consider doing this with all seniors who have completed capstone projects.
Latin Honors

A more conventional sign of honorable achievement in a University education is the classical designation *cum laude*: “with honors.” Less concrete than a written thesis, it is determined not by the concentration but by the College at the very end of a student's career. Brown grants only one honor at commencement: *magna cum laude*. The determination for *magna* is based on the percentage of “A” grades and marks of “S with distinction” that a student receives in all courses taken at Brown. By Faculty rule, this honor goes to no more than 20% of the graduating class each year. The distinction mark, while visible to the student in the online internal record, is not released outside the University and is not noted on the external transcript.

Prizes

Another formal recognition for excellence comes in the form of end-of-year prizes. Some departments have endowed monetary prizes, which they award at commencement to recognize outstanding undergraduate work. Most are funded by endowments held in the College’s budget. You should talk to your department manager about how many prizes your department has, how they are awarded, and in what amounts. The College has limited additional funds to support the awarding of prizes in departments that do not have any such endowments. Each spring the Dean of the College office sends an announcement inviting departments to apply for these premiums. For more information, contact Sara_Walsh@Brown.edu, in the Office of the Dean of the College.

Clearing Seniors for Graduation

The last and perhaps most official role you will play in the life of your students will be to determine whether they have completed the requirements for the concentration. This is one of the necessary steps toward what we call “clearing” seniors for graduation. In October and March every year, you will receive a clearance form for each of your 8th-semester seniors. The packet will include a list of courses in which they are currently enrolled, together with a copy of an internal record for all courses completed. The Registrar asks you to check the records and indicate whether the student has completed or is expected to complete the concentration that semester, and, if not, what requirements remain. This is a very good excuse for you to meet with your seniors again—not just to go over their records, but to review their overall Brown experience.

Before you meet, you should take care to check any anomalies or substitutions against the student’s official declaration form: Was permission granted to satisfy the requirements by other means? Is there other documentation in the student’s file noting the substitution? If not, the student will not be able to graduate and you will have to inform the Registrar. The Registrar will record the names of those who have not completed the concentration; that office will also notify the students. You may want to discuss this situation with the students yourself when you meet with them. It may also be useful to strategize how they can complete the concentration, either at Brown or elsewhere. Keep in mind that all of these students—even if they have requirements pending—can still “walk” in the graduation ceremony, although their names will not appear in the official graduation program. Departments decide for themselves whether students who have not completed degree requirements can participate in their own graduation ceremonies.

Aside from this official clearance process, you can view these final meetings as a time for seniors to reflect on their experience at Brown more generally. What was the most useful thing they learned in your concentration? What work are they most proud of? What work was most challenging? Is there anything they would do differently if given a second chance? Asking such questions, even in an informal way, can send a very good message that you are concerned not only about their individual experience but also about the experience of future concentrators. If you were to ask your seniors, moreover, to take a moment to put these thoughts in writing, both you and they might end up with a different picture of the real “outcomes” of your concentration.
Commencement Festivities

The departmental commencement is the last chance you will have to acknowledge the good work of your students. Students receive their diplomas at the ceremony, in the company of family and friends. You can help make this event more meaningful for everyone who attends—and especially for your students—by taking the time to acknowledge the accomplishments of your graduates, reporting their honors in the department program, narrating one or two of their successes during the formal remarks, and announcing their future plans. Everyone needs to be acknowledged for good work, and a few well-chosen phrases, uttered publicly by a faculty mentor, will surely be remembered for a very long time. If the chair of your department presides over these ceremonies, you can help him or her by providing information about concentrators whom you know best. And you should make sure to attend the celebrations yourself. As an advisor, it will mean more to your concentrators than you can imagine if you simply take the time to be present.

Tracking Your Graduates

When a department is asked about the “outcomes” of graduates, it often has trouble coming up with more than anecdotal evidence. Where did your concentrators end up? Knowing the answer to this question can be a great benefit when giving concrete evidence of the success of your program. It is not always possible to keep up with Brown graduates in such a rapidly changing world, but making an effort to connect with them before they leave campus can help enormously. Try collecting, for example, their google addresses so a member of your department can drop them a line from time to time. While students might ignore a form letter from the University, they are likely to read an email query from someone in your department, asking them what (and how) they are doing. You might also have a member of your staff create a simple database, poll colleagues about former students, and update the information. These efforts will pay countless dividends in the future. Indeed, keeping in touch with your alums, and learning about how their lives develop, will give you all the more reason to invite them back for a visit, so they can share their life experience with current students.
APPENDIX

We offer here a list of useful names and contact numbers to help you and your students find academic and personal support.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Office of the Dean of the College (DOC)
Katherine Bergeron, Dean of the College
2nd Floor, University Hall (x3-2573)

The deans in the DOC are your primary source of support for any academic issue related to your students. To locate specific individuals, telephone numbers, and responsibilities, consult the DOC website at www.brown.edu/College/people/ or contact Dean Bergeron’s assistant, Barbara Sardy (x3-2573). Academic deans hold open hours for students every Monday-Friday from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. in University Hall and from 1:00–4:00 p.m. on the second floor of J. Walter Wilson; students may make appointments for longer consultation.

Co-Curricular Advising and Tutoring
Yolanda Rome (x3-6803)

The Director of Co-Curricular Advising oversees group tutoring and study skills and tracks students who are struggling academically. This assistance consists of “early warning” notifications to students and their advisors—including outreach to seniors who may be in danger of not graduating. The director also supports the Faculty Advising Fellows Program and Advising Central, which sponsors events throughout the week on the second floor of J. Walter Wilson.

Science Center
David Targan (x3-2314)

In January 2010 Brown will unveil a new Science Center on the third floor of the Science Library, providing comprehensive support for science education at Brown. In addition to science-specific advising and academic support, the Science Center will house academic mentoring programs and serve as a clearinghouse for information about hundreds of research, fellowship, and internship opportunities.

Math Resource Center
151 Thayer Street (x3-2708)

Students in introductory courses may obtain assistance four evenings a week from a graduate proctor in mathematics. The Resource Center’s schedule changes each semester; call the Center for the current schedule.

Curricular Resource Center
308 J. Walter Wilson (x3-2419)

Staffed by trained peer advisors, the Curricular Resource Center advises students developing DUGS, independent studies, and independent concentrations, and provides information about options for taking time away from Brown.

Writing Center
213 J. Walter Wilson
Doug Brown (x3-3524)

The Writing Center provides individual and group writing support. Staff members help students with all stages of the writing process. The Writing Center is open Sunday through Thursday from 3 to 9 p.m. for drop in, but it is usually best to schedule an appointment in advance. Appointments may be set up via email at www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Writing_Center/appointments/.
OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Career Development Center (CDC)
167 Angell Street (x3-3326)

The CDC offers one-on-one advising about job placement and internships, hosts alumni events, and provides students with a venue to meet and interview with future employers in both for-profit and non-profit sectors.

Psychological Services
516 J. Walter Wilson (x3-3476)
Belinda Johnson

Students experiencing emotional difficulties that interfere with their school work may benefit from a consultation with a counselor. Students with general concerns should call to make an appointment. If a student is in crisis, you may call Psychological Services yourself to request a same-day appointment for a student.

Office of Student Life (OSL)
20 Benevolent Street (x3-3800)
Maria Suarez

Student Life deans and directors can assist students with general concerns related to life on campus, academics, or accessing appropriate resources. The staff also provide support for students who need assistance or advice during a particularly stressful or demanding period.

Disability Support Services (DSS)
20 Benevolent Street (x3-9588)
Catherine Axe

Students with disabilities may obtain individual support from DSS, which facilitates services and accommodations for students with physical, psychological, sensory, and learning disabilities. Requests for accommodation are evaluated individually, based on documentation from appropriate professionals.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Department of Public Safety
Emergency 863-4111
Non-emergency 863-3322
Student Life Administrator On Call
(Nights, weekends, holidays) 863-3322
Psychological Services
(After 5 p.m. through Health Services) 863-1330
ADVISING CALENDAR 2009–2010

** means your presence is required at this event

**SEMESTER I**

Monday, September 7
**Academic Expo, 4:00–5:30 p.m., Sayles Hall**

Wednesday, September 9
Classes begin for Semester I.

Wednesday–Friday, September 9–22
**Meetings with 7th and 8th semester concentrators to approve course schedules**

Wednesday, September 16
First day to register for a RISD course

Tuesday, September 22
Last day to add a course without a fee (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Wednesday, September 23
Last day to register for a RISD course without a fee or change a RISD grade option (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Tuesday, September 29
Study Abroad Fair, 11:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 6
Last day to add a course, change from audit to credit, or change a grade option (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Monday, October 12
Fall Weekend holiday. No University exercises.

Friday, October 16
Last day to change from credit to audit in a course (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Monday–Friday, October 19–30
Advising period for spring pre-registration.

** Schedule extra office hours for concentrators.**

Tuesday, October 27
CDC Alumni Panel on Careers and Concentrations, 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 28
**Concentration Fair: 7:00–8:30 p.m.**

Thursday, October 29
Concentration filing deadline for 4th semester sophomores. Students who do not file will have a “No Concentration” hold placed against their Banner registration. (Forms due by 5:00 p.m.)

First week of November
Registrar submits list of seniors to concentration advisors to clear for graduation at mid-year.

Tuesday–Thursday, November 3–10
Registration for Semester II. (Note: No student will be permitted to register for his or her fifth semester unless a declaration of concentration has been filed.)

Wednesday, November 4
Undergraduate Research and Fellowship Fair, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 5
Deadline for submitting proposals for group independent study projects (GISPs) for Semester II

Tuesday, November 10
End of the pre-registration period (5:00 p.m. deadline). Last day for students in their 7th semester to declare a second concentration.

Wednesday–Sunday, November 25–29
Thanksgiving recess begins Wednesday at noon.

Monday, November 30
Classes resume.

Tuesday, December 1
CDC Internship, Research, and Funding Showcase, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 5
Midyear Completion Celebration

Monday–Friday, December 7–11
Reading period (optional and at the discretion of the instructor)

Friday, December 11
Classes end for courses not observing reading period. Last day to drop a course or to file for an incomplete (5:00 p.m. deadline). Last day of RISD classes. (RISD final studio reviews and exams: December 14–18)

Monday, December 12–21
Final examination period

Monday, December 21
Deadline to nominate seniors to be Commencement speakers
SEMESTER II

Monday, January 18
Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. No University exercises.

Tuesday, January 26
Registration of new students for the second semester

Wednesday, January 27
Spring semester classes begin
Deadline for nominated seniors to submit one-page synopsis of potential Commencement speech

End of January
Deadline for submitting your departmental alumni event for “Brown Degree Days”

Tuesday–Tuesday, January 26–Feb. 9
**Meetings with 7th and 8th semester concentrators to approve course schedules

Monday, February 1
Deadline to submit grades for fall semester incompletes if the course is to count toward academic standing

Tuesday, February 9
Last day to add a course without a fee (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Wednesday, February 17
**Concentration Fair 7:00–8:30 p.m.

Saturday–Tuesday, February 20–23
Long weekend. No University exercises.

Monday, February 22
First day to register for a RISD course

Wednesday, February 24
Last day to add a course, change from audit to credit, or change a grade option (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Monday, March 1
Last day to register for a RISD course without a fee or to change RISD grade option (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Friday, March 12
Last day to change from credit to audit in a course (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Mid-March
Registrar submits list of seniors to concentration advisors to clear for graduation in May.

Saturday–Sunday, March 27–April 4
Spring Recess

Monday–Friday, April 5–16
**Advising period for fall pre-registration. Schedule extra office hours for concentrators.

Friday, April 9
Deadline for submitting proposals for group independent study projects (GISPs) for Semester I.
Deadline for applications to Office of the Dean of the College to fund departmental prizes to recognize outstanding concentrators at graduation.

Thursday, April 15
Concentration filing deadline for 4th semester sophomores. Students who do not file will have a “No Concentration” hold placed against their Banner registration. (Forms due by 5:00 pm.)

Tuesday–Tuesday, April 20–27
Registration for Semester I, 2010–11. (Note: No student will be permitted to register for his or her fifth semester unless a declaration of concentration has been filed.)

Tuesday, April 27
End of the pre-registration period (5:00 p.m. deadline). Last day for students in their 7th semester to declare a second concentration.

Friday–Tuesday, April 30–May 11
Reading period (optional and at the discretion of the instructor)

Tuesday, May 11
Classes end for courses not observing reading period. Last day to drop a course or to file for an incomplete (5:00 p.m. deadline)

Wednesday–Friday, May 12–21
Final examination period

Friday, May 21
Last day of RISD classes. (RISD final studio reviews and exams: May 24–28).

Sunday, May 30
Commencement

Monday, June 14
Summer Session begins.

Thursday, July 1
Deadline for submitting grades for spring semester incompletes if the course is to count toward academic standing