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Teaching Issues and Concerns across Campus, II

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Between January 1998 and March 1999, members of the Sheridan Center staff visited forty-seven (47) academic departments across the University to meet with Chairs, Faculty Teaching Liaisons (FTLs) and other faculty to discuss issues confronting the Brown teaching community. This was the first time the Center had conducted such a comprehensive survey since early 1993. Last winter *The Teaching Exchange* included an article describing the preliminary issues and concerns expressed in the earliest visits. This article summarizes the final results.

The visits across the disciplines reveal the strong commitment by faculty and graduate TAs to undergraduate instruction within the context of the Brown (open) curriculum. However, many faculty face a variety of complex issues and concerns about how to provide the best possible educational experience for their students at the advent of the 21st century. The Brown curriculum challenges all members of the teaching and learning community to undertake an explicit educational partnership. Students as well as faculty need to express a clear and explicit understanding of the nature and purpose of a Brown education in a rapidly changing world. Expanded support for graduate student training, as the future professoriate, is crucial to the enterprise.

While the range of teaching issues and concerns varied across departments, certain major themes emerged. The issue of responsible and effective student evaluation forms indicated that most departments will undertake to revise their present instruments in the near future. Faculty have noted that the undergraduate student body is not only socially diverse, but also diverse in the quality and content of their educational preparation for

college level work. Many faculty are concerned with the documentation of teaching performance and the appropriate relationship of that evaluation to tenure and promotion. A common issue was interest in increased opportunities for exchange of ideas about teaching both within departments and across the disciplines. The use of instructional technology has encouraged many faculty to seek out experienced colleagues across the University to assess the applications and impact of this developing pedagogy. Faculty expressed serious concern over the impact of such course management issues, such as class size, on the quality of instruction. Finally, support for the ongoing pedagogical development of both new/junior and senior faculty was a subject for concern. Services provided by the Sheridan Center staff, such as Presentation Consultations, Grant Consultations and Individual Teaching Consultations have been created in response to these concerns.

As the University prepares to finalize and implement its Strategic Goals, the means to effectively address these teaching issues and concerns will define the shape of the Brown curriculum in the 21st century.