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## UCS Recommendations for Updating the Plan for Academic Enrichment

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Over the Fall 2007 Semester, The Undergraduate Council of Students has invested a large effort to evaluate undergraduate student needs and priorities at Brown. We have conducted large meetings and discussion forums, provided surveys, spoken with individuals, solicited written feedback, and spoken with faculty, administrators, and campus groups. We have attempted to synthesize recommendations for updating the Plan for Academic Enrichment. While these recommendations do not and cannot speak for every student, we believe they reflect the priorities most important to many students.

- **Develop and implement a program to encourage and reward high quality faculty advising**

Many students seek new opportunities to develop strong one-on-one advising relationships with faculty and feel that some faculty do not have enough incentives to encourage and reward time and energy spent on advising.

Recommendation: Create a program called “President’s Advisors” or “Chancellor’s Advisors”. Students would nominate top advisors for this position, and the Dean of the College Office would choose from the nominees to maintain a balanced group of advisors, who would be appointed for several year terms. These advisors would provide a profile of themselves and their interests, and be available for any undergraduate – similar to the current Randall Advisor program but more prominent and with a wider scope. Whereas Randall Advisors currently receive little prestige and no compensation, these new advisors would receive some benefit – funding for a graduate student or summer salary, for example, and the program would be promoted strongly. The program would provide a valuable new set of advisors, and because of the prestige and reward would also create incentives to encourage a larger group of faculty who are not necessarily in the program to dedicate more energy to quality advising.

- **Create more opportunities for building student-faculty relationships, including small seminars and outside-the-classroom programs**

The First Year Seminar and CAP programs have been very successful, but many students are not part of these programs, and even some who are need more opportunities to develop strong personal relationships with faculty who also know them in an academic setting. In addition, students seek better opportunities for interaction with faculty outside the classroom.

Recommendation: Create a CAP-like seminar program for sophomores that will help those who do not have one-on-one faculty relationships to develop them after their first year, and that will provide additional small seminar classes to undergraduates who are not eligible for first year or senior seminars.

Recommendation: Create new programs and improve existing ones that provide opportunities for student-faculty interaction outside of the classroom, although specifically not in residence halls: significantly expand and improve the faculty fellows program, and explore opportunities in other areas such as dining.

- **Improve and increase financial aid to reduce burdens for students on financial aid and to attract new students**

Students from both lower and middle-income families suffer excessive burdens because of their financial circumstance. Many are unable to attend Brown, and some at Brown are unable to pursue important educational opportunities like research because of financial obligations.

Recommendations: Decrease student and parental contributions for financial aid and decrease loan burdens. Reduce summer work requirements or increase summer stipends in programs like UTRA to allow students on financial aid to pursue activities like research. Allow outside scholarships to reduce the student and parental contributions beyond the current limit to encourage undergraduates to pursue such awards.

- **Improve the quality of students' residential experience by adding lounges and renovating residence halls**

Few residential floors have lounges available, so residential communities are not as strong as they should be. Existing residence hall space is unpleasant and discourages community.

Recommendation: Substantially increase the amount of common space in residence halls by returning all lounges that have been converted into housing back to lounges, and by removing additional rooms from the housing lottery and designating them as lounge space.

Recommendation: Undertake major renovations of many existing residence halls, including upgrades to lighting, paint, and common spaces across campus and as a larger scale project than is currently planned.

- **Increase the amount of high quality study space in libraries and in regional computer clusters**

Students lack adequate study space on-campus, both in libraries and in residential areas. The Friedman Study Center has been wildly popular, but it is overcrowded at almost all times.

Recommendations: Increase on campus study space by adding or expanding library areas like the Friedman Study Center. Create new regional computer clusters and study spaces in places where they do not exist, such as on Pembroke Campus.

- **Increase the amount of high quality social, event, and performance spaces**

Student groups consistently suffer from a lack of adequate and high quality social, event, and performance spaces.

Recommendation: Create new social, event, and performance spaces, and renovate existing spaces specifically to accommodate large social or performance events.

- **Support new initiatives and strengthen existing ones in climate change/energy/environment areas**

A very large number of undergraduates are excited about opportunities in climate change/energy/environment areas, across a wide variety of disciplines.

Recommendations: Support initiatives in the climate change/energy/environment area. Develop new course and research opportunities in these areas. Permanently fund the CCURB program at a high level.

- **Increase funding for student groups to support student publications and events**

Student groups are under-funded, largely because the Undergraduate Finance Board has inadequate funds and does not receive substantial regular increases to its budget.

Recommendation: Create a permanent funding source, such as an endowment, to provide reliable supplemental funding for the Student Activities Fund.

- **Improve comprehensive support for students in science, technology, engineering, and math fields**

Many students need a stronger and more comprehensive network of support resources in science, technology, engineering, and math fields.

Recommendation: Create an “Undergraduate Science Education and Outreach Center” as proposed by the Undergraduate Science Education Committee.

- **Improve support for interdisciplinary concentrations**

Interdisciplinary concentrations like International Relations and Development Studies are very popular, but undergraduates suffer from a lack of resources and support for such programs.

Recommendation: Increase funding, faculty, and administrative support for targeted interdisciplinary programs.

- **Improve support for and encourage more independent projects and research by increasing support for the UTRA program as well as for ISPs and GISPs**

Recommendations: Increase the number of UTRAs and the size of the UTRA grant, which is currently insufficient. Create more programming to support the UTRA grants. Create structure to support and encourage independent study projects (ISPs), and group independent study projects (GISPs).

- **Make expensive classroom technology a lower priority**

While it is extraordinarily difficult to pinpoint any area that students clearly agree should be de-emphasized, there appears to be almost universal agreement that classroom technology should be a lower priority. While comfortable classroom environments are essential, undergraduates feel that

costly innovative classroom technologies (such as SmartBoards) do not significantly improve their educational experience in the way that other priorities discussed above do.

- **Make major renovations to existing residence halls at least as high and possibly higher priority than building a new residence hall**

Students acknowledge, support, and desire the functions a new dorm with high quality apartment-style housing could provide – such as creating better space to develop community, allowing better educational program in residences, and encouraging upperclassmen to live on campus and remain involved in campus life. What is absolutely clear, however, is that students believe that renovating and improving existing residence halls is absolutely essential, and do not want to see fewer resources invested in renovations because resources are being dedicated to creating a new dorm. Many existing residence halls are deficient and badly need very sizeable improvements. If a new dorm can be built in addition to improving residence halls, that would be ideal – but renovations and improvements on the scale of a major new dorm project must be undertaken.