The 2008 report of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education acknowledged the strength and diversity of Brown’s concentration programs, noting that more work remained to be done to ensure that all our programs reflected the same high standards. Specifically, the Task Force recommended that all concentration programs define learning outcomes for students, provide opportunities for capstone experiences, and develop systematic plans for assessing students’ success in achieving these outcomes. (www.brown.edu/college/tue). The College Curriculum Council (CCC) is now undertaking reviews to assess progress toward these goals.

Each concentration program will be asked to discuss four basic areas in the course of the review: (1) the intellectual rationale for the program and the expectations for student learning; (2) the role played by the program in advancing Brown’s liberal learning goals; (3) the strength and coherence of the advising program; and (4) the outcomes of seniors, including but not limited to those who have achieved honors in the concentration.

Reviews will be conducted in two stages. First, a small committee from the CCC (consisting of one student and two or three faculty members or deans) will visit the department to meet with chairs or directors of programs, and a representative group of faculty and students. The CCC committee will arrive with some knowledge of the program, including knowledge about enrollments and graduation rates, and will expect the faculty and students in the concentration to provide more information about the four areas above.

Chairs should be prepared to give concrete responses to the following questions:

(1) Why is your concentration structured as it is? What specific knowledge or skill do you believe every concentrator should have gained by the time of graduation? What process do you have in your department for verifying that students have gained them? (See Sheridan Center’s Assessment Overview and Best Practices).

(2) What do you consider the most important outcomes of a liberal education? (Refer to the 2008 statement Liberal Learning at Brown). How does your concentration help students achieve these outcomes? What requirements do you have in your program to ensure, in particular, that students have worked on their writing, either in your discipline or elsewhere?

(3) What are the goals of your advising program? What process do you have in place to ensure that advising is working? How do you think advising could be strengthened?

(4) What is the nature of the work completed by seniors in your concentration? What percentage of the class of 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 completed a senior project of some kind? (Give examples of the kind of work they completed.) Did the faculty as a whole talk about the work done by your seniors? Finally, what are the criteria for earning honors in the concentration, and how recently has your honors program been revised?

After the interview, the chair or director will receive a brief summary highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the program, and from that summary will be asked to draft a response. This constitutes the second stage of the review, during which time the chair and others will also be invited to discuss their response with other members of the CCC.