

September 15, 2016



Strengthening Brown's Research Environment

**Office of the Vice President for Research
Strategic Plan 2016 - 2021**

Introduction

Brown's aspirations in research are described in the University's 2013 strategic plan, *Building on Distinction*:

Our primary ambition is to pursue Brown's mission at a higher level of distinction, to raise Brown's stature as a leading university that unites innovative teaching and outstanding research. Success will mean new discoveries that advance human well-being and new research that helps us understand the human condition,...an increase in the productivity of faculty members working at the forefronts of their fields, a rise in the standing of Brown's graduate and medical programs, and a continued stream of outstanding undergraduates who go on to equally outstanding careers that reflect the high value of a Brown degree.

While strong research is not new to Brown, the priority assigned to it has risen markedly over the past 15 years under the leadership of Presidents Simmons and Paxson. This transition has not been without challenges both in changing the culture of the institution and finding paths to success in an intensely competitive research-funding environment. In 2016, however, our goal is now clear: Brown's aspires to have its research enterprise join the ranks of the world's leading academic research institutions, building on our longstanding achievements in education and scholarship. In the same way that Brown has approached its educational mission in a distinctive and creative manner, we must build its research program with full appreciation of Brown's unique academic culture

The underlying motivation for this goal is to be of value to society and, in so doing, to enhance Brown's stature as an institution. The role of the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) is to provide services that support this goal. While we are not the source of the creative ideas that drive the research, we have a significant, even central, role in moving Brown's research enterprise forward.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to describe how we will do this. It articulates our vision and goals and provides a roadmap for OVPR's leaders and staff to follow to achieve those ends. It represents our translation of the University's long-term agenda for research, articulated in, *Building on Distinction*, into a set of strategies we will use to improve the day-to-day endeavors of Brown faculty and amplify the benefits of their research for the University and more importantly for our society.

Mission

OVPB encourages and enables the highest aspirations for research at Brown by increasing opportunities for faculty scholars to pursue their research goals, facilitating the process of obtaining external research funding, and promoting Brown's research achievements. By enhancing research development and management, we not only effect positive changes in the volume and culture of research at Brown but also increase the profound benefits to society that are the result of an ambitious, innovative, productive constellation of research activities.

Vision

OVPB's efforts will enable the faculty to substantially increase the quantity, quality, diversity, and impact of research at Brown. We are committed to accelerating the transformation of the University's research portfolio into a nationally and internationally recognized program that complements and extends Brown's excellence in education. As stated in *Building on Distinction*: "We believe that education and research reinforce each other and that the best academic programs bring innovative teaching and rigorous research together."

Core Values

All of the activities that OVPB pursues to fulfill its mission and vision are guided by our commitment to the following values.

Faculty focus: Our role, first and foremost, is to support and enhance the faculty's research agenda.

Informed competence: maintaining the highest standards of accuracy in the information we provide and expertise on the part of our staff—informed by our close interaction with peer institutions and research networks to identify best practices that can be adapted to serve Brown more effectively.

Efficient customer service: providing researchers with timely and high-quality service that enables them to achieve their research goals, while deploying OVPB staff time and University resources in the most cost-effective and beneficial ways possible.

Impact: maximizing the benefits of research to society by connecting faculty to partners in academia, government, and the private sector who can amplify the results of research.

Strategic insight: providing the University well-informed, creative, and thoughtful approaches to enhancing Brown's research enterprise.

Strategic Goals

OVPR will achieve its vision by pursuing four overarching goals:

- I. Optimize Brown's Research Environment**
- II. Translate Research Discoveries into Benefits for Society**
- III. Ensure Maximum Impact for Brown's Investments in Research**
- IV. Advocate for Research Throughout the University**

I. Optimize Brown's Research Environment

We will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes for identifying sources of research funding, competing for funding, conducting research, and creating successful research teams. Providing strong research support will allow Brown to attract, retain, and ensure success for the very best faculty and graduate students.

- 1. Connect faculty with a larger and more diverse set of external research funding sources**
 - Enhance OVPR's ability to identify and share with faculty funding opportunities targeted to Brown's research strengths—reaching beyond traditional sources to include a broad pool of federal agencies, private foundations, corporate partners, and private philanthropists.
 - Increase the use of internal seed funding to improve the ability of Brown researchers to compete successfully for external funding by making proposals more compelling and demonstrating their feasibility.
 - Develop OVPR's expertise in supporting large, capacity-building, interdisciplinary grants.
- 2. Streamline the administrative process for obtaining external funding**
 - Implement new information technology that will automate a larger number of the administrative tasks of proposal development and submission, conserving faculty time to focus on research content rather than administration.
 - Improve integration of the research infrastructure across departments, centers, and OVPR so that all faculty are well supported with a seamless network of services and able to manage their grants efficiently.
 - Develop an accelerated process for seeking, obtaining, and managing corporate research partnerships, ensuring that the process of cultivating relationships, developing formal proposals, and implementing contracts flows smoothly and quickly.

- Develop processes and guidelines to streamline the process for obtaining research funding from non-traditional federal and state agencies that may have distinctive contractual terms.
- Develop a routine, ongoing feedback system that allows those who submit grants to identify their problems and concerns, make suggestions for improvement, and monitor progress in OVPR's services.

3. Provide the infrastructure, information, and services needed to conduct research in a highly efficient yet ethically and fiscally responsible manner

- Ensure that Brown provides as much flexibility as possible in the conduct of research while remaining ethically and financially compliant with guidelines.
- Coordinate with other offices on campus such as the Office of the General Counsel, the Comptroller, and Health and Safety to streamline compliance with federal research regulations.
- Enhance the training of research administrators so that they are better able to guide faculty in handling IRB, IACUC, and COI issues.

4. Facilitate development of concentrated research programs in selected areas of Brown's strength

- Identify clusters of faculty expertise at Brown whose capabilities could be leveraged to achieve critical mass and become leading research programs, particularly in areas related to the seven integrative scholarship themes identified in *Building on Distinction*.
- Work with successful research teams on campus to understand the practices and skills that have enabled them to thrive, so that OVPR can provide more informed, effective guidance to nascent programs with the potential to become leading concentrated research efforts.
- Cultivate research team leadership skills among our faculty members with the interest, talent, and motivation to pursue such goals.

II. Translate Research Discoveries into Benefits for Society

We will assist Brown's talented researchers in translating their discoveries and inventions into products and methods that will benefit society. By actively promoting these accomplishments, we will amplify Brown's research impact while enhancing the University's research visibility and reputation.

1. Commercialize research results and disseminate knowledge to the public.

- Streamline the process leading from research discovery to commercial application and promote it widely among faculty researchers.

- Communicate—both internally at Brown and to audiences outside the University—the achievements of faculty who have successfully moved from research discovery to product development.

2. Enhance internal and external recognition of Brown research and celebrate faculty research achievements.

- Support prestigious nominations of Brown faculty by identifying opportunities and assisting faculty in putting their candidacies forward
- Develop written and web-based marketing materials that effectively catalog and communicate Brown’s research capabilities to funding agencies and throughout the University research community

III. Ensure Maximum Impact for Brown’s Investments in Research

To support responsible stewardship of University resources, OVPR will seek areas for University research investments and document the return on those resources to better focus investment strategy and maximize its impact. Strong returns on Brown’s research investments will provide greater resources with which to strengthen research capacity and support the University’s overall financial base.

1. Secure University resources that will increase Brown’s research capacity in a strategic, cost-effective manner

- Monitor the results of seed awards for research to identify predictors of success and refine the selection process to increase the impact of future seed funding.
- Experiment with new approaches to providing strategic financial support that can enhance success in obtaining external funding, such as the existing Grant Resubmission Award.
- Develop a strategy for investing in core laboratories and data analysis and computation cores that strengthens Brown’s research capacity and impact

2. Coordinate OVPR’s support for research with that of Brown’s research-intensive schools, institutes and centers to identify opportunities for joint investment, consolidation/centralization of common activities, and other mutually-supportive initiatives

- Support the strategic research priorities of the Schools and Centers through clear communications, targeted efforts to identify new funding opportunities, and providing assistance in the development of grant applications.
- Work with selected departments and centers that have the greatest potential to support their plans for growing the research portfolio in a manner that is consistent with their goals, develop a constellation of activities to maximize their chances for success.

IV. Advocate for Research Within the University

Advocate for research broadly across all levels of the University—not only highlighting the research community’s financial resource needs but also identifying issues of academic and management policy (e.g., teaching load, academic calendar, space allocation) that bear on Brown’s research productivity. While OVPR has a limited role in decision-making in these areas, it can aid Brown in creating a supportive culture for research by being a “voice at the table” for faculty researcher needs that can only be addressed at the most senior levels of the University.

1. Support changes in University policies and procedures that would make Brown’s research environment more supportive

- Work with the Research Advisory Board and conduct informal conversations with research-intensive faculty to identify University-wide policies and procedures that hinder research productivity, identify how they might be improved, and elevate discussion of potential changes to the appropriate decision-making body.
- Explore with the Provost and Deans’ Council the possibility of incorporating IP generation (patents) and research commercialization as criteria in the hiring and tenure & promotion processes.

2. Raise the visibility of research at Brown, demonstrate the University’s support for it, and highlight the centrality of Research to the University’s mission

- Collaborate with the Office of Communications to develop mechanisms for enhancing recognition both on campus and to outside audiences.
- Develop an annual publication highlighting research achievements for dissemination widely to prospective students, faculty, the Brown Corporation, potential donors, funding agencies, and others in the community.
- Promote the relevance of direct research experiences to undergraduate education, support the engagement of undergraduates in faculty research, and highlight the value to faculty and graduate students of involving Brown’s exceptional undergraduate students in their work.

3. Work with the Office of the Provost to establish metrics and targets for research productivity that are appropriate to Brown

- With the deans, departments and faculty, identify approaches to measuring research productivity that are sensitive to the wide variety of research, scholarly, and creative activity across the disciplines.
- Establish a systematic process for monitoring research productivity and incorporating the results into department, college, and University decision-making.