

February 2, 2024

Dear Students,

I have received your letter expressing your intent to refuse food until the Corporation of Brown University considers and votes on a resolution, based on a 2020 report by Brown's Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Policies (ACCRIP), for "divesting its (Brown's) endowment from companies that enable and profit from the genocide in Gaza and the broader Israeli occupation."

Before I share what I've explained to other student activists who have made similar demands related to the 2020 ACCRIP report, I want to express my strong hope that you attend to your own health and safety, as well as the safety of your colleagues, as you engage in this act of protest. We are a community that recognizes protest as a valid form of free expression, and understands the power of activism to elevate critical issues. However, just as our policies outline that protest is unacceptable if it interferes with the normal functions of the University, protest is also unacceptable if it creates a substantial threat to personal safety of any member of the community.

The University has a wide range of resources for [care](#) and [support](#) related to physical and emotional health, and Campus Life staff will continue to be in communication with you as you make your own choices during your protest.

Regarding the demands in your letter, I and other administrators have met with hundreds of students – individually and in groups – in recent months, to discuss how the endowment is managed and explain the process for requesting that the University consider divesting its endowment from the assets of specific companies.

The first step in this process is not a Corporation resolution, but rather to submit a proposal to the Advisory Committee on University Resource Management, or ACURM (formerly known as the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Practices, or ACCRIP). The committee, which includes faculty, students, staff and alumni, is charged with making recommendations to the president, who may take recommendations to the Corporation of Brown University.

The bar for divestment is high. It requires a demonstration that the University's investments in the assets of specific companies create social harm, and that divestment will alleviate that harm. Furthermore, we consistently reject calls to use the endowment as a tool for political advocacy on contested issues. Our campus is a place where difficult issues should be freely discussed and debated. It is not appropriate for the University to use its financial assets – which are there to support our entire community – to "take a side" on issues on which thoughtful people vehemently disagree.

As members of the Brown community, you are free to submit a new request to ACURM, and any recommendation from ACURM will be required to meet the standards of its charge.

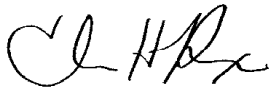
I will not revisit the 2020 ACCRIP report. Here, I will directly restate much of what I have shared with other students and activists making this demand:

“ACCRIP – and now its successor, ACURM – is advisory to the president, and I am not obligated to bring its recommendations to the Corporation of Brown University. I have consulted with the Corporation on this matter during previous student protest actions, and I stand by my previous decision not to bring the 2020 recommendation to the Corporation. As such, I will not commit to bring a resolution to the February 2024 Corporation meeting or any future meeting of the Corporation.

The 2020 ACCRIP recommendation did not meet the standards as outlined in ACCRIP’s charge. As I stated in a March 9, 2021, letter to the members of ACURM: “In my view, the recommendation did not adequately address the requirements for rigorous analysis and research as laid out in ACCRIP’s charge, nor was there the requisite level of specificity in regard to divestment. The divestment recommendation did not meet established standards for identifying specific entities for divestment or the articulation for how financial divestment from the entities would address social harm as defined in the committee’s charge.”

I encourage you to continue to engage with Campus Life staff during your protest action, and to safeguard your health and well-being as you exercise your right to protest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. H. Paxson', written in a cursive style.

Christina H. Paxson
President