

December 11, 2023

Dear Students,

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your document that includes a demand that Brown “promote a permanent ceasefire by divesting from companies that facilitate the genocide in Gaza.” You have asserted that you intend to stay in University Hall until I publicly commit to forward the 2020 report by the Advisory Committee on Corporate Responsibility in Investment Policies (ACCRIP) to the Corporation of Brown University with my support.

In this letter, I review my response to the 2020 ACCRIP report, and I outline what steps would be necessary for a new divestment proposal to be considered. I also remind you of the standards for protesting in University Hall.

ACCRIP – and now its successor, the Advisory Committee on University Resources Management (ACURM) – is advisory to the president, and I am not obligated to bring forth its recommendations to the Corporation of Brown University. After consultation today with the chancellor of Brown University, I stand by my previous decision not to bring the 2020 ACCRIP recommendation forward to the Corporation. As such I will not commit now to forward or recommend the 2020 report.

I declined to bring forward to the Corporation the previous recommendation for Brown University to divest its financial holdings (stocks, funds, endowment, and monetary instruments) from “companies that facilitate the Israeli Occupation of Palestinian Territory,” because it did not meet the standards as outlined in ACCRIP’s charge. In a March 9, 2021, letter to the members of ACURM (after the transition from ACCRIP), I stated the following with regard to a February 13, 2020, meeting with members of ACCRIP about its initial report:

“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.”

ACCRIP made revisions to the report and released an updated version in March 2020. However, the revised report still failed to meet the standard as stated in the committee’s charge, and therefore, was not brought forward to the Corporation.

While I will not revisit the 2020 report, I continue to recognize the essential role of ACURM in considering how ethical and moral standards are applied across all of Brown’s business and investment practices, aligned with Brown’s mission and values. One path forward would be for you to submit a new request to ACURM to examine your concerns. Any member of the University community may submit a request for ACURM to examine allegations of “social harm” with respect to the investment or expenditure of University financial resources.

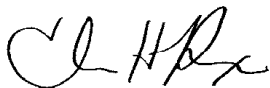
While ACURM is not obligated to consider all requests brought forward by the community, I am prepared to ask the committee to assess the request in a timely manner. I closely review and assess any recommendations that meet the criteria in ACURM's charge. Should ACURM submit a recommendation based on a new request that fully meets the criteria for considering issues related to social responsibility, I will bring it forward to the Corporation for its own review and consideration. It is up to the Corporation to decide whether to include items on its meeting agendas.

In regard to your presence in University Hall today, my expectation is that you will leave the building by 5 p.m., which is the end of normal operating hours. Brown recognizes that protest is a necessary and acceptable means of expression on campus. However, the University maintains safeguards for determining time, place and manner to ensure that protests don't interfere with the normal functions of the University. University Hall is a secure building that maintains confidential and privileged information in multiple offices; staying in the building after business hours poses security concerns.

Should you choose to remain in University Hall past business hours, we are prepared to enforce Brown's policies, which prevent students from remaining in secured, non-residential buildings after normal operating hours. Willful trespass of a school building is unlawful per Rhode Island statute and a violation of Brown's conduct code; implications include arrest, criminal charges and review per the University's conduct procedures.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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

Christina H. Paxson
President