



Motion to Approve “Statement of University Values and Voice May 6, 2025

SUMMARY: Motion to approve, and to recommend to the Corporation that they approve, the “Statement of University Values and Voice” as drafted and presented by the Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice.

MOTION:

That the Faculty approve the following “Statement of University Values and Voice” as drafted and presented by the Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice, and further that the Faculty recommend to the Corporation that they approve the same:

STATEMENT OF UNIVERSITY VALUES AND VOICE

The core institutional values of Brown University are:

1. The pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

The pursuit of knowledge and understanding is the primary way in which the University serves the community, the nation, and the world. It does so through research and creative expression and by educating students duly qualified for discharging the offices of life with usefulness and reputation.

2. Academic freedom and freedom of expression.

Academic freedom is the freedom to investigate and learn without interference or censorship. Academic freedom is necessary for the production of knowledge and understanding and imposes responsibilities on those who exercise it. Freedom of expression is the right to communicate ideas and engage in reasoned and informed protest, dissent, and criticism.

3. A commitment to openness and diversity of ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

Successful fulfillment of the University mission requires a wide range of ideas, perspectives, and experiences to advance knowledge and understanding.

4. Responsibility for a thriving academic community.

The University is a community of students, faculty, and staff, and holds itself responsible for generating the conditions necessary for every individual member of its community to thrive. This responsibility rests on the fundamental presumption that all persons have something of value to contribute to the University mission.

University voice is:

University “voice” is defined as a public statement or action that intentionally expresses a position on an issue.

Being necessary to advance and defend the mission and core values of the institution, use of University voice should concern only those issues that directly influence the University mission. The University has discretion in the use of its voice on such issues, informed by the principles of shared governance.

The University must refrain from expressing positions on topics unrelated to its mission, because doing so risks undermining the public trust, damaging the conditions necessary for academic freedom, and preventing fulfillment of the University mission.

RATIONALE:

In December, 2024, the Faculty Executive Committee convened, with the Office of the President, an Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice charged with defining the core values of Brown University in consultation with students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The full report of the Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice describes in detail the process the Committee followed, the feedback it received and incorporated, and contains a full explanation of the rationale and reasoning for the proposed Statement of University Values and Voice.

The scope of the Charge to the Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice did not include modification to existing Brown University policies. However, the Committee was invited to make recommendations to the President, including those regarding inconsistencies among existing University policies and/or among existing University policies and the proposed Statement of University Values and Voice. In accord with its Charge, the Committee sets forth one critically important recommendation to the faculty and the President. The Committee urges the faculty and the President to consider and act affirmatively upon this recommendation.

Recommendation of the Ad-hoc Committee on University Values and Voice

The Committee recommends that the Office of the President, in consultation with the Faculty Executive Committee, convene an ad-hoc committee or working group that includes students, faculty, and staff to guide implementation of the Statement on University Values and Voice. Such a committee is essential in the next academic year. The charge of this committee must include:

- A. Considering and making recommendations regarding the manner in which principles of shared governance can most effectively support the administration and the University in the discretion in the use of its voice on issues that directly influence the University mission, as called for in the proposed Statement of University Values and Voice.
- B. Reviewing alignment between current University policies, committee charges, and related governance structures to ensure consistency with the Statement of University Values and Voice.