BROWN EDUCATION

DESIGNING YOUR BROWN EDUCATION

A GUIDE FOR NEW STUDENTS 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brown's Philosophy of Education Navigating Brown's Curriculum Academic Policies	6 11 17		
		Life at Brown	18



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As an alumnus, faculty member and dean of the College, it is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to Brown.

As you will learn over your time here, Brown's Open Curriculum is defined by a philosophy of education that underpins our distinctive culture of open inquiry and collaboration. This philosophy highlights your learning as an individual student, requires your active participation and relies on a community of faculty, staff and fellow students to make it all possible. This booklet will help you take your first steps toward becoming a member of the Brown community.

At Brown, we often say students are the "architects" of their education. This metaphor implies that you are building a strong foundation to embrace the many choices you will face in the future. It also suggests the process itself will take time and extensive collaboration. "Designing Your Brown Education" contains information and advice about how to begin the process of designing your studies at Brown.

Please read this booklet carefully as you begin this new phase of life and learning at Brown. Our office will be communicating with you over the summer to assist in your transition, and we look forward to meeting you soon on College Hill.

Sincerely,

Rashid Zia Dean of the College



BROWN'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

THE OPEN CURRICULUM

Most students say they chose Brown because of the freedom afforded by the Open Curriculum. Now that you are getting ready to explore it, we would like to provide you with some background on its philosophy and tips for making the most of your Brown education, especially during your first year at Brown.

The "New Curriculum" was adopted by the faculty in 1969, after a year of collaborative study and debate — led by approximately 80 students and 15 faculty — about the need for educational reform. The key components remain in place to this day: no distribution requirements mandating coursework in particular fields of study, a simplified grading system without grade point averages and class rankings, the option to take any course satisfactory/no credit or for a letter grade, and an invitation to "concentrate" rather than "major" in broad, interdisciplinary fields of study. Additionally, the faculty institutionalized the opportunity for you to design your own independent concentrations and independent studies for academic credit. At the core of these features is a student-centered philosophy that espouses that each student should be an active participant in shaping their education.

LIBERAL LEARNING AND CORE COMPETENCIES

While the Open Curriculum is a half-century old, it is rooted in a long Western tradition of learning called the liberal arts, which encourages breadth of education across multiple domains as well as depth in a single area. Our courses are taught by scholars who are dedicated to the production of knowledge in the arts, humanities, life sciences, physical sciences and social sciences.

You are not required to study in all of these areas; however, our enrollment data reveal that Brown undergraduates tend to distribute their courses across the curriculum, choosing classes in a wide array of fields. Consider Brown's liberal learning goals as you begin to construct your course of study.

Work on your speaking and writing

Writing, speaking and thinking are interdependent. Developing a command of one of them means sharpening another. Seek out courses, both in and out of your concentration, that will help you improve your ability to communicate in English as well as in another language. Whether you concentrate in the sciences, the social sciences or the humanities, your ability to speak and write clearly will help you succeed in your college coursework and in your life after Brown. Seek out courses that carry the University's "writing designation." In these courses, faculty will provide feedback, not just on your ideas, but on your prose as well.

Understand differences among cultures

Your future success will also depend on your ability to live and work in a global context. And that means knowing as much about other cultures as you do about your own. Brown offers a wealth of courses and international experiences that will help you develop a more self-conscious and expansive sense of how different cultural groups define themselves through social, aesthetic and political practices. Working with international students and teachers on the Brown campus can make you equally aware of the challenges of communicating across linguistic and cultural barriers. Fluency in a second language, coupled with time spent studying abroad, will sharpen your sensitivities, enlarge your sense of geography and prepare you for leadership in an increasingly interconnected world.

Evaluate human behavior

Knowing how individuals are socialized and express their identities can lead to deeper insights about the nature of human organization, the sources of political power and authority and the distribution of resources. The study of race, gender, ethnicity and religion can help you think more deeply not only about yourself but also about the social institutions that serve to define our very notions of self, together with the policies and institutions that maintain them. Look for courses designated as "DIAP Courses: Race, Gender and Inequality," named for Brown's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

Learn what it means to study the past

Understanding how people and institutions have changed over time is fundamental to a liberal education. Just as you should expand your cultural breadth, so should you develop your historical depth. Coming to terms with history involves far more than learning names and dates and events. It means understanding the problematic nature of evidence and the distance that separates the present from the past. It also means thinking critically about how histories themselves are written and who has the power to write them.

Experience scientific inquiry

Evidence is also a central aspect of scientific inquiry. The interpretation of natural or material phenomena requires a unique combination of observation, creativity and critical judgment that hones your inductive reasoning, sharpens your ability to ask questions and encourages experimental thinking. Understanding the nature of scientific findings, along with their ethical, political and social implications, is also critical to an informed citizenry. As you plan your course of study, look for opportunities to experience direct, hands-on research.

Develop a facility with symbolic languages

Symbolic languages make it possible to think abstractly across many disciplines. Linguistics, philosophy, computer science, mathematics and even music are among the disciplines that have developed symbolic systems to make theoretical assertions about their objects of study or to imagine alternate realities. Courses in these areas will teach you what it means to conceptualize systems and structures that have the potential to reframe our notions of time and space.

Expand your reading skills

Studying written texts, interpreting graphs and evaluating systems and codes are all forms of analysis that belong to the more general category of "reading." Learning how to read closely makes you aware of the complex nature of expression itself, where the mode of expression is as important as what is expressed. Gaining experience with close reading — across many genres may be one of the most important things you will learn to do in your four years at Brown.

Enhance your aesthetic sensibility

A liberal education implies developing not just new ways of reading but also of seeing, hearing and feeling based on exposure to a range of aesthetic experiences. Courses in the visual and performing arts, music and literature will deepen your understanding of many kinds of expressive media, past and present, and the kinds of realities they aim to represent. Developing your own creative abilities in one or more art forms will deepen your self-understanding and enhance your ability to appreciate the work of others.

Embrace diversity

Achieving excellence in liberal education requires a commitment to diversity in the broadest sense. This means embracing not only a range of intellectual perspectives but also a diversity of people. Brown's diverse educational environment offers you the opportunity to think broadly about the nature of complexity itself and to learn how to participate productively in a pluralistic society. The Brown curriculum features hundreds of courses that offer you a chance to enlarge your perspectives in just this way. Seek experiences inside and outside the classroom that will challenge your assumptions and allow you to develop a more open and inclusive view of the world and your place in it.

Collaborate fully

Learning never happens in isolation, and the quality of your experience at Brown will depend on your ability to collaborate fully with others: with teachers, with fellow students, with advisors and mentors of all kinds. Be as bold in seeking guidance as you are in pursuing your educational aspirations. Begin developing your network of collaborators early, and work to stay connected with those teachers, advisors and peers who have meant the most to you. Visit office hours not just to expand your understanding of course material but also to get to know your teachers as people. Reach out to faculty at other events — or over lunch or coffee. Work on research projects or independent studies with professors whose interests match your own. And make use of the many offices and centers that can support you in reaching your academic goals. By taking charge of your education in this way, you will enrich your teachers' and mentors' understanding as much as you will expand your own capacity to learn, not just here at Brown but in many other environments and for many years to come.



Apply what you have learned

Your general education at Brown will be enriched by the many kinds of work you do beyond the classroom. Additionally, as you study areas broadly across the disciplines, and deeply within a selected concentration, you can expect that you will become competent in a group of academic skills that will enable you to examine knowledge critically, produce scholarship of your own and use these transferable skills as you set out on a career pathway and connect learning to life outside the classroom. These core competencies — reading, public speaking, critical reading, data analysis, problem-solving and research - are skills you will practice and develop as part of coursework, research and other co-curricular opportunities. Looking beyond the horizon of your immediate interests and sharing your knowledge and talents with others can expand intellectual and ethical capacities that will make it possible for you to lead a full and engaged life or, in the words of the Brown charter, "a life of usefulness and reputation."

ACADEMIC INTERESTS WORKSHEET

Take time to answer these questions before you meet with your advisor.

 What new areas are you hoping to explore during your first or second year at Brown, and what's drawing you to them?

2. What are you particularly curious about, and how do you want to build on that curiosity?

3. What are some of your hopes, values and goals that guide your choices of study?

LIBERAL LEARNING GOALS TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR COURSE OF STUDY

Work on your speaking and writing.

Understand differences among cultures.

Evaluate human behavior.

Learn what it means to study the past.

Experience scientific inquiry.

Develop a facility with symbolic languages.

Expand your reading skills.

Enhance your aesthetic sensibility.

Embrace diversity.

Collaborate fully.

LEARNING NEVER HAPPENS IN ISOLATION, AND THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AT BROWN WILL DEPEND ON YOUR ABILITY TO COLLABORATE FULLY WITH OTHERS.

BECOMING THE ARCHITECT OF YOUR EDUCATION

Within Brown's Open Curriculum today, you will choose between more than 80 concentration programs and from a large number of courses offered by faculty numbering more than 800. You will have the opportunity to study abroad, engage in research within or outside of your concentration and take advantage of summer programs and internships across the globe. Needless to say, that's a tremendous amount of opportunity and choice! Our curriculum ensures great freedom in directing the course of your education, yet it is natural to feel both excited and overwhelmed by the range of choices. How do you begin considering them?

The process of making the various choices before you will require ongoing reflection about your learning process; building a team of advisors; and adopting a mindset that encourages an openness to people, ideas and experiences that may be entirely new. By cultivating such openness, you will learn to make the most of the freedom you have and to chart a meaningful intellectual journey throughout your undergraduate career. To help you take advantage of the Open Curriculum, Brown provides a strong advising community. In turn, your advisors, professors and other advising partners will expect from you a willingness to listen, engage and seek out resources to support your decision-making and your intellectual and personal growth. The 1stYear@ Brown online course will give you a chance to think more critically about a Brown education, introduce you to how to build an advising team, and provide a space to reflect on who you are as you join the Brown community. As you participate in the course and read this guide and other materials, we suggest that you consider the questions to the left about your academic interests.

NAVIGATING BROWN'S CURRICULUM

ADVISING FUNDAMENTALS

Like every other Brown student, you have a particular set of interests and passions that will inform your academic choices. At the same time, you are encouraged to experiment with new approaches, to cross boundaries and to explore new areas of study. In order to help you navigate the Open Curriculum, Brown offers a robust advising program. Your advising community will help you navigate the Open Curriculum.

Your advising community will provide you with the guidance you need to experience a liberal and thus liberating — education.

Your first advisors

You will be assigned an academic advisor and a peer advisor. These individuals will help you make decisions about course selection, answer your questions and introduce you to various opportunities, academic and otherwise.

Contacting your advisors

You will be prompted via an email from the College's advising team to introduce yourself to your academic advisor via the 1stYear@Brown online workshop.

You will meet for an initial academic advising conversation before you register for your courses. You will learn about how to approach "shopping period" - when you visit classes you may consider taking. You will begin to build an advising partnership with your advisors, one in which they get to know you and your goals for the coming year. If you are entering as a firstyear or first-semester sophomore transfer, you'll meet with them at least twice more throughout the year, more often if you choose to establish a greater rapport. If you are an incoming second-semester sophomore or junior transfer, you will be connected to advising in your intended concentration(s) for further academic advising and to learn about the concentration declaration process.

BUILDING YOUR ADVISING TEAM



Your advisors' role

Your advisors have been trained to guide you during your first year at Brown. Their job is to engage you in a conversation about your academic choices. Come to your advising meetings with specific questions and also with some thoughts about your academic hopes and plans for the semester. Be ready to describe your current academic interests and how they have evolved. (See worksheet on page 9.)

Think about how you would describe your long-term goals. Sharing them will help your advisors get a sense of where you're headed.

Building an advising team

The 1stYear@Brown online workshop will introduce you to the many advising resources and programs available. As the course emphasizes, your academic advisor and peer advisor are your first, but not your sole, advisors. No one person can advise you on all aspects of a Brown education; as a student, you are encouraged to visit the drop-in office hours of your class professors, concentration advisors (even as you explore a range of concentrations), academic advising deans and many other educators here who are readily available to meet with students.

Resources for skills development and support

All students benefit from developing their academic study and research skills by taking advantage of the many academic support resources at Brown:

- Content librarians: Any of the librarians are available to orient you to Brown's library services and collections. Library subject specialists can meet individually with you to assist with research and offer guidance and advice.
- Specialized support centers: Academic Support Services, Academic Tutoring, the Curricular Resource Center, Math Resource Center and Writing Center offer free, individualized services to support you in achieving your academic objectives.

CURRICULAR BASICS

Choosing courses for your first semester can be a daunting process. Many options are available in different areas that narrowing down one's course selection to four may initially seem impossible. The following pages offer some general advice on how to approach the task.

Building relationships with your professors

Getting to know your professors is a critical part of your Brown education. By the end of your first year of study at Brown, at least one faculty member should know you well enough to advise you on your academic choices. Bear this in mind as you choose your courses. While Brown faculty are committed to working closely with students, it is simply not possible for professors in large lecture courses to establish relationships with all of their students. Smaller, seminar-size courses can be more conducive to building relationships.

First-Year Seminars

One of the best ways to establish relationships with faculty and other students, and also to discover a new field, is to enroll in a First-Year Seminar (FYS). Limited to no more than 19 students and offered in all areas of the curriculum, First-Year Seminars introduce you to college-level work and Brown's academic culture. Many students have used their FYS as a springboard to independent, interdisciplinary work on the seminar theme or with the seminar professor. Whether helping you discover your future academic path or simply find your academic voice amid the small discussion groups, First-Year Seminars emphasize active participation and discovery — which defines the Brown experience. An added benefit is that many of these courses satisfy the first half of Brown's writing requirement.

Sophomore Seminars

Sophomore Seminars bring together ideas, perspectives and approaches that are not normally seen side by side in a given course or program. Embracing a range of intellectual perspectives, many of the seminars focus specifically on issues of social justice, identity and difference. Limited to 19 students each, the seminars help you develop the knowledge, skills and methods you need to progress toward more advanced learning in a discipline or field.

Curricular Programs

Using the Advanced Feature of courses@brown, you can search for first year and sophomore seminars in the Curricular Programs filter. Other course options include Writing-Designated courses, DIAP courses: Race, Gender, Inequality, Community-Based Learning and Research, and Collaborative Scholarly Experiences. There is also an available description for each in the Advanced Search filter.



Writing requirement

Brown requires you to work formally on your writing at least twice — once in your first two years of study and again in your junior or senior year. You will meet the first part of this requirement by completing any Brown English, comparative literature or literary arts course, or with a transcripted pre-Brown course credit in these subjects if you have transferred, or any of the hundreds of Brown courses across the curriculum marked as a Writing-Designated Course. You are strongly advised to enroll in one or more of these courses in your first year of study. You must finish part one of the writing requirement by semester four (second-semester sophomore transfers may seek a semester extension) and part two between semesters five and seven.

Brown's English department offers a number of intensive writing courses designed to help master the skills needed for university-level writing. Many firstyears benefit from enrolling in a section of English 0900, Critical Reading and Writing I: The Academic Essay, in which you learn the fundamentals of a variety of essay styles. Additional courses focus on other styles of writing, such as journalistic writing and creative nonfiction.

Writing Fellows Program

The Writing Fellows Program helps you improve your written communication skills through intensive work with a Brown student, called a Writing Fellow, who has been trained in composition and pedagogy. Writing Fellows read drafts of student papers and meet in conferences with student writers to discuss their drafts. You then revise your work and submit both versions to your professor or teaching assistant.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center provides individual and group writing support free of charge to all members of the Brown community. Writing associates assist you at any stage of the writing process, from finding a topic through drafting, revising and final editing. Typical assignments include academic essays, lab reports and research projects, as well as professional materials for fellowships, internships and the job market. Writing Center appointments are scheduled for one hour and should be requested at least five days in advance.

Science and math courses

Brown offers a wide range of math and science courses. Determining which math or science course is appropriate is important, so make sure to carefully review the relevant departmental websites.

Grade options

You may opt to take courses for a grade (A/B/C) or satisfactory (S), and some courses are designated S/ NC by the instructor. You may request a narrative course performance report if the S option is selected. Although you can take any course, even concentration requirements, as S/NC, you should consider professional or graduate plans in making this decision. Academic advisors and deans are available to help think through your options.

Changing course registration

You may add and drop courses and change grade options using the registration system up until the fourth week of the term. Although you can drop courses after the fourth week, you cannot add courses or change grade options.

ONLINE ADVISING TOOLS

1stYear@Brown is an interactive workshop that provides details about Brown's mission, the University's advising culture, and how to develop college learning capacities such as self-reflection. canvas.brown.edu

Advising Sidekick (ASK) is an online portal where your 1stYear@Brown assignments are uploaded; it is also the platform where you will declare your concentration(s). In addition, the site lists the various advising sessions and events offered across campus throughout the year. ask.brown.edu

Courses@Brown is Brown's online course catalog. Courses@Brown allows you to view course descriptions, enrollments, meeting times, instructors and often the class syllabus. An optional "Courses I Can Take" feature allows you to view only those courses for which you immediately qualify. cab.brown.edu

Undergraduate Concentrations is a website that showcases every concentration at Brown; it provides a summary of the concentration, its requirements and its advisors. Dipping into a few of the descriptions can help you investigate potential pathways and imagine how your academic journey might take shape. brown.edu/go/concentrations

Bruno Beginnings is a platform designed to facilitate your transition to college — connecting you to events, discussions and peers to promote community building. orientation.brown.wisr.io

ADVISING RESOURCES

CareerLAB

The Center for Careers and Life After Brown (CareerLAB) can help you refine a resume, write a cover letter, prepare for a job interview and find jobs and internships.

Curricular Resource Center

The Curricular Resource Center for Peer Advising is a place where student advisors help their peers engage with the Open Curriculum and effectively take advantage of Brown's academic resources.

Departmental Undergraduate Groups (DUGs)

A DUG is a group of student concentrators who work with the faculty in their concentration to advise preconcentrators and establish a sense of community.

Faculty Advising Fellows

Faculty Advising Fellows are experienced academic advisors who support students' lives both inside and outside the classroom. Drawn from a wide range of academic disciplines, Faculty Advising Fellows are dedicated, knowledgeable faculty members who work with students to discuss academic choices and challenges.

Matched Advising Program

The Matched Advising Program pairs sophomore students with junior and senior mentors for one-onone and group advising, providing a support system for navigating concentration declarations, research opportunities, internships and more.

Meiklejohn Peer Advising

Meiklejohn peer advisors are sophomores, juniors and seniors trained to provide you with advice and counsel on the academic, extracurricular and social transitions that come with attending college for the first time.

BUILDING YOUR ADVISING NETWORK BEGINS EVEN BEFORE YOU GET HERE, AND WE HOPE YOU WILL EXPLORE BROWN'S ARRAY OF ACADEMIC ADVISING RESOURCES.

ACADEMIC POLICIES

Effective academic planning requires knowledge of Brown's graduation requirements. Below is an overview of the most critical academic policies that all undergraduates should know. Please carefully review all of Brown's academic policies, available online, and consult the most critical academic policies that all undergraduates should know. Please read them carefully and consult with an academic dean when you arrive on campus if you would like clarification on any of these points.

At Brown we strive to maintain an open learning environment based on individual expression and the free exchange of ideas.

Degree requirements

At Brown, two baccalaureate degrees are awarded — the bachelor of arts (A.B.) and the bachelor of science (Sc.B.). The degree awarded is determined by the chosen concentration program. In order to graduate with a Brown baccalaureate degree, you must meet the following requirements:

- 1. Earn at least 30 course credits.
- 2. Complete a concentration (major).
- 3. Demonstrate proficiency in writing.
- 4. Fulfill Brown's eight-semester enrollment requirement.

Students are welcome to consult with an academic dean to discuss the policies that accompany these requirements.

Brown University's Academic and Student Conduct Codes

At Brown we strive to maintain an open learning environment based on individual expression and the free exchange of ideas. Our community and our academic mission are governed by four basic principles:

- individual integrity;
- respect for others;
- respect for University resources; and
- respect for the values of teaching, learning and scholarship.

Brown University's Academic and Student Conduct Codes explain these principles and, along with them, your rights and responsibilities as a Brown student. You are expected to read the Codes closely and complete a tutorial before registration. You will be sent more information over the summer.

brown.edu/offices/
student-conduct/code

To learn more about these and other academic policies and procedures, please visit our website at brown.edu/go/academic/ code.

LIFE AT BROWN

WE ARE A COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES DEEP INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND INDIVIDUALITY.

Brown brings to campus independent and creative students who develop intellectually and personally through activities beyond the classroom. The University is committed to cultivating a vibrant and supportive environment that empowers you to engage as a member of the community in creating meaningful connections between your curricular and cocurricular experiences.

A wide range of departments and programs within the Division of Campus Life contribute to your intellectual and personal experience in the following areas:

ADVANCING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Brown recognizes that physical, mental and emotional health and well-being are essential to the ability of every student to take full advantage of the academic and personal opportunities on campus. A number of departments and programs provide you with transformative learning opportunities, preparing you to engage — at Brown and beyond — as a culturally informed educator, role model and leader.

- With the support of offices such as **BWell Health Promotion**, student peer educators take an active role in designing and delivering educational workshops, discussion groups and training to their peers and other community members.
- Students have the opportunity to craft meaningful applied learning experiences through programs such as the student-staffed Brown Emergency Medical Services (EMS) — a more than 40-year-old national model.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Campus Life facilitates connections between curricular and co-curricular learning by building community across differences — work that has never been more important and challenging.

- The Community Dialogue Project is a studentdesigned and staff-supported effort devoted to helping students foster intentional community and navigate difficult conversations through facilitated dialogue, critical reflection and educational programming.
- Supported by the Office of the Chaplains and Religious Life, students engage in interfaith dialogue and collaboration through longstanding programs such as the Interfaith Thursday Night Supper or more recent initiatives such as Hillel's student-created initiative Building Relationships: Islam and Judiasm.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

You will discover and create leadership opportunities throughout your undergraduate experience, both in and outside the classroom. Through participation in student organizations, club and varsity sports, or co-curricular programs — and in many cases, all three — you engage in mentorship and applied learning in the development of organizing and leadership skills.

- The Leadership Development Initiative is a student-driven effort that creates educational and community training opportunities that prepare students to engage and lead in their communities at Brown and beyond.
- With mentorship, advising and support from the Student Activities Office, students lead more than 500 student organizations and engage in important applied leadership learning opportunities through organizations and programs such as Brown Outdoor Leadership Training (BOLT), Brown Student Agencies and the Ivy Film Festival.

PROMOTING EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Brown is committed to building a diverse and inclusive community, in which a wide range of identities, histories, experiences, backgrounds and beliefs are valued and respected. At Brown, this commitment to equity and inclusion is embedded in everything that we do inside and outside of the classroom.

Brown is committed to transforming the policies, structures and practices that have led to the exclusion — rather than the meaningful inclusion — of some members of the community. The University Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) was created in 2016. Every academic and administrative unit, including the Division of Campus Life, has been called upon to submit an approved Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DDIAP) aligned with the University's overall set of concrete actions. As an example, in

the past four years, the campus life division has hired many more professional staff members of color, which is helping students to feel more represented and supported.

 Professional and student staff of centers such as the Brown Center for Students of Color (BCSC), Global Brown Center for International Students, LGBTQ Center, Office of Military-Affiliated Students, Undocumented, First Generation College and Low-Income Student Center (U-FLi), and Sarah Doyle Center for Women and Gender work together to provide resources, support and a home away from home for historically underrepresented students in higher education as well as create intellectual discourses critical to the educational experiences of the entire Brown community.

VALUING THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

At Brown, we recognize that a large part of personal growth and development takes place outside of the classroom. This is the result of not just intentional resources and programs but also the ability of students, individually and collectively, to chart and navigate their own co-curricular experiences in a residential community.

The **Office of Residential Life** creates a meaningful, holistic residential experience in which students can share a sense of belonging to the Brown community, practice and expand what they are learning in their course of study, be supported in the development of healthy practices, and cultivate connections with their fellow students.

Students benefit from the mentorship, guidance and support of more than 140 Residential Peer Leaders (RPLs) who live in residence with them as well as from an engaged community of their peers in the day to day.

HOUSING INFORMATION brown.edu/go/reslife-incoming



The College Division of Campus Life Brown University Box 1828 Providence, Rhode Island 02912