Dear (Bearly) Brunonian,

In a few months, you will be joining the rest of the Class of 2018 to walk through the Van Wickle Gates and into your first year at Brown—congratulations! This is a huge moment for you! Just like the City of Providence, Brown is an amazingly diverse and passionate community where you will meet peers who come from places you’ve never heard of with ideas about the world completely separate from your own. They will challenge you and inspire you to think critically about your identity and your beliefs – trust us when we say this is a good thing. Expect to find parts of yourself that you didn’t know existed and take pride in that.

You’ll receive plenty of academic advice during these next few days from your faculty advisor, Meiklejohn, your RCs (more on these terms later!), and many others. It probably seems to you like everybody else has a word of advice on what you should do. Do listen. However, don’t forget to listen to your inner gut feeling—after all, this is your education. Take charge of it. You should ask any and all questions you have. Just remember that the best questions come with a little preparation. We recommend coming to your advisor with 5-8 classes that you’re considering. That’s a good conversation starter. Remember, you’re not married to your classes — when you register for classes at the beginning of the semester, you can (and most likely will) change them!

If there’s one thing about the Brown community that you should know, it’s that you can do nearly anything you want while on campus. You can take any course S/NC (i.e., taking it pass/fail instead of for a grade) and you can double concentrate, but you will receive better advice when you ask if you should. Most likely, someone has an experience or opinion they would be happy to share with you. Talk to upperclassmen. They’ve been in your shoes and have the wisdom of experience. Even
if you think that you have it all figured out, chances are your thoughts will shift and it will be helpful to hear differing perspectives and experiences. While a class can look perfect on paper, there are many factors that might not make the class the right fit for you (the teacher’s style, the workload, the class size, etc.), so take advantage of the two-week shopping period to explore these nuances.

Learn for learning’s sake, not just for a mark on your transcript. To get the most out of your academic experience, embrace the S/NC grade option. It truly is one of the greatest freedoms of the Open Curriculum. The ability to try new things, to maybe even fail, and then try again or go a different route is an important part of the unique Brown learning process. Additionally, educational opportunities stretch beyond the classroom. Engagement with the outside community and interaction in the social circles you develop are equally (if not more) important. There could be a point during the year where it gets to be overwhelming. Don’t be afraid to consider dropping a class or club in the middle of the semester- just make sure you check in with your advising team before you do so. Schedule overload is very common at Brown, so we suggest that you focus on a handful of activities and classes you’re really committed to rather than superficially engage with too much, too fast. Practice self-care! Part of this comes from exploring and knowing your limits.

Over the course of your first year, you might worry that you’re wasting time figuring out your classes, interests, and passions. However, the process of finding yourself is never a waste of time. In fact, your first year is a great opportunity to explore. Take advantage of it!

Congratulations again, and welcome to Brown!

Sincerely,
The Academic and Administrative Affairs Committee
Undergraduate Council of Students
The Meiklejohn Leadership
Limited academic freedom
- Generalized education
- Lots of classes at once
- Plus & minus letter grades
- Getting into college
- Year-long courses

People who care about you
- Small seminars
- Opportunities to excel
- Hard work (if you want it)
- Extracurricular activities
- Overloading

Fast-paced classes
- Recitations/Study sessions

Academic freedom (no requirements!)
- Large lectures
- Academic self-accountability

3-5 classes per semester
- Semester-long courses

Personal independence
- Concentration(s)
- Liberal arts
- Pre-professional advising
- S/NC

1800 classes to choose from
- Diversity in all aspects
- Research

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Meik·le·john (n) [mik-uhl-jon] (like picklejohn, not michaeljohn; colloquially referred to as “Meik”): This obscurely titled figure is your peer advisor, named after Alexander Meiklejohn, a Brown alum, professor, dean, and free speech activist. Meiklejohn Peer Advisors are sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are eager to pass along their tips, tricks, and knowledge of their time as a Brunonian. Meiklejohns are trained to help first-years with the academic, extracurricular, and social transitions that come with being in college for the first time. Meiklejohns are there to help you decide if CHEM0100 and NEUR0010 are too much to take in the same semester, find a volunteer group, or get into a capped class that sounds so interesting. They can give you advice on whether or not to take five courses in the same semester and how to most effectively find a summer job or internship.

Since Meiklejohns are students, they understand problems that don’t fit neatly into the academic aspects most familiar to your first-year advisor. While academic advisors are often available in person, by email, or by the phone during business hours, your Meiklejohn will be able to help you around the clock. If you find that your advisor is not available for the attention you need, feel free to lean a little more heavily on your peer advisors. Whereas faculty advisors should be your sounding board for the more “professional” elements of your life, your peer advisor is a perfect resource for every other question flooding your brain during your first year at Brown. Because Meiklejohns are students too, you’ll run into them at the dining halls, on the Main Green, at performances, and at parties. Their accessibility is one of the key features that makes peer advising at Brown so great.
A few weeks before orientation, every first-year student is assigned to a faculty advisor -- a professor, a dean, or an academic administrator in the Brown community. Advisors exist in all of the academic fields on campus. While there is merit to having an advisor in a field of interest, a potential biology concentrator with an advisor in the English department is also possible, and an excellent opportunity to expand the academic scope of your time on campus. Your advisor is there to help you navigate the issue and the University’s resources as smoothly as possible.

Your advisor will serve as your #1 advocate and supportive critic on campus. If you have trouble with a class, a family problem, or a health issue that is affecting your Brown experience, your advisor is there to help you. Your advisor can also challenge you to think seriously about your academic goals and vision for the future, as well as counsel you on summer opportunities and general experiences outside of the classroom. You will meet with your advisor during orientation, before the end of shopping period, in the middle and end of your first semester, and a couple of times again during the spring. Your advisor will help you reflect on your strengths as a student while also identifying areas where you can improve. Your advisor is the first faculty member or administrator whom you will get to know on a one-on-one basis, and these experiences can help you prepare to approach other professors and administrators, be it during office hours or after class.
On Building a Relationship with your Advising Dream Team

Your advisors can help you navigate every academic or social quandary that comes your way during your first year. However, there are a few things you can do to help the advising process be as smooth and effective as possible.

Pick a technology. At the beginning of the year, you and your academic advisor should establish a preferred mode of communication. Advisors usually have set times to meet with students (office hours) and overwhelmingly like to be contacted by email, but it can be different for every advisor. After you establish how your advisor likes to be contacted, make sure to respond when they do contact you! Not responding to an email or phone message can seem disrespectful. That being said, if you need advice, always try to meet in person. Meiklejohns are usually more flexible on their preferred method of communication, and a lot of students feel comfortable chatting with their Meiks via text message for quick advice.

Ask questions. Academic advisors and Meiklejohns know about tons of resources and have information that could be useful to you, but it’s hard to anticipate every question or concern you will have. Each first-year experience is different, so make sure to ask any questions that come up throughout the year. Your advisors are here to help.

Consider your Brown goals. While your advisors do want to help, you are also responsible for shaping your first-year experience. Taking the time to set goals for yourself and for your relationships can often help you develop more fruitful and productive connections with your advisors.

Be professional. There are a few simple tricks that can help you build a trusting relationship with your advisor. Always respond promptly to your advisor’s emails (48 hours is a good limit), be on time to meetings, and never skip them. If there is an exception and you must miss a meeting, send a prompt apology (preferably before the scheduled meeting) asking to reschedule.
Trust in Me(ik). Like your faculty advisor, your Meiklejohn may have interests far afield from your own. However, your Meik has been provided with an abundance of resources and has lots of Brown experience under their belt. Brown’s open curriculum and small size encourage people from diverse backgrounds to come together in many unexpected settings. There’s a 99.9% chance that your Meiklejohn can help you out in any given situation, and if they can’t, they definitely know someone who can. Even if you are a varsity athlete who wants to study history and your Meik is a Biology student who acts in plays, trust that they still have helpful advice and tips.

Engage your academic advisor. While seeking advice from an older student usually comes naturally to first-years, communicating with your advisor can be more difficult. Remember that faculty members’ knowledge regarding life at Brown tends to be localized to their department, sometimes leaving them unsure of how to relate to the nervous and excited 18-year-old sitting across from them in a meeting. Don’t be discouraged if your advisor seems a little tense or distant at first. By asking questions about your advisor’s research or professional career, going to office hours periodically, and being responsive and prompt when your advisor contacts you, you will be able to build a rapport with your advisor. This can help you to build confidence and set a precedent for contacting professors outside of class. Developing a relationship with your advisor can also be useful if you need recommendations for summer jobs or positions on campus.

Advising is year-long. Oftentimes, first-years stop contacting or responding to their advisors after the first couple weeks of school. Then, they only emerge from radio silence if something goes gravely wrong or they realize they need their PIN numbers for registration. While your advisors are available to help you through all of your issues as they arise, staying in contact with them throughout the year can help prevent colossal problems from arising. Regular contact can also give advising teams the background knowledge necessary to help you solve your issues effectively. We know you get (or will get) a million emails a day, but make time for two more people in your life – that way, you get advice on both the small potatoes and the big Kahunas.
**Brownisms**

Indicates that a class fulfills the writing requirement. All students are required to take at least one WRIT class in the first-year and sophomore years, and another in junior and senior years.

**PGP**

Personal Gender Pronouns. These are the personal pronouns that someone goes by. If someone identifies using certain pronouns, respect and use them! (e.g., he, him, his; she, her, hers; they, them, theirs; phe, phe, phe’s; ze, zim, zir)

**FYS**

First year seminar! Classes that are typically 20 students or fewer and are for FIRST-YEARS ONLY!

**CONCENTRATION**

The Brown word for major; a specific area of study.

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Residential Counselors are RPLs generally trained to help first-years make a smooth transition to college life. They are especially trained in mediation and conflict resolution.

Residential Peer Leaders are Brown’s version of RA’s, except they are not in your dorm to get you in trouble or watch your every move. RPL’s are there for guidance and counseling, free food, and Unit activities.

“Diversity Perspectives” class, or a class that explores perspectives of groups often not represented in the classroom. These are not required, but highly recommended.

Womens Peer Counselors are RPL’s trained to talk to first-years about sexism, gender issues, and sexuality. You can talk to them regardless of your gender!

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Minority Peer Counselor, an RPL with specialized understanding of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia. They also hold multiple workshops on those issues every semester.

Short for Josiah’s, a late night dining option with chicken sandwiches, custom salads, mozzarella sticks, and other fantastic, fried food.

JO’S

Andrews Commons, our newest dining hall, which opened January 2014, has tons of great options like pho, pizza, salad, calzones, pasta, and sushi (it’s still new, you definitely have the room to shape the ism on this one).
You may be surprised to discover that many Brown students face some difficulty managing the rigors of academic life and need a little help somewhere along the way. So you definitely shouldn’t be afraid to check out these awesome academic resources early on to get great advice on studying for exams, writing papers, and more.

**Group and Individual Tutoring**
Free group or individual tutoring is offered for certain introductory classes in science, math, economics, and statistics by trained, expert peers. Find out more at: brown.edu/College/tutoring

**Academic Coaching**
Individual appointments or group workshops to help students develop study skills such as reading strategies, note-taking, and time management. Email academic_coaching@brown.edu for more information.

**Drop-in Hours/Office Hours**
Didn’t quite understand a concept in lecture, or just want to talk more about it? Your professor sets aside two hours each week during which you can ask questions. Be sure to check your course syllabus or ask your professor when and where office hours are!

**Writing Center**
Need someone to help you structure and proofread a paper before you submit it? The Writing Center provides one-on-one conferences on writing assignments (make sure to make an appointment ahead of time!), as well as general writing workshops. brown.edu/Student_Services/Writing_Center

**Math Resource Center**
Get math help for select classes at this walk-in center. www.math.brown.edu/mrc

**Science Center**
Need help in a science class? The Science Center offers drop-in tutoring and group study sessions for most science and math courses. Specialized advising is also available specifically for science concentrators. brown.edu/academics/science-center
New Scientist Program
If you are a student of color planning on studying science at Brown, the New Scientist Program matches you with a peer mentor to support your growth as an academic.
http://www.brown.edu/academics/new-scientist-program/

Deans
If you have any questions about anything relating to academics or student life, don’t hesitate to contact a dean! If something’s wrong, even if you don’t know what or why, go talk to a dean. Find out more about what they do at
http://brown.edu/academics/college/people/responsibilities

Pre-Professional Advising
Planning to go to medical, law, or business school? Check out these resources for tailored, career-path advising:
http://brown.edu/academics/college/advising/health-careers/
http://brown.edu/academics/college/advising/law-school/
http://brown.edu/academics/college/advising/business-school/

CareerLab
The Center for Careers and Life After Brown can help you refine your resume, write a cover letter, prepare for an interview, or find a job or internship. They maintain an online database of open positions, the Job and Internship Board (JIB), and before the start of second semester, run a two-day career resource workshop called JanLab -- first-years are encouraged to participate!
http://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/careerlab/

Additional Resources

Res Life
The Office of Residential Life deals with all aspects of student housing including residential peer leaders, the housing lottery, dorm rules and regulations, and summer and commencement housing.
http://reslife.brown.edu/
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
Located in J. Walter Wilson Rm. 516, CAPS provides counsel and support for students with an array of needs. The primary mission of the office is to promote and maintain mental wellness on campus. Feel free to talk to an advisor or dean to see if CAPS support is a good option for you.
http://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/psychological-services/

Department of Public Safety (DPS)
DPS is a full-service Law Enforcement Agency that provides a wide array of police and public safety services to the Brown Community. Whether you’re locked out of your room, reporting a theft, or shutting down a party, DPS is there to help. They also administer the SafeWalk program, which is a student patrol that will escort you if you are walking alone late at night. Register your bike, laptop, or any other valuables with DPS when you arrive on campus.
http://www.brown.edu/Administration/Public_Safety/

Health Services
Health Services is the place to go when you wake up and feel like you’re getting sick, want to get recommended vaccines before international travel, or just want to get medical advice for that weird stomach ache. Nurses are available for advice over the phone at any hour, as well as Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/

Brown University Shuttle (BUS)
Designed to reduce walking distances and increase student safety, BUS is a free transportation service for all Brown students that has two scheduled shuttles, Daytime and Evening, with fixed routes that stop at various places on campus. An OnCall service is also available for students to reach places not on the BUS’ usual route.
http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/transportation/brown-university-shuttle/

Sexual Health Awareness Group (SHAG)
The Sexual Health Awareness Group (SHAG) is a peer education program from Health Education comprised of Brown students who promote sexual health on campus through workshops, a confidential e-mail Q&A response service (shag@brown.edu), and other outreach projects. Don’t miss out on one of their events during the year!
First Year Timeline

**Summer**
- Start exploring fall class options
- Receive room and roommate assignment
- Receive advising group, advisor, and Meiklejohn Peer Advisor assignment
- Send letter to advisor and Meiklejohn
- Receive letter from Meiklejohn
- Start exploring fall class options

**Fall**
- **August 30:** Beginning of Orientation
- **September 2:** Opening Convocation and registration for first-year students
- **September 3:** First day of classes
- **September 16:** Last day to add a course without a fee
- **September 30:** Last day to add a course (with a fee), change from audit to credit, or change grade option declaration
- **October 13:** Fall break
- **October 17:** Last day to change a course from credit to audit
- **October 20-31:** Begin to discuss spring courses with advisors
- **November 4-11:** Pre-registration for Spring semester
- **November 26-30:** Thanksgiving break
- **December 7-11:** Reading Period
- **December 12-20:** Final Exams

**Spring**
- **January 21:** First day of second semester!
- **February 3:** Last day to add a course without a fee
- **February 14-17:** Long weekend
- **February 18:** Last day to add a course, change from audit to credit, or change grade option declaration
- **March 21-29:** Spring break
- **March 30-April 10:** Begin to discuss fall courses with advisors
- **April 14-21:** Pre-registration for Fall Semester (2015-2016)
- **April 24-May 5:** Reading period
- **May 6-15:** Final Exams