

Brown University Community Council

Public Meeting

Thursday, February 27, 2025

4:00 – 5:30 PM EST

Meeting Minutes

Present (In-person & *Virtual*): Christina H. Paxson, Scott AnderBois, David Buchta, Mary Jo Callan, Max Clermont, Cass Cliatt, Ruth Colwill, Weston de Lomba, Lindsay Garcia, Samdeet Khan, Surya Khatri, Kevin Logiudice, Ken Mak, *Akashleena Mallick, Jennifer Maloney*, Calista Manuzzo, Sydney Menzin, Daniel Newgarden, Caroline O'Brien, *Jessica Pesce*, Ranna Rozenfeld, Matthew Rutz, Robert Sobol, Leah VanWey, Niyanta Nepal

Absent: Nicole Bonelli, Louis Boyang, Vilma Cortez, Frank Doyle, Miled Faiza, Ainsley LeSure, Esha Patel, Kayla Rosen, Irene Sudac, Jacinda Townsend, Stephanie Zielinski

President Christina H. Paxson welcomed the Brown University Community Council (BUCC) and community members in the audience. She reviewed the meeting agenda, which included the Report of the President, a presentation from James R. Kellner, Professor and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on University Values and Voice, and open time for community members to address the Council.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the BUCC meeting held on December 4, 2024. The motion is seconded and passed.

President Paxson invited BUCC members and audience members to introduce themselves. President Paxson began her Report, covering progress made on FY2025 University priorities. She highlighted the launch of the Brown 2026 initiative, led by Karin Wulf and Kevin McLaughlin. President Paxson described Brown 2026 kickoff events that took place in January, which included a conversation with Tricia Rose, Professor of Africana Studies, and actor, writer, and producer Daveed Diggs '04, as well as a concert featuring musician Jon Batiste.

President Paxson spoke about the campus-wide Discovery Through Dialogue project. She shared that the project includes the following components: expanding skill-building opportunities, such as scaling the Community Dialogue Project run by the Division of Campus Life; community-wide events, including a talk about hope in the face of cynicism by Stanford psychology professor Jamil Zaki and a panel discussion with Brown faculty talking about dialogue from the perspectives of different disciplines; and support for student-led projects that promote open and respectful dialogue on campus through the now-open Student Dialogue Fund.

President Paxson shared updates about the process of launching a School of International and Public Affairs, including a search for an inaugural dean, and planning for the school. President Paxson shared the name for the school – The Thomas J. Watson School of International and Public Affairs.

BUCC members asked about the impact of federal actions on the new school, as well as other changes to the Watson Institute.

President Paxson next addressed the priority of defending Brown from ongoing threats to higher education, which she noted began before the election and new administration. President Paxson shared that internally, the Brown leadership team is assessing impact; defining and operationalizing responses; communicating directly with the Brown community; and providing support to students, faculty, and staff; and that, externally, Brown is managing government relations and public relations, working alongside other universities.

President Paxson shared that Brown continued to advocate strongly to sustain the institution's mission of education and research, exercising legal rights as appropriate; and that, the University also continued to follow the existing law and affirm Brown's commitment to diversity and inclusion as grounded in, and central to, its academic mission.

President Paxson noted that the Brown leadership team was monitoring and responding to federal actions that impacted Brown's academic mission, University resources, and the Brown community. She shared that the Brown leadership team was engaging in scenario planning and taking prudent, proactive steps.

President Paxson opened the floor for questions or comments.

Senior Vice President for Communications and BUCC member Cass Cliatt shared that community members are asking why Brown has not made a broad statement at this time. She shared that at this moment, Brown is looking for ambassadors to speak for the values and impact of universities like Brown, whose voices are valued and respected at this moment.

A BUCC member asked how this information can be shared with other stakeholders to help disseminate messaging beyond town hall meetings. President Paxson shared that deans and department leaders are working on this, and there is opportunity to expand reach to staff and students as well.

There were additional questions related to how Brown planned to engage with the Administration and how Brown would address the impact of NIH policy changes on research.

President Paxson responded that Brown was building a team to engage with the Administration, and noted that addressing the impact of changes at the NIH may impact fundraising priorities.

A BUCC member shared appreciation for the steadiness of University leadership at this time, and asked how the University would communicate with the Brown community as things continue to change.

President Paxson noted that there would be a time when things become more clear; and, once there was more certainty related to budget and policy changes, University leadership would communicate about this.

Next, President Paxson invited James R. Kellner, Professor and Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on University Values and Voice, to address the Council. He provided an update on the process of defining the core values of Brown University. Professor Kellner highlighted Brown's mission as the Committee's reference point, defined the Committee's understanding of core institutional values, and described criteria for identifying core institutional values. Professor Kellner then provided an overview of the Committee process, including deliberation and discussion among Committee members; a review of historical materials; engagement with students, faculty, staff and alumni; engagement with the Brown Corporation; and gathering written feedback from members of the Brown community.

Professor Kellner described the Committee's timeline, noting that work commenced in December 2024. He shared that the Committee would share a draft statement of University Values and Voice with the Brown community in the second half of March; and that town halls with students, faculty, staff, and alumni would then take place in April, before vote of the faculty and Brown Corporation in May.

Lastly, Professor Kellner reviewed the Committee composition, which includes six tenured faculty members, three students, and two members of the senior administrative staff. Professor Kellner then opened the floor for questions and comments.

President Paxson thanked Professor Kellner and the other Committee members for their work. Several BUCC members commended the speed and clarity with which the Committee is carrying out its charge. BUCC members asked whether other universities were doing similar work; potential policy implications of the Committee's recommendations; preliminary findings from the review of historical materials; whether contemporary issues are informing the Committee's work; and more. Professor Kellner closed the discussion by emphasizing the importance of partnership to advance Brown's mission and to define the University's core institutional values.

The meeting adjourned. The next BUCC meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 2, 2025.