

# Why Brown? - Brown University - College Review

## **Essentials:**

Brown University is the quintessential liberal Ivy League school where nonconformity is the standard. Brown University's progressive operating philosophy contributes to the school offering students great flexibility regarding their academic pursuits and activities at the school. The word tradition is not usually associated with Brown.

It's quite often reported that Brown has one of the happiest student bodies of any college in the country. Factors that contribute to this happiness are centered on the students' freedom and control over their college life. Students have a great deal of freedom to choose their academic path, learn, experiment and try an assortment of new things. In addition, students have available a wide range of interesting and rewarding activities at their disposal. Brown's active student body possesses a spirit of collaboration; this also contributes to the positive, happy environment of the school. In addition the "right" size of the school with six thousand undergraduates, neither too small nor too large, is also considered a plus for Brown.

Brown does not have any academic distribution requirements, making the student the architect of their course selection and educational experience. There is a great deal of flexibility to try different offerings and experiment.

## **Strength of the School:**

Brown is focused on undergraduate education. Brown has a relatively small graduate school population, relative to many other Ivy League schools. Brown sponsors important research, however, research tends to be on a smaller scale than other Ivy League competitors while the school's focus on the undergraduate tends to be greater when compared to other Ivy League schools. In addition, Brown's faculty is excellent and also very accessible. They provide excellent instruction in the classroom and personal attention outside the classroom.

## **Academics:**

- The student is in control at Brown. A student is in charge of their education and course selection. It is a basic tenet of Brown academics. While there are course requirements for the completion of academic concentrations or an engineering degree, there are no overall core or distribution requirements necessary to attain a degree. A student is responsible to plan, create and monitor their own academic progress. This means that to be successful, the student must be self-directed and have the ability to thrive in this type of unstructured environment.
  
- Academic advising at Brown is judged by many students as being ineffective, probably by design to make the students really take responsibility for their academic careers. Students are mostly in agreement that the open academic policy is a fundamental strength of the undergraduate educational experience and Brown.
  
- An additional policy that encourages students to pursue new academic interests is the ability to take any course at Brown on a Satisfactory/No Credit basis. A student can experiment with a course and potentially avoid negative effects to their GPA. Brown students believe that this policy, rather than encouraging students to take an easier academic path encourages students to take higher-level classes and fosters the development of new interests.
  
- Overall, the opinion is that class experiences are enhanced because more students choose to be in any particular course rather than just being required to be in a course. Students are encouraged to take courses that interest them so classroom enthusiasm and participation is enhanced.
  
- Academics are challenging, Brown students can be characterized as achievers who take their studies seriously and who enjoy learning. The overall atmosphere is geared to learning rather than strict preparation for a future career.

- There is a collection of talented professors; many are acknowledged leaders in their fields. Professors do get to know students by name and they are also very accessible. Scheduling a meeting during office hours can be easily accomplished.
- Faculty focus is on providing excellent instruction in the classroom and keeping the educational experience interesting and even entertaining.
- Due to the relatively small graduate school population at Brown, opportunities for research are widely available to undergraduates.
- The size of classes tend to vary, however, even with larger lecture courses there are smaller discussion sections also scheduled to complement the learning experience.
- Students tend to be collaborative with one another academically, students assisting one another is the norm as well as wide participation in study groups.

**Student/ Social Life:**

- Students are enthusiastic to participate in extracurricular activities. The arts including singing and dance groups are very popular and so is political activism and participation in organizations with liberal minded agendas dominate the landscape of the school. Political protests are almost a daily occurrence on campus.
- Brown is dominated by like-minded people who appreciate the progressive atmosphere and the unique philosophy in effect at the school.

- Promoting diversity of the student body is an objective of Brown, however, the “typical” student background can be characterized as privileged and many students come from a private high school or Academy. School spirit is enhanced because the typical Brown student agrees on so much and often come from similar backgrounds. They find little in the Brown experience to counter their established worldview. All of these factors lead to an atmosphere of collaboration and good feelings by students who typically share the same confidence in their outlook on life.

- The lack of a first rate financial aid commitment to students on the order of other Ivy League schools such as Princeton, Yale, Penn, Columbia or Harvard is often mentioned as a barrier to attracting larger groups of other types of students.

- Many students are content to spend the majority of their time in Brown’s College Hill neighborhood which includes the commercial Thayer Street that runs through the middle of campus. Others take short walks or use readily available public buses to travel to the downtown district which includes a large and attractive shopping mall or to a nearby neighborhood such as Federal Hill. Federal Hill is Providence's Little Italy filled with restaurants and other cultural attractions. It is a popular area destination.

- There will no longer be separate freshman housing starting in 2013. Dorm life and accommodations are considered very acceptable, however, overall the on-campus dining experience is considered to be disappointing. For upper-class students, opportunities to live off-campus in the immediate vicinity in either private or Brown owned apartments is common.

- A majority of Brown students do not consider Greek life as suitable for them and would never consider joining a fraternity or sorority. Small but vibrant Greek life does exist and many underclass students will attend their parties.

- School spirit does not live through following Brown's varsity sports teams. Following varsity athletics is not a common pastime of Brown students. There is, however, degree of participation in intramural sports of all sorts.

**Location:**

Brown's campus is built in the traditional New England style and is located in an appealing urban location in the College Hill neighborhood, overlooking downtown Providence, Rhode Island. Providence is a medium-size city of over 175,000 that has done a lot in recent years to revitalize many neighborhoods, especially the downtown area. Providence offers a wide assortment of ethnic restaurants, excellent shopping, entertainment and cultural activities literally just around the corner from campus. Providence is one hour by commuter train or bus to Boston and three hours travel time to New York City. The popular resort town of Newport is also not far away.

**Don't go to Brown if:**

Don't go if you want a structured education. A structured education, at some schools, provides a sense of unity among students because students share the experience of a common core of classes. At Brown, you are the architect of your course load. In addition, Brown has a tradition of strong activism that is not suitable for everybody.

**Brown Interview- College Specific Questions to Ask the Interviewer:**

- What are the pluses and minuses of being the architect of your curriculum?
- Did you receive a well-rounded education at Brown?
- How do you characterize school spirit at Brown and what contributes to it?
- What are the most popular extracurricular activities at Brown?

**Brown University Quick Facts:**

Brown General Website:

<http://www.brown.edu/about>

Brown Financial Aid:

<http://www.brown.edu/about/administration/financial-aid/>

Brown Campus Map

[http://brown.edu/Facilities/Facilities\\_Management/docs/PAUR\\_Campus\\_Map.pdf](http://brown.edu/Facilities/Facilities_Management/docs/PAUR_Campus_Map.pdf)

Brown Athletics:

<http://www.brownbears.com/landing/index>

Brown Nickname: Bears

Brown Undergraduates: 6,133

**Brown Famous Alumni:**

Ted Turner

John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

Chris Berman

Bobby Jindal

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