THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
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FOREWORD

This is the third message from the Corporation of Brown University to the Alumni. The first dealt with our unique Charter structure and governance. The second described the housing project and its development along distinctive lines. The third discusses the educational fabric.

A broad picture of the general program of the Corporation can be gained by re-reading these statements consecutively.

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I

BROWN UNIVERSITY occupies a unique educational position. It is set apart from all but a very small group of institutions by the fact that it is a university college. That description requires some amplification to make its whole meaning clear. A university college is an institution which puts primary emphasis upon the liberal arts, bringing to their cultivation the library, laboratories, and personnel resources of a university.

As a college, Brown has been bound to recognize that technological skill has far outrun moral, social, and political wisdom. To fulfill its purpose, therefore, it has had to accentuate, in its educational program, the elements of knowledge which are associated with intellectual and moral development.

As a university, Brown assumed an obligation to seek to expand the boundaries of knowledge by emphasis upon research. The record shows that ideal has been kept bright; the flow of research has been constant, particularly in fields of pure learning. But members of the faculty have been
alert on the frontiers of action as well, participating, to use the commonest recent example, in the development of the atomic bomb.

The university college differs in organization from most American universities, which are exceedingly complex. Between the two wars the structure of the characteristic university became vastly more complicated, for state institutions burgeoned both in prosperity and depression. They grew during the booming twenties, sharing the belief then current that "bigger" and "better" were synonymous. When depression came, a fundamental reversal of economic theory emphasized deficit spending rather than public economy; that change stimulated extravagant construction in state institutions. Though forced to economy in personnel, their plants were nevertheless expanded enormously by federal grants; the scope of their activities greatly increased. Many have become educational empires so vast as to be beyond the control of their faculties and beyond the comprehension of their boards of management or their administrative officers.

Professional training in the specialized schools which make up such universities occurs partly or wholly at the undergraduate level. Rarely do students devote two years to liberal studies; more often it is a single year, frequently not even that much. The college of letters, arts, and science is
no longer the real focal center, though in charts of organization it often appears to be, since it is the only constituent element which performs services for all parts of the university. The principal energies of such institutions run characteristically to law, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, business, agriculture, or other specialized subjects. Professional and technological emphasis blankets the liberal arts. So much is this the case that in many universities even the name "college of liberal arts" has disappeared; in others the unit which bears that name is on the defensive. Thus even more important than the difference in organization is the contrast in orientation between the usual complex university and the university college.

Against the tendency to allow the liberal arts to occupy a secondary position Brown has been almost uniquely emphatic. Brown, for example, is one of very few members of the Association of American Universities which incorporates even engineering education within the liberal arts college instead of segregating it in a separate school. In the nearly two hundred years of its existence Brown has experimented with a medical school, with agriculture, with forestry, and with business administration; each was dropped because it proved fundamentally incompatible with the University's major obligation. Brown is convinced that the impairment of the liberal program does not
pay adequate dividends on the technical side and impoverishes education in terms of social effectiveness. Its central business remains the increase of knowledge, the inculcation of wisdom, the refinement of emotional responses, and the development of spiritual awareness. The University has concentrated its energies deliberately and with more and more conviction and assurance upon the undergraduate colleges of liberal arts and graduate work in the arts and sciences.

The graduate school is an essential element in a university college. It gives outlet to intellectual energies beyond those absorbed by the college. That is the explanation of the institution of graduate study at Brown. In 1889 President Ezekiel G. Robinson wrote: "It is earnestly to be hoped that courses of graduate study, to be rewarded by higher degrees, which have . . . been begun, will hereafter become permanent parts of the educational opportunities afforded at Brown University."

President E. Benjamin Andrews stated the issue more sharply three years later: "I cannot avoid the conviction that Brown University has reached a serious crisis in its history. It stands face to face with the question whether it will remain a College and nothing more or will rise and expand into a true University. The problem is a momentous one, and . . . must be irreversibly answered in one way or the other before a decade passes. . . . The
old and well-known institutions of higher education in this country are silently but irresistibly parting into two classes.” “University work will immensely enrich the undergraduate life of every college strong and progressive enough to do it well.” “College studies flourish best in a university air, university research is most successful when carried on in connection with university instruction.”

The Corporation of Brown University decided to follow the ideal expressed by these successive presidents. The intention was not to be bigger, but to be better. Expansion was not the purpose, but more adequate fulfillment of the basic obligation. Any growth in size was incidental to this central objective. The first doctor of philosophy degrees were conferred in 1889. The number of institutions engaged in graduate work at that time could be counted on the fingers of one’s hands. The Johns Hopkins was opened only thirteen years earlier, and it was but four years before that when Harvard entered upon graduate study in a serious way. The program at Brown, therefore, represented the alert and forethoughtful spirit which marked the regime of President Robinson. Soon thereafter the pattern was set, as President Andrews predicted, “irresistibly” and “irreversibly.”

The graduate school makes possible the full use of the library, laboratories, and personnel re-
sources. The Brown University Library, for instance, is one of the largest university libraries in the country; it is probably the greatest scholar's library freely open to undergraduates. Brown's laboratories and personnel are equipped for research at advanced levels. Evidence of this is found in the very wide war use of its scientific facilities by the government.

Brown, as a university college, has a unique relationship to the education of women, following a pattern which no other university college in the country has matched. Over a half century ago it recognized an obligation in the matter. Sharing New England's distaste for coeducation, it established a coordinate college. Pembroke became distinctive because it was made genuinely coordinate, not subsidiary. The resources of the whole University—faculty, library, and laboratories—are available to women without customary discriminations. The coordinate arrangement preserves the social and other advantages of a separate organization; at the same time it gives women the intellectual and cultural advantages of the entire University.

Brown is different in yet another way. This institution alone of the very small number of university colleges is located in a metropolitan center. Liberal education must function amid inhospitable pressures. Education must progress, if at all, like a swimmer—in a resisting medium. The realities
of economic, political, social, cultural, and spiritual life constitute the problems to be faced. Only a university college in a metropolitan center faces its problems in the environment in which most of its alumni will live; only one which makes provision for both men and women fully discharges its obligation.

In these and other respects no other institution in the United States is characterized by the same educational organization and policy as Brown University. It has found original solutions to some of the dominant educational needs of our time.

II

Public imagination has long since been captured by technological advances. Eagerness for new sources of power has usually been more acute than awareness of the problems of its control. At this moment the potentialities of the atomic bomb seem so terrifying that it is assumed peace can be assured by the mere horror of war. That ancient fallacy is writ large in the history of the world. Poison gas and the newly developed airplane played the same role twenty-five years ago; they created a similar environment of fear and dread. Yet those alarms made no solid contribution to peace; they only stimulated a false pacifism, the pacifism of escape, not of conviction. If technology is not to become a Frankenstein monster, it is essential to
strengthen and fortify the only type of education adapted to produce a free citizenry—liberal education.

Concern is for the moment absorbed in the political and moral problems of building for peace. The current problems of the world are both more immense and more urgent than ever before in history. The dislocation of persons, the destruction of property, the rupture of the economic fabric, the physical, moral, and mental, upturn, all these run far beyond historical experience. Hunger, almost banished fifteen years ago, again stalks the earth. Hunger may drive men to anarchy; demoralization may invite the restoration of discipline by force, setting back self-government many generations.

In the face of such dangers training for citizenship is not a luxury; it is a vital necessity. This is the time to deal with fundamentals of thought and feeling, not with superficialities. The need for larger numbers of men who have the broader and more basic types of competence which the liberal arts inculcate is more urgent than ever before. With wealth heavily concentrated in the hands of women, with their political and social influence advancing continuously, the education of women in the liberal arts is also more than ever essential to sound progress.

From whatever point of view the matter is approached, whether in seeking to evolve a classless
society, or in promoting political stability, or in developing an alert and balanced economy, or in enriching the cultural heritage, the support of the liberal arts cannot be described as anything but a vital necessity. Full employment, peace, all the yearnings of the human spirit have been shamefully cheapened by glib promises. They can come only through knowledge of history and its lessons, the discipline of logic and its dilemmas, appreciation not alone of social urges but of social inertia, understanding of political and economic realities, the development of wisdom—and the whole kept in balance.

No other instrumentality is dedicated to that purpose save the college of liberal arts. Its very name suggests devotion to liberty. It recognizes the achievement of liberty as an art, not a science, realizing that the demands of art are insatiable. The college can never advance freedom without utter dedication to its indispensable task. It can make no profound contribution if its energies are divided or its purposes distracted by over-emphasis upon techniques and skills rather than upon understanding and wisdom in action. The development of intellectual power and moral force is its final justification. Its vitality comes from integrity, originality, boldness, and imagination—the qualities required for novel and valuable research. That is why the university college, and not the college of
liberal arts alone, is an essential element in American education.

The university college cannot be content to expound the wisdom of the past; it must keep its students aware of the inevitability of change as well as the permanence of values and the stability of principle. Only the resources of a university can fully implement so vast a responsibility. Only the single-minded commitment of a college to this task can keep that energy from fatal dissipation. President Robinson made this clear when he said in his last annual report: "In ... pleading that provision be made for advanced instruction, nothing is further from my thought than that the distinctive work of the college should in any way be interfered with, or its courses of study or standards of excellence be in any way changed."

The alumni of Brown who are devoted to the cause of the liberal arts may rightly rejoice in the fact that their University has a graduate school. It gives assurance that the liberal arts program looks not backward but forward. The graduate work draws to the society of scholars, the faculty, men who are ready to adventure beyond the beaten intellectual paths, men of creative spirit, whose devotion to truth far transcends self-interest, however defined. It brings freshness, vigor, and vitality to the instruction of the undergraduate body. The College remains the center of the University, but

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the College profits by the strength which is added to its instruction by the presence of a graduate department.

III

Liberal education cannot be carried forward except under conditions of complete independence. As the result of political considerations the support of education by the federal government is limited to agriculture, domestic science, vocational and other "practical" skills. Since the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, there has been no expression of interest on the part of the federal government in liberal education. Colleges and universities which draw support from federal funds inevitably suffer from pressures which impair or destroy a genuine liberal arts program.

State-supported institutions are affected even more seriously by political interference, sometimes overt and explicit, but always potential. In consequence they have increasingly devoted themselves to the practical arts and sciences; it is safe to say there are no state-supported universities which put the liberal arts at the heart of their program of higher education. Without independence, therefore, without complete freedom to write its own program, a university can never make the whole-hearted commitment to devote itself to liberal education that has been made by Brown.
Endowed institutions, however, find independence increasingly difficult to maintain. Between the two world wars there were enormous increases in endowments, but much of the gain simply offset the declining purchasing power of the dollar. Although the inflationary effect of the first World War left endowed institutions with assets severely impaired, the combination of high industrial activity and relatively low taxes, plus the rapid repayment of the national debt, created a singularly good opportunity to raise endowment. Where institutions were aggressive, the growth in endowments was phenomenal. Nevertheless by the close of the era between the two wars interest rates had fallen so low that investment committees sensitive to security of principal could not hope for a return which would much more than compensate for the decreased purchasing power of the dollar even though the endowments had been greatly increased. Moreover, where net additions in the real purchasing power of endowments occurred, they were too often assigned to collateral enterprises, to expansion in the number of fields offered, to enlargement of the scope of the institutional program rather than to the refinement and intensification of the liberal arts.

For these reasons the incidence of world war in 1939 found liberal arts education in a far more precarious position than ever before in American
history. The peril was heightened by wartime shifts in educational emphasis. Moreover the financial foundations of liberal education were weakened; war again accentuated the deficiency of endowments. Its inflationary effects have been more profound than spectacular. Repair of that damage has been made infinitely more difficult by high taxation, by government control of interest rates, prices, and manpower, and by chronic unwillingness to face the problem of a balanced budget. New endowments available from gifts must be invested in securities with low returns. The drop in the purchasing power of the dollar during the war and the yet further decline immediately facing us raise the issue of independence with greater urgency than ever before. It is peculiarly important in an era which has seen the influence of the state penetrate not alone into more areas of life, but deeper and deeper into the fastnesses of freedom.

Continued growth of endowments is essential by way of reinsurance. But the additional principal necessary to produce an income adequate, at current rates of return, for faculty salaries and plant maintenance is so huge that there is no possibility of dependence upon endowment growth as the sole means of balancing the university budget. Gifts for current use have become and must remain an important part of income. They have,
however, the serious defect of tending to dry up when the need is most acute. Student fees offer another possible means of covering the margin between income and expenditure. For that reason tuition and fees have steadily advanced.

Yet increasing dependence upon student fees, in the effort to secure independence, must not lead to discriminations in favor of wealth and social position. That would be fatal. The liberal arts are no refuge for privilege. It is essential that the college of liberal arts be even more democratically constituted than ever before.

Its student body should be recruited from a very wide range of economic levels, but from as narrow a range of high intellectual capacity as is practicable. Those who want college merely as a social experience or only as preparation for a vocation should be encouraged to attend institutions which serve those ends primarily. The effort should be to discover and enlist those who have the ability and the taste for the intellectual life, and then see that they get rigorous intellectual discipline balanced by a varied and lively religious, social, and physical program.

Rising costs, higher fees, and increased democratization can be harmonized only by more student aid. Such assistance becomes ever more essential as child labor laws, state regulations, union restrictions, and many other factors decrease
the economic independence of youth and impair their capacity to save money for college before the age of admission. Students enter college between seventeen and nineteen; under present conditions the opportunities for earning and saving before that time are more severely limited than ever before. If they must spend a year in military service preceding college, earning power before admission will be still further reduced.

These statements are cast in the form of an argument; they can be put in historical terms just as well. At Brown scholarship aid rose in the twenty years between the two wars by 232 per cent; student loans from nothing to $42,250; student employment by the University itself by 50 per cent; and outside employment under University auspices had a comparable growth. If we are to achieve objectives at once distinctive and democratic, the volume of student aid must continue to increase.

The liberal arts college requires more subsidy both for plant facilities and for scholarships than any other type of educational institution. It cannot seek income from the industrial contracts available to technical and professional schools. Its growth of resources is dependent upon gifts. Moreover its students do not have so immediate and direct a vocational outlet; they inevitably and properly require somewhat longer apprenticeship
when they enter upon gainful occupations. Loans must consequently be for longer durations and scholarship aid must be more generous. In short no liberal arts program can meet its own costs; resources must be continuously refreshed and equipment replaced by a steady flow of gifts. There is, therefore, every reason for gifts, continuous and generous, to endowment, but more particularly at this moment gifts to rehabilitate buildings and bring plant and equipment up to date.

Colleges must have classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and housing facilities. Unless those physical necessities are adequate, students will not pay the fees even a well-endowed liberal arts college must charge. At Brown the need for modernization of housing and instructional buildings is singularly urgent. The quality of the faculty has come to surpass the instruments available to it. To support it and maintain and strengthen it require more income.

The most urgent requirement, however, is better housing; it is essential as a means to facilitating the work of Brown undergraduates and stimulating them to be better students. Technical skills can be learned where they are to be used; the liberal arts program, on the other hand, is dependent not alone upon the power of the teacher and the availability of books and laboratory instruments but upon appropriate intellectual, social, physical,
cultural, and esthetic support. The task of the liberal college is at once so critical and so difficult that the whole must be in harmony to be genuinely effective.

At the end of the war Brown University has more students in residence than ever in its history. For want of housing we are having to turn away qualified men and women able and willing to pay our fees. Careful investigation has shown that with the expenditure of six million dollars on housing and plant rehabilitation we can achieve many of our most significant educational objectives. If the housing units are constructed skillfully and operated economically, they can become self-supporting. This will leave only the educational plant proper and scholarships dependent upon continuous giving.

The need for the improvement and expansion of housing facilities at Brown is instant and overwhelming. It is the key to the more efficient employment of the faculty and equipment; it is the key to the maintenance of Brown University in that position of independence without which it could never have achieved distinction.