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ON-CAMPUS

Brown Doubling Number of Veterans Enrolled as Undergrads

At Brown's annual Veterans Day ceremony, President Christina H. Paxson announced plans for increased financial aid for student veterans, need-blind and test-optional admission policies and new partnerships to increase the number of veterans at Brown.

As communities across the nation commemorated Veterans Day on Monday, Nov. 11, Brown University unveiled plans for a new initiative that aims to more than double the number of U.S. military veterans enrolled as Brown undergraduates over the next three to five years.

Extending Its Need-Blind Admission Policies

To achieve that enrollment goal, Brown will extend its need-blind admission policies to include prospective students who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces; increase financial support for veterans; make standardized test scores optional for veterans in the admission process; and strengthen recruiting through a new partnership with the nonprofit organization Service to School.

President Christina H. Paxson announced details on the initiative at the University's annual Veterans Day ceremony, where more than 100 members of the Brown community gathered near Soldiers Arch, a campus memorial erected in memory of the 42 Brown students, alumni and faculty who lost their lives in World War I.

Expanding Support and Creating Pathways

At this year's Veterans Day ceremony, Brown President Christina Paxson shared the University's new goal to more than double the number of undergraduate student veterans by the 2024-25 academic year.

"We owe an immense debt of gratitude to our veterans for the tremendous sacrifices they make and the uncompromising courage they display in defending the freedoms that we all enjoy," Paxson said.

"Increasingly, Brown has become a home to student veterans earning college degrees. It's essential to expand support and create new pathways, both to honor their service and to enhance the education of every student who benefits from the unique lived experiences and perspectives that our veterans contribute to campus."

A total of 21 student veterans are currently enrolled as Brown undergraduates, a small but growing number as the University has implemented new efforts to recruit veterans and expanded affiliations with Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs.

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With the goal of more than doubling the number of undergraduate student veterans by the 2024-25 academic year, Brown will take a number of actions.

First, beginning with applicants seeking admission as undergraduates for the 2020-21 academic year, Brown will consider all prospective student veterans on a need-blind basis, which eliminates from admission decisions any consideration of an applicant's ability to pay tuition. The University expects the need-blind policy for veterans to result in more transfer applicants, adding to the small number of student veterans who currently come to Brown

each year through the Resumed Undergraduate Education program.

Secondly, the University will increase Brown financial aid available to undergraduate student veterans, replacing all family contributions (previously expected from student veterans and their spouses who earn income) with scholarship funds and boosting Yellow Ribbon scholarship awards (currently capped at \$10,000 per student).

The result is the full elimination of all out-of-pocket costs toward undergraduate tuition and fees for student-veterans (as well as the dependents of veterans). The full amount now will

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be covered by a combination of Post-9/11 G.I. Bill educational benefits, Brown's Yellow Ribbon scholarship funds and matching funds from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Eliminating Other Barriers

Next, Brown will make the submission of standardized test scores optional for all undergraduate applicants with U.S. military service, enabling veterans to more easily apply for admission. The shift in requirement eliminates a barrier faced by many veterans, given that most enter the application pool years after having completed high school, when standardized tests are typically taken.

Additionally, to identify talented, high-achieving military veterans as prospective undergraduates to Brown, the University will partner with Service to School. Founded by three military veterans and an admissions expert, the organization helps transitioning military veterans prepare for their next leadership experiences by counseling them on admission to highly selective colleges and graduate schools.

To implement the need-blind admission policy for undergraduate student veterans and provide increased scholarship funds, the initiative will require an additional \$1.5 million to \$2 million each year.

Funds from an existing gift to Brown will be designated in support of the veterans initiative, providing immediate current-use funding to meet early goals toward achieving the five-year enrollment goal.

Simultaneously, Brown will begin an effort to raise a \$25 million endowment to enable the University to admit student veterans through a need-blind process and offer full financial support on a long-term basis. New gifts will be raised as part of the overall \$500 million goal for undergraduate financial aid set in 2015 as part of the \$3-billion BrownTogether campaign.

Honoring Veterans' Service

Brown Dean of Admission Logan Powell said that each of the new initiatives comes in appreciation of veterans' service to the country and the unparalleled experiences that inform the contributions of student veterans as they engage with fellow students in classrooms, laboratories and social spaces on campus.

"Veterans have served our country in such noble and courageous ways, and that unyielding dedication deserves recognition," Powell said.

"And the perspectives that veterans bring to our broader student body add depth and dimension to how we understand history, conflict, leadership and so many other issues. The more we do to support and enroll student veterans, the stronger we are collectively as an institution of higher learning."

Powell added that other measures within the Office of College Admission—including work with the College Board to search for veterans who have taken College Level Exam Program tests—will assist in identifying additional prospective students. Those efforts will expand upon other actions implemented in recent years, including targeted recruiting efforts led by Brown's Office of Military-Affiliated Students (OMAS).

Kimberly Millette, a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and program director for OMAS, said student veterans enrolled at

Brown currently—many of whom are active in the University’s Student Veterans Society—have advocated for veteran-friendly practices based on their direct understanding of the unique circumstances facing service members transitioning to post-military lives and careers.

True to the Spirit of Brown

“This is a moment of excitement for the future of military veterans at Brown,” Millette said. “True to the spirit of Brown, where University leaders and students can work in concert to effect real change, the catalyst for these actions to increase support for service members and veterans has been the voice of our students.”

BrownTogether campaign co-chair and Class of 1972 graduate Joan Wernig Sorensen will lead fundraising efforts toward the \$25 million endowment. As Veterans Day approached, she and her husband, E. Paul Sorensen—who earned two bachelor’s degrees as well as a master’s and Ph.D. from Brown—made the first gift toward establishing the endowment.

Joan Sorensen, whose father served as a U.S. Coast Guard officer for 25 years, said the opportunity to support veterans pursuing a Brown education will inspire the generosity of University donors to reach \$25 million in funding to expand financial support for undergraduate veterans.

“I’ve been lucky enough to get to know many of the student veterans currently on College Hill,” Sorensen said. “They are among the best and brightest minds on the Brown campus today. I know that the Brown community will come together to champion students who served in the military and now pursue their education as an integral part of the extended Brown family.”

Bridging Civilian and Military Experiences

Millette added that the civilian/military divide is very much a challenge facing the country. Sharing experiences across that divide is an important factor in considering how future leaders can best prepare to make informed decisions on major questions facing the nation and the world.

“Many students at highly selective institutions such as Brown proceed to careers in public service, and some will become the members of Congress who make decisions about whether we go to war,” Millette said. “To not interact with veterans or service members would be a disservice to any future leader—for that reason alone, the presence of veterans on every campus is essential.”

The initiative to increase the number of undergraduate veterans at Brown adds to a growing array of actions on campus to strengthen support for military-affiliated students. In fall 2017, the University began to waive application fees for veterans applying for undergraduate admission and guaranteed the opportunity for an admissions interview.

Dedicating New Suite of Rooms for Veterans

In the same semester, Brown dedicated a new suite of rooms just south of the College Green for the use of veterans, particularly important to those who live off campus, often with family members.

The space is also available for students in commissioning programs—Brown has significantly expanded ROTC opportunities for students in recent years, formally renewing partnerships with the Navy and Air Force in 2016, complementing an existing relationship with the Army.

Michael Muir, a Brown undergraduate student and former U.S. Marines combat engineer who organized an annual meeting of the Ivy League Veterans Council on Brown’s campus in 2017, said that in recent years, students who have served in the military have been increasingly welcomed at Brown. At the recent Veterans Day ceremony, Muir said the commitment to doubling undergraduate veteran enrollment will make that even more the case.

“It’s an affirmation, really, [of] Brown’s commitment to student veterans overall,” Muir said. “I’m really proud to be here on campus ... there’s this sense of community that I never really felt [before]. I can sense a positive change, and it feels good.”

Shared by Brown University. Brown University, a private Ivy League research university in Providence, Rhode Island, is the seventh-oldest institution of higher education in the United States. A leading research university, Brown is an innovative institution home to world-renowned faculty—where creativity, intellectual joy, and curiosity drive students to academic excellence.

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