

Hi,

I am a student at Brown University and the production director at Brown Student Radio, one of Brown's two radio stations. In 1936, Brown University became the first university to have a student-run radio station when two freshmen strung wires between two buildings, allowing for students to have the chance to participate in the exciting world of radio.

Brown Student Radio evolved into WBRU, a non-profit, commercial station that distances itself from the university. I was part of an effort two years ago to rejuvenate a student radio station at Brown.

Currently, however, we have difficulty getting air time. We are currently renting airtime from another station (WELH, run by the Wheeler School in Providence, a private high school) and are constantly having to work around their schedule. Also, the WELH tower (250 watts, I believe) is located in Barrington, RI, twenty miles from campus. This means that the Brown Student Radio signal does not reach many students on campus. They can't tune it in on their radios.

Lower-power radio would allow for Brown University and hundreds of other colleges around the United States to have small, local radio stations that broadcast news, sports, and music to students on campus. It doesn't cost much (under \$1000) for a small broadcasting tower and a transmitter. The prohibitive expense now is the radio license, which is often either not available (there are no stations for sale in Providence) or hard to get due to intense competition in the radio market.

Low-power radio could fix that. By offering licenses to colleges and universities, communities, schools, unions, and other groups that feel like other media can not adequately represent their views, the FCC could return radio to the people. As we enter a new century, it's important to remember that radio was originally a mass medium, a medium where everyone could both send and receive messages. Slowly but surely, corporations have overtaken the airwaves, denying people any true voice.

Thanks for listening to my concerns.

Martin Johnson '01
Brown University

Prod Director, Brown Student Radio